



Mrs Susan Locke
Headteacher
Milldene Primary School
Barbrook Lane
Tiptree
Essex CO5 0EF

Our Ref: ZA66030

5 January 2021

Dear Mrs Locke,

Covid-19 – School Closures

As you will be aware, the Prime Minister has announced that from today, Tuesday 5 January 2021, schools in England are closed to the majority of pupils, with the exception of children of key workers and those who are most vulnerable.

The Government has been doing everything in its power to keep schools open because we know how important each day in education is to children's life chances. However, this is a fast-moving and unprecedented situation and due to the rapid rise in cases and the increasing pressure on our NHS, we have had to take the difficult decision to close schools at this time to stop the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

I recognise that many staff, parents and pupils will be concerned about this latest announcement and the impact of school closures on the education and welfare of children and young people. The Prime Minister announced last night that extra support will be provided to ensure that pupils eligible for free school meals will continue to receive them while schools are closed and the Department for Education will also be distributing more devices to disadvantaged children to support remote education. In addition to this, the Department for Education has published guidance for schools to help disadvantaged children to access free mobile data increases or 4G wireless routers to support remote education and more information about this can be found at:

<https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/internet-access>

I am also aware of concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people while schools are closed to the majority of pupils. The Government has published comprehensive guidance about supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and Public Health England has also updated its world leading 'Every Mind Matters' platform to provide advice on mental health support and services for people of all ages.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

The Government will continue to do whatever it can to support the country through this national health emergency and please feel free to share any of the information and guidance in my letter with parents at your school.

I know that you and your staff have worked extremely hard during this pandemic to support remote education and keep schools safe and I thank you all for your hard work and dedication during this challenging time. If you have any concerns or queries about the latest announcements for schools or support in place, please do not hesitate to let me know so I can raise any issues with the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely,

with our good wishes,


Rt Hon Priti Patel
Member of Parliament for Witham