

17 March 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

I wrote to you yesterday to update you on new government guidance about self-isolation for people who were experiencing symptoms consistent with the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

You will probably be aware that the advice was updated again last night, and the changes are significant.

Self-isolation

If any member of your household experiences a new, continuous cough, or a high fever (it does not need to be both), it is now the case that **every member of the household must begin 14 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, everyone in the household 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 14 days are up, and only then if they are still unwell and unable to attend. If they feel better before the 14 days are up, they must still remain self-isolated and cannot return to school.

During self-isolation, if your symptoms worsen you are advised to contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Social distancing

Yesterday's announcement also introduced the concept of "social distancing". It identified a number of groups of people who are potentially at higher risk from COVID-19, which as well as the over-70's includes:

- People with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds): •chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy

- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)
- Those who are pregnant

If your child falls into any of these categories, it is my strong recommendation that they do not come into school. The guidance states that it is “likely to be in place for some weeks”. Please contact the school at the earliest opportunity to let us know that they will be absent because of **social distancing due to an existing condition**.

The full social distancing guidance is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>. It also identifies a smaller group of people who may be at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of specific underlying conditions – please read it carefully if you believe that you or your child may be in this category.

It remains the case that there are no plans for a programme of school closures in England. However, the new self-isolation and social distancing requirements do now make it more likely that there may be occasions when we do not have enough staff available to operate a normal school day. In those circumstances 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.

In the event of our academy closing your child will be given work to complete at home. Further details will follow which will also be available on our website. Your support with this would be much appreciated.

Thank you again for your ongoing support at this uncertain and challenging time. It is likely that the guidance will change again in the coming days, and as that happens I shall continue to keep you informed.

Yours faithfully



Ms J Harlow
Headteacher