4th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your patience during these worrying and confusing times.

Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in March last year, the staff of our nursery have worked hard to make sure we provide a safe place for children to attend. We would like to thank you for the support you have shown us across this time.

As you will be aware, things are changing rapidly in our country and we find ourselves in a worrying position. Cases have surged and a new variant of Coronavirus has emerged, which is reported to be more transmissible amongst children than previously thought. The North East region has been placed into Tier 4 restrictions, in line with London and many other South East areas. Many schools within these areas are closed due to rapidly increasing cases. Significant pressure is being placed on the Government from many sources, including Durham County Council and teaching unions, to keep all schools in Tier 4 closed. This will initially be for a period of two weeks, to enable a decrease in transmission rates.

My responsibility as a Headteacher is to provide a safe environment and under these circumstances, bringing all our children back together potentially poses a serious risk not only to the children themselves, but to you the families, the school staff and the wider public.

Myself, the Governing Body and the teaching team have agonised about the decision we should make, due to the situation we find ourselves. We have carried out comprehensive risk assessments and it is with great regret that the conclusion we have reached is that it is unsafe to fully open our nursery to all children right now.

Our school risk assessment is individual to our setting and considers a range of factors including local infection rates, availability of staff, as well as the school’s physical environment and organisation. Based on these factors, I currently have no option but to close school to all children except those who are vulnerable or children of critical key workers.

Initially, this will be for a period of two weeks until the week beginning Monday 18th January. This will naturally be under constant review.

I appreciate that this news will be both disappointing and worrying for many of you and understand the difficult position that this will put many of you in. The most important consideration is protecting of the lives of your children, your families, the school staff and wider community. We have to believe that better times are ahead and remain positive in the way that we face adversity, trying the best we can to get through it together.

Our staff team are working on home learning and information for parents and this will be made available through our Class Dojo site. We encourage any parent who has not signed up to this to do so. If you need any further information on how to do this, please contact the school. For parents who are unable to access the Dojo, information will be emailed to you.

We have provided additional information on the Governments criteria of a critical worker, along with this letter. If you believe that your child will qualify for a childcare place at nursery from Tuesday 5th January, please contact us on 0191 5865415. Please be aware, that these places are limited and it is important that you only take these up if you have no other alternative.

Yours faithfully,

Natalie Parkinson and the Nursery Team

Horden Nursery School