



16th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you with details of the most recent update from the Government for schools in response to the Coronavirus, COVID-19 outbreak. I want to reassure you that we continue to monitor developments on a daily basis to ensure we are ready to support any developments in the steps being taken by the Government to minimise the impact of this outbreak.

At the time of writing, there are still no known cases of Coronavirus amongst students or staff at the school. We are continuing to monitor and adhere to the advice coming from the Department of Education and Public Health England and as such the school will therefore remain open.

The Government announcement at the end of last week indicated what other actions will be most effective in slowing the spread of the virus in the UK. As the disease becomes increasingly established in the UK, they may still consider further measures to reduce the rate and extent of its spread. Future actions could include population distancing strategies (such as school closures, encouraging greater home working, reducing the number of large-scale gatherings) to slow the spread of the disease throughout the population, while ensuring the country's ability to continue to run as normally as possible. They may also consider measures in order to protect vulnerable individuals with underlying illnesses and thus at greater or more risk of becoming seriously affected by the disease.

The announcement also included Government advice against international school trips. The Government advises against all overseas education trips for children under 18. Further to this, South Africa effectively closed their borders and as a consequence, we are cancelling the Sports Tour over Easter. We are in the process of seeking clarification regarding insurance for monies already paid. Families who are affected by this will be contacted directly with more information as soon as we are able to seek clarification of the next steps to be taken.

In preparation for any move by the Government into this phase, the school has been undertaking steps to ensure, as far as practicably possible, we can continue to maintain our education provision to the school population. We are also conscious that students are becoming increasingly aware of the potential of an enforced school closure, but current advice is for education establishments to remain open and continue to plan for the forthcoming exams as we would normally do so. Our current guidance also indicates that even if there were to be an enforced closure for any length of time, the planned GCSE and A level examinations will go ahead as scheduled.

We have plans in place that will make provision for the education of our students to be maintained via online learning tools such as Show My Homework and Google Classroom. Our approach would be that should we be instructed to close, staff will set work online through Show My Homework & Google Classroom, as per individual classes school timetables.

For students in Year 11 & Year 13 this may contain links to other work streams such as past paper exam questions or video conferencing facilities at set times to enable students and staff to continue some level of dialogue between students and teachers.

It is likely that if there were to be a closure it would be for an extended period and whilst this may seem attractive at first it could prove detrimental in the long run. We would therefore suggest that students attempt to maintain a daily routine to their learning in order to provide a structure to their day and continue to engage in learning activities by following a similar pattern to the normal timetable. There may also be a number of other challenges that would develop, such as childcare for both you as parents and for those of our staff who will have their own children at home.

Needless to say, we hope that we will not have to put any of this into practice but given the current reporting on the situation it would seem prudent to be prepared for any eventuality. Despite this, please rest assured that we will continue to take a sensible approach to the situation at school and do all we can to reassure the children and prevent them from becoming unduly anxious.

Thank you all for your ongoing support as we work together to manage this challenging situation. We will be in touch with further updates in due course.

The NHS Advice for preventing the spread of viruses:

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

Don't

- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Yours faithfully,



Mr R Denial
Principal

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