



17 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Update on coronavirus

You will have seen the news that the government announced some new measures to deal with COVID-19 and also a change to its overall response, moving from the 'contain' to the 'delay' phase of its plan. As before, the advice remains that effective hand hygiene and using a tissue when coughing or sneezing are some of the most effective ways in which we can help reduce the spread of the virus. We are continuing to do all that it can to minimise the spread with good hygiene and is following all the advice from Public Health and Hertfordshire County Council.

Please let the school know if:

- A child or someone in the household has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus;
- A child has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Student absence

In a school with just under 1,500 students there are going to be instances where students feel unwell. The NHS advice is available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

This absence will be authorised. If your child displays these symptoms at school then they will be isolated from the rest of the student body and we will contact you. Please use the NHS website to reassure yourself about how best to support your child if unwell.

Self-isolation and staying at home

As you know the government has widened their advice on who should self-isolate to include those that have coronavirus like symptoms - a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, however mild - should stay at home for at least 14 days to protect others and help slow the spread of the disease. All our staff will follow this advice, and we ask you to ensure that your children do so too.

In certain circumstances, medical professionals may advise to keep your child at home. In this eventuality, let us know and we will support your decision.

I understand that parents are concerned about the risk of their children catching coronavirus and that some may wish to keep children at home even though they have not had any medical advice to do so. However, we cannot agree to a child's absence for that reason alone. All children who are well enough to come to school should continue attending as normal unless advised otherwise by Public Health England.



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The possibility of school closure

Some parents have asked whether we could choose to close the school now. If we are told to close the school by Public Health England, because there is a risk to children/students and staff, we will do. If the government make a decision to close all schools we will do so, otherwise our intention is to stay open and operate as normal. The Government has made it clear it expects schools to remain open unless public health advice is to close. This is the advice of the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government.

We are however preparing in case the school closes and we are looking at ways for managing a remote curriculum and contingency planning is underway regarding public examinations. We recognise that if closure is necessary this will have significant implications for many of our families with issues ranging from the loss of free school meals to problems for families finding suitable childcare. In the knowledge that a closure is possible can we suggest that you start planning, please let me know if you work for the NHS.

Partial closure of our school

In the event of significant staff absence (10 teachers are currently absent) we will need to partially close the school or review the structure of the school day, for example asking one or more year groups to stay at home. We will not be taking this decision lightly, but as you will understand, we need an adequate number of staff in school to ensure that all students are safe and that we can teach all the classes. If we need to make this decision, then we will communicate with you as soon as possible. Work will be set via Show My Home Work (SMHW) for students asked to stay at home for partial school closure. Our priority will be students with public examinations this year.

Setting of work

Please note that all homework will be on the SMHW platform. Curriculum information for each subject can be found on the school website.

Please can I ask that all parents are able to support their child's learning from home, by logging onto SMHW.

Examinations

One of the areas that the school cannot directly control is what the examination boards are going to do. The official statement from Ofqual is:

We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer exam series. Our advice at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal. We continue to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education and we have met to plan for a range of scenarios, as the public would expect. Our overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum. It is still many weeks until exams start and we will issue updated advice if necessary, giving schools and colleges as much notice as possible.

Overseas and UK trips

No school trips, both in the UK and overseas, will go ahead.

We would ask you to be understanding. We do not have an extensive phone call handling system and so where possible, please do use email. Please only use phone communication with the school for emergencies, matters related to pastoral care and behaviour.

Our priority is to ensure the wellbeing of all in our school community. I thank you for your continued support.

We will keep you updated via the school website.

Yours sincerely



Martyn Henson
Headteacher