



11 March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

Update on COVID-19 Contingency Plan

I wanted to update you on our contingency planning in the event of further developments linked to the coronavirus.

As you know, the advice from Public Health England and the DfE is being updated on a daily basis and it is therefore very difficult to predict what might happen over the coming weeks.

The Trust are regularly reviewing our action planning with our schools, and whilst we want to preserve our pupils' and students' education, the safety of the young people and staff is paramount

Actions taken to date:

- Raising awareness of the virus and how to avoid it spreading (e.g.: hand washing);
- Encouraging all pupils/students to wash their hands thoroughly at break and lunchtime as a minimum and those that travel on public transport, upon arrival;
- Key information contact numbers sent to parents (e.g.: 111 and DfE helplines);
- Sourcing and making hand sanitisers available and dispensers to cover at least communal areas, kitchens and toilets;
- We have strongly advised staff not to shake hands with visitors during this time.

School cleaning

We are working with our cleaning contractors to ensure that particular attention is paid to high-risk areas. Our site teams are also on hand throughout the day to respond to requests, e.g. where soap dispensers, hand towels and tissues require replenishment.

Contingency planning

The governments preference currently is to keep schools open and so this is what we are working towards. The government is, however, planning for a range of future scenarios, some of which may result in full or partial temporary school closures.

We are currently reviewing staffing ratios to determine what absence levels among staff may mean that we cannot remain open. Whilst the government is looking to relax the law regarding maximum class size, in reality this has no practical meaning, especially for our secondary schools. Rooms have a maximum capacity and students are taught by subject specialists. If high staff absence does become the case, we will do everything we can to remain open, but we will prioritise our exam classes and we reserve the right to partially open for other year groups. Any decision to partially open would be a last resort.

Given how quickly the guidance is changing, we must let you know that decisions on school closures may need to be made rapidly and so it is important that we are able to contact you in order to make arrangements for you to collect your child, or for them to go home. Please ensure that we have your up to date contact details and that you monitor communication from the school (emails, website updates, social media posts etc).

It is vital that if schools close, pupils and students should continue to study at home. If we have to close a school, staff will make provision for your child to have appropriate work to do. Information about this will come directly from your child's school.

Examinations

Currently, public examinations are expected to continue as planned. If the situation changes, we will update you at that point. Students who are taking examinations this year should continue to prepare as normal.

School trips

Current guidance advises that foreign travel should go ahead as planned if it is not to a Category One or Two country, please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>. We will continue to advise you as information is updated and we will follow all Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and DfE advice.

We are currently reviewing all school trips to determine whether they can go ahead safely. Decisions about whether planned school trips will go ahead will be communicated by the school directly.

Wellbeing

Students may well become more concerned about coronavirus as the government considers moving from the contain phase to the delay phase. We all have a role to play in managing this. You know your son/daughter best but together we should:

- Do our best not to sensationalise or overdramatise this issue
- Steer students away from some of the newspapers and social media coverage
- Not hide information from students but stick to known facts
- Not pass our own concerns or stresses to our children/students

At the time of writing, out of a population in the UK of 67 million people, there have been 373 confirmed cases and six deaths. The risk to young people who are not suffering underlying health conditions is very low. There will be a small number of students, staff and your own family members with suppressed immune systems, so please do take advice from NHS 111 and government websites.

Further advice for parents

This is a fast-moving situation and at the time of writing this letter, the risk level is deemed low to moderate, although for parents/guardians wishing to keep up to date with the latest situation, the following links may be helpful:

- www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public
- The Government Coronavirus Action Plan; a guide to what you can expect across the UK – www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan

As you will understand, this is a very challenging situation to manage for everyone. We have a group of cross-Trust leaders, including all the headteachers, who meet regularly to discuss the latest advice and situations as they arise in our schools. Rest assured that we are doing our very best to pre-empt issues where possible, and react to situations as they arise.

On behalf of our schools, I should like to thank you for your on-going support and understanding during this unprecedented period. We will continue to prioritise the health and welfare of our young people and our staff whilst being mindful of our responsibility to maintaining education provision as best as we can.

Yours sincerely



Miss M Davies
Chief Executive Officer