



St. Malachy's College

36 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 2AE



20 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Following the Minister of Education's announcement yesterday evening I am providing you with detail of how we will facilitate those children who are vulnerable, or those students up to the end of Year 10, whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response who would otherwise have no option but to stay at home to ensure safe supervision of their children.

The aim of closing schools to pupils was taken to reduce the number of children in schools to enhance the effectiveness of our response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The College will however be open to:

- those children who are vulnerable (guidance on this definition has yet to be provided and we will publish this as soon as it is made available)
- young people up to the end of Year 10 whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response (key workers) who would otherwise have no option but to stay at home to ensure safe supervision of their children

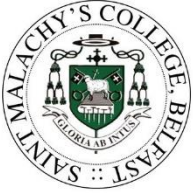
Currently the broad categories of **Key Workers** are defined as follows (the definition of key worker will be flexible and dependant on the circumstance and requirements over the course of this critical period):

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social response
- Education and childcare. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response
- Utilities and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (eg. hygiene, medical etc)
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response

Even if you meet the definition of a key worker the government advice is that, if possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your Key Stage 3 child to school. Please try to use the school facility as a last resort. This is to allow us to

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minimise the number of children and adults together in line with recent social distancing guidance.

For those pupils in school from Monday 23rd March 2020:

- **normal school hours and rules regarding uniform etc. will apply (pupils should attend only within the hours of 9am to 3.30pm)**
- **if you are a part-time worker your son should only attend on the days you work**
- **there will be supervised study areas which will operate in line with social distancing advice**
- **the College's own bus service will not be operating until further notice**

Canteen

The canteen will be open from Monday for pupils in school.

Free School Meals

The Executive is committed to ensuring continuity of provision for children and young people who may be vulnerable or who currently avail of free school meals through our schools. The Department of Education together with the Department for Communities are working to put in place alternative arrangements as soon as possible. We will notify you of these arrangements as soon as they are published.

If you believe you meet the key worker, or your son meets the vulnerable children criteria as set out by the Minister and you would like your child to avail of a place in the supervised study provision we can offer, **please inform the College by contacting Ms Deirdre McCusker as soon as possible by email (dmccusker152@c2kni.net), providing your child's name and class in Key Stage 3 together with details of the key worker category applicable.**

Students will not receive any formal teaching while in attendance and there will be no one-to-one assistance available. They will be instructed to follow the routines set up through Google classroom as if they were at home. **You will appreciate that we are already operating with a depleted staff. Parents must only use this provision if absolutely necessary and I would appeal that parents should explore all other avenues before deciding to contact the College in this regard.**

Please note that if your son or anyone in your household is displaying symptoms of the Coronavirus Covid-19, you should follow the Public Health Agency advice in relation to self-isolation and should not send your son to school until it is safe to do so.

Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to pray that the College family stay strong and look forward to when normality returns.

Paul McBride
Principal

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