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**Birches Primary School**

**Key Workers**

Dear Parents,

Our Board of Governors and staff want to make sure we do everything we can to help our Key Workers, at the same time making sure the children we are looking after are kept in conditions which are safe and adhere to PHA guidelines.

I would like to thank the parents who are Key Workers for contacting me, further information will be emailed to them regarding arrangements for next week, with the view to open on Tuesday 24 March.

**If you are a Key Worker, this is the advice schools have been given from the Department of Education:**

* Children of key workers must only avail of sending their children to school when there is NO OTHER OPTION available to them.
* If there is a parent, guardian or elder sibling at home or other provision available to key workers, then they must use that provision.
* This is essential to avoid schools becoming overwhelmed and having to close completely on safety grounds.

**The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.**

**If a family does not meet the definition of key worker or their child is not vulnerable but wants to attend**

* Families can be directed to the Family Support NI website which has details of a range of support available to families including registered day-care provision in the area.
* Vulnerable children are defined currently as those children who are in need of protection, or in need, as defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995.

We will be closed on Monday 23rd to put in place preparations to accommodate safely the opening of school on Tuesday 24th March at 8.30 am.

This is a very difficult, challenging and worrying time for all of us. We hope everyone follows guidance from PHA in order to best protect yourselves and your families.

We hope everyone keeps safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Watson