

18 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: Coronavirus**

I am writing to update you about our school's current position regarding the Coronavirus.

We take the health, safety and wellbeing of our students and staff very seriously, and we want to reassure you that we are taking all of the necessary steps to protect our community, following the official guidance from Public Health England and the Department for Education (DfE). Details of this guidance can be found on the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>

The recent UK government advice states that the most common symptoms of coronavirus are a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature. The government advice is as follows:

- If you live alone and have symptoms however mild, stay at home for **7 days** from when your symptoms started.
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**. The 14 day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

**If your children are unwell, please do not send them into school;** inform school of their absence via the school telephone number or by using the MyEd app.

**If your children become unwell at school with the symptoms stated above,** we will contact you to collect them as a matter of urgency. **Please follow the government guidelines regarding the self-isolation period.**

The guidance from Public Health England and the DfE is being updated regularly in response to the changing situation. We will continue to monitor and follow the advice and we would urge parents/carers to do the same.

**Preventing the spread of infection**

Please follow these general principles to prevent the spread of infection:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based sanitiser if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell

- If you feel unwell with symptoms of a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature, stay at home and do not attend work or school
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue, bin the tissue and wash your hands thoroughly
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home
- If you are worried about your symptoms, please call NHS 111 and do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment

## **Reducing Risks**

The risk of the coronavirus is currently low in County Durham, however, to minimise the spread of any infection in school we have implemented the following actions:

- “Catch it, Bin it, Kill It” posters have been displayed in every classroom and toilet facility.
- High standards of cleanliness and hygiene have been reinforced with students during assemblies and lessons.
- Soap is readily available in all toilet areas and in all classrooms with sinks. Students are reminded on a daily basis to wash their hands, particularly before eating at break-time and lunch-time.
- Anti-bacterial cleaning wipes are available in all subject areas including computer suites.
- Regular and thorough cleaning of all school areas is taking place on a daily basis and toilet facilities are checked and cleaned throughout the school day.

In addition, we are limiting large gatherings of people and have implemented the following actions from Monday 16 March:

- Year group assemblies have been cancelled. Notices to students will continue to be given out during registration times and pastoral lessons.
- Break-times are being extended (11.00 – 11.30am) to separate year groups and limit the number of students in the dining room at any given time. Cold snacks and limited hot food will be available to students at these times.
- Lunchtimes are being extended (12 – 2.00pm) to limit the number of students in the dining room at any given time.
- School trips, fixtures and events have been cancelled up to the Easter holidays in the first instance. We will continue to monitor the situation during April and we will continue to follow guidance from Public Health England and the DfE.
- Meetings with Parents/Carers/External Agencies will continue to take place over the telephone rather than in person.
- After school detentions have been cancelled up to the Easter holidays. Alternative arrangements will be made and parents/carers will be informed.
- International trips planned for the Summer term may not go ahead as the government are currently advising against all but essential international travel for the next 30 days in the first instance. Trip leaders would face significant challenges in making arrangements to ensure children’s welfare, should adult supervisors or children be required to self-isolate. In light of this recent Foreign Office advice, we are working with our insurance and travel companies and will contact parents/carers in due course with further details when a plan is in place.

## **Students Preparing for External Examinations**

We recognise that students, parents/carers may be anxious and concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the Summer external exams. The advice from Ofqual is to continue as normal with our preparations for these examinations and for assessments. Ofqual is working closely with the exam boards

and with the Department for Education to ensure fairness to students and to keep disruption to a minimum. We will keep students, parents and carers informed of developments as they arise.

### **Contingency Planning**

As you are aware, there is no recommendation from the government to close schools at this stage, however, we are busy preparing classwork, resources, homework menus and presentations for students so that they can continue with their studies, even if they are unable to come into school. Subject work for each year group can be accessed through Classcharts and through Google classrooms/Google Drive. A help-sheet explaining how to access Google Drive from home is attached and available for students/parents/carers on our website. Students have been informed of how to access the materials. Staff are sharing their work email addresses with their classes so that work can be emailed for marking purposes.

In addition, online resources such as SAM Learning, My Maths and Educake are available to all students and they have their passwords to access these programmes. Please check that you and your child can access these from home. **If you have any issues with using the internet, please let us know as a matter of urgency so that we can make alternative arrangements for your child (eg. hard copies of learning booklets and resources).**

If circumstances arise where the school must close, we will inform you via the MyEd app, parent email and through our website. **If you have recently changed your contact details, please inform the school office as soon as possible so that we can update our systems.**

If you have any further concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact school by telephone or leave a message through the MyEd app.

Thank you for your support and understanding with these matters during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,

**Lisa Byron**  
Head Teacher