

Friday March 20th 2020

THE government has published the full list of key workers whose children will be exempt from school closures.

It was revealed on Wednesday that all UK schools will shut from this afternoon, indefinitely, due to the spread of coronavirus. Schools will stay open for a minority of pupils, however, even during the Easter holiday.

The education secretary said these pupils would be those whose parents are 'key workers', and those who are the most vulnerable. Much confusion ensued about who is classed as a key worker, and which children are considered to be vulnerable. Frustration built throughout yesterday, with many headteachers taking to twitter to call for the list so they can plan provision.

The list of professions was finally announced overnight. The wording below is taken directly from the [government guidance](#):

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 nursery 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.

'Key workers' also include those whose work is 'critical' to the Covid-19 response.

Some heads have been surprised by the scope of the list, raising concerns about the number of pupils who could still be attending come Monday. However, the government said if any key workers can safely keep their children home without it affecting their work, they should.

This is the guidance:

- If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.

- If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.
- Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
- Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
- Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.



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Some schools had understood yesterday that only pupils whose parents both worked in key professions would be eligible. However, the government has clarified that this is not the case:

"Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the government can send their children to school if required."

As well as children of key workers, children considered to be vulnerable will also be allowed to attend. The government guidance states:

"Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

"We know that schools will also want to support other children facing social difficulties and we will support headteachers to do so."