

# St James' Primary School

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**ST JAMES'**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2021

Dear Parents,

Firstly, we wish you all a very Happy New Year - 2020 was pretty awful and I know we're all looking forward to a better year ahead!

That said, it's looking like the start of the year is going to be tricky.

Over the course of the last few days, the Government has announced various measures regarding the start of the Spring term. Most primary schools are set to open as usual on Monday, with the exception of schools in high risk areas. Today, there have been a number of calls for primary schools to remain closed due to the high rates of COVID cases, including from Mayor Dave with regards to Bedford (as reported in the press today), which is seeing a significant increase in the number of cases. We received an email from the Local Authority this afternoon, which states 'The Council view is that primary schools should only be open for the first two weeks of term to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers due to the local and national evidence of the increase in cases and the rapid transmission of the new variant of COVID.' We have also been informed that 4 members of staff will not be able to return to school due to shielding and isolating, as well as being unwell with COVID.

The statistics for Bedford Borough are alarming, and are in line with/higher than many of the areas which have already been closed by the Government. We are also aware of a significant number of positive COVID cases within our St James' family over the Christmas period, both staff and children, and we are concerned that we do not yet know enough about the impact of this new variant.

**In the light of these latest developments, we have considered our risk assessment and do not believe we can safely re-open to all children and have therefore decided that it is in the best interests of children and staff to delay the start of term by two weeks. We hope to re-open to all children on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> January.**

We will continue to publish home learning packs on our website each week, and will use Teams as much as possible to support children at home. Teachers will spend time on Monday to put into place all arrangements and will contact you further. All staff who are fit to work will be working in school to provide as much support as we are able to families and children at home.

We will be open for vulnerable children and those of key workers. The current list of keyworkers can be found here: [Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/critical-workers) We have been in touch with Dawn Until Dusk to confirm whether or not they will continue to offer childcare in this circumstance and will confirm this as soon as we can. To help us, if you are a keyworker please would you email the school office to let us know whether your child will be attending school next week.

For those families entitled to Free School Meals, we will liaise with Caterlink who will provide hampers, and will contact you directly with arrangements for collection.

We will continue to monitor the situation over the weekend, and will post any updates on the school website <https://www.stjamesprimary.org.uk/> and on Maria's Twitter feed @StJamesHead.

With very best wishes,

David Fraser  
Chair of Governors

Maria Soulsby  
Head Teacher

