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20th March 2020

TO ALL FAMILIES ACROSS THE LEARN TO LIVE FEDERATION

Dear All,

Devon Special School Headteachers and Local Authority representatives met today to discuss the unprecedented situation we find ourselves in, due to the Covid-19 virus. We are all facing increasingly difficult decisions due to the worldwide crisis we find ourselves in. The following statement was agreed and shared with all SENTient Trust Special Schools:

“The overarching message from Government and the Local Authority is that children are safer at home; this is the best way to limit the virus.

In our school community, we have pupils, family members and staff who are vulnerable to this virus and we have a duty of care to protect all.

Our schools are no longer able to operate due to critically low staffing levels, except for a small number of children whose families most need our help.”

This includes those families who have one parent or carer who is identified as a “Critical Worker” (see over the page for an explanation).

The decision has been taken to **close the schools to pupils on Monday 23rd March 2020**, due to our concern that we will not have safe staffing levels. Staff will be in school on Monday to prepare online learning resources for all children and to plan what limited onsite childcare we can provide and who for, for the rest of the week. We will contact families on Monday to have a discussion with you and will re-open to some families again on Tuesday.

The schools will **CLOSE** for the Easter Holiday at the end of the day on Friday 27th March 2020. If at all possible, we may be able to provide some assistance to parents who are Critical Workers, but this possibility is **ONLY** open to this group of families.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqui Warne".

Jacqui Warne
Executive Head

WHO IS A CRITICAL WORKER? The Critical Worker categories are:

Health and social care - This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare - This includes childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services - This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government - This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response, or delivering essential public services, such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods - This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security - This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport - This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If you believe you fall into one of the above categories, please speak with your employer to check that, based on their business continuity arrangements, your specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

