

16 March 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

I am writing to provide a further update in respect of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the school's response to recent changes in guidance.

You will be aware, I am sure, that the government announced last Thursday that the UK has moved from the "Contain" phase of its coronavirus action plan to the "Delay" phase. One of the most significant changes is to the guidance on self-isolation.

There is now a requirement for any individual (adult or child) to self-isolate if they experience symptoms which are consistent with COVID-19. The full guidance can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

According to the guidance:

"The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- *new continuous cough and/or*
- *high temperature*

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild infection. If you have symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started."

If your child experiences a new, continuous cough, or a high fever (it does not need to be both) they need to begin 7 days of self-isolation with immediate effect. There is no choice about whether or not to self-isolate, or about how long to do it for. During self-isolation, the individual concerned must follow the government guidance. This is extremely strict – they must not leave their house, must stay away from family members as much as possible and must follow very specific guidelines for cleaning and disposal of waste. If someone in your household is affected, please read the online guidance very carefully.

In the event that your child does need to self-isolate, please contact the school as you would to report any other absence, but also please tell us that your child is beginning a period of self-isolation. You do not then need to contact us again until the seven days are up, and only then if they are still unwell and unable to attend. If they feel better before the seven days are up, they must still remain self-isolated and cannot return to school.

The government guidance gives the following advice about self-isolation:

"If your symptoms worsen during self-isolation or are no better after 7 days contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

You should remain at home until 7 days after the onset of your symptoms. After 7 days, if you feel better and no longer have a high temperature, you can return to your normal routine. If you have not had any signs of improvement and have not already sought medical advice, you should contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111.

Cough may persist for several weeks in some people, despite the coronavirus infection having cleared. A persistent cough alone does not mean you must continue to self-isolate for more than 7 days."

Students who need to self-isolate at home will be able to access school work via Ed Lounge. Only if, students feel well enough should they attempt school work. Log in details have been given out.



Please also note that self-isolation applies to an individual, not a household. **Even if someone else in the home is self-isolating, your child should continue to attend school as normal unless they develop symptoms themselves.**

There are currently no plans for a programme of school closures in England. However, we are working hard with our colleagues in the Trust to prepare for a range of eventualities. As the self-isolation requirements also apply to school staff, it is possible that there may be occasions when we do not have enough staff available to operate a normal school day and I may therefore need to close the school to some or all year groups at quite short notice. Please make sure that we have your up to date contact details in case this becomes necessary.

There are also a number of additional measures that we are taking to reduce the risk of the transmission of infection. These include:

- The cancellation of all planned overseas and residential visits
- The cancellation of other school trips
- A significant reduction in the number of visitors who come into school
- A reduction in the frequency of assemblies, so they are used only when this is the best way to communicate an important message to a large group of students
- The postponement of Year 10 Parents' Evening in April.

Basic hygiene, and particularly hand washing, remains a crucially important element of efforts to slow the spread of the virus. We will continue to take every opportunity to remind students that this is one way that they can make a significant contribution to the national efforts to reduce its impact.

Thank you again for your ongoing support at this uncertain and challenging time. I anticipate that new guidance will come into force in the coming days and weeks – as things change I will continue to keep you informed.

Yours faithfully

Ms J Harlow
Headteacher