

19 March 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

As you will be aware, the Prime Minister made a number of announcements yesterday as part of the Government's ongoing strategy to combat the COVID-19 outbreak:

- all schools in England have been instructed to close to most students with effect from the end of the day on Friday 20/03/2020 until further notice.
- Schools have been asked to remain open for the children of 'essential workers', students with designated social workers and those with an Education and Health Care Plan.
- Examinations for GCSE, A Levels and equivalent qualifications (as well as Key Stage 2 SATs in primary schools) will not take place this summer

For students who are either the children of 'essential workers', or have a designated social worker or an Education and Health Care Plan, I can confirm that the school will be making daily provision for them as requested by the government. **This will begin on Tuesday 23rd March.** As you would expect, as the announcement yesterday was the first time that schools were made aware of this plan, there is a significant amount of work going on today to make preparations for this new requirement. I will write to you again as soon as I have further details.

If you are an essential worker for the emergency services or a supermarket delivery driver etc, please can you contact the academy via schoolclosure@merrillacademy.derby.sch.uk so we know how many students will need provision.

The news that examinations had been cancelled has been a surprise for us all, although I suspect in the current circumstances that it was inevitable. Students in Year 11 are understandably concerned and anxious, having spent the last two years working so hard, and we are doing everything we can to support and reassure them. The Prime Minister made clear in his statement that the students affected would not be prevented from gaining the qualifications that they need. I anticipate a further announcement from the government tomorrow to explain in more detail what will happen to these students, and I will be in touch with parents of the students involved as soon as that information is released.

From Tuesday 24 March we will be operating a takeaway meals service for our students who are entitled to a free school meal. Meals can be collected from the rear door to the dining room 12.00-12.30pm daily (access via the carpark). This service will operate until the Government Voucher Scheme comes in to place.

We are clearly dealing with an unprecedented challenge as a nation, and everyone will need to play their part over the next few weeks. There is no way of knowing how long schools will need to remain closed to most of their students. Please be assured that my staff and I remain fully committed to doing everything we can to continue your child's education and prepare them for the point when things eventually return to normal.

In the meantime, the government's guidance on self-isolation and social distancing remains in place, and may well be strengthened further as the outbreak develops. It is important that your child observes the general advice on social distancing and avoids any kind of large gathering.

Arrangements for students to work at home in the event of an extended school closure

Your child has been set home learning to complete. Please go to the school website with your child, to access further details. Your support with this is much appreciated.

This includes **Ed Lounge**. <https://merrill-academy.edlounge.com/>

There is an expectation that at least 3- 4 hours of activities are completed every school day with the **Ed Lounge** tasks being monitored closely by teaching staff.

Students can access their **Ed Lounge** activities through the **homework button**.

Ed Lounge log on information is as follows:

School ID: merrill-academy

Username: YourName

- No space
- Capital letter at the start of your forename and surname e.g JoeBloggs

Password: Date of birth as 8 digits e.g. 01032005

Your child also needs to regularly check their school email address as their teachers will be in contact with them. A shortcut for this can be found on our website. Other activities will also be set which will involve the **Classcharts App** and the **work booklets** they bring home.



In our community we all need to look after each other to keep safe and well. Please take care.

Yours sincerely



Ms J Harlow
Headteacher