

17th March 2020

Dear Parents,

Coronavirus update

As you will be aware, the Government updated its advice yesterday, 16th March 2020.

The advice now states that:

- Avoid gatherings and crowded places
- Avoid non-essential travel
- Work from home where possible
- At risk groups should stay at home for 12 weeks
- If one person in a household has a persistent cough or fever, everyone in the household must stay at home for 14 days.
- Over 70s should minimise contact

Schools, however, need to stay open for the time being.

Schools have an extremely important role to play in the next few weeks. Children need to come to school because:

- ✓ Children are less likely to spread the virus in the wider community if they are at school.
- ✓ We need to support health and care workers by continuing to look after their children so they can go to work.
- ✓ We can protect grandparents and at risk groups if children are at school.
- ✓ We provide normality and a place of security, support and consistency in worrying times.

I fully appreciate however that parents have questions about whether their children should be in school or not and I will do my best to help you with this.

Should my family be self-isolating?

The latest advice is for families to self-isolate for 14 days if one member of the household has a new, continuous cough or a fever. If you telephone the school office and say your family is self-isolating we will assume the children are absent for 14 days and we will record them accordingly on the register. This is not an unauthorised absence.

We have no symptoms but we want to self-isolate anyway

In light of the new advice from Government yesterday, parents are free to make this decision. Children will be recorded on the register as self-isolating. This will not be an unauthorised absence.

My child has a cold – should I keep them at home?

Only you, as parent/carer, can make this decision. Your child will be recorded as absent through ill health and we would expect parents to phone each morning as is the normal policy.

If my child comes to school, how can I be sure they will be safe?

The safety of the children is always of paramount importance. As long as schools stay open we have put measures in place to keep the children as safe as possible. These include:

- Whole school collective worship will be suspended for the time being to avoid lots of children and staff together.
- Children will be given plenty of opportunities to go outside on the field and playground in the fresh air.
- Children will continue to wash their hands regularly. If you are concerned about your child's hands drying out please feel free to send in sensitive hand wash or cream but please make sure it is labelled clearly with your child's name.
- All staff will follow the guidelines for self-isolating.
- All meetings and training courses have been cancelled and visitors to school will be kept to an absolute minimum.
- All trips, swimming and events have been cancelled to avoid unnecessary contact with others. (These may be rescheduled, if not we will reimburse parents as soon as we can.)
- We have cancelled all external groups who use the school facilities.

What if the school has a shortage of staff?

We have already asked staff who have underlying health conditions to stay at home. We appreciate that this is disruptive to the children's education however the Governors and I have a duty of care to all the adults who work in our school.

I have supply staff who can cover lessons at the moment and with a number of children absent due to self-isolation we can put some classes together where necessary. Children will not be taught in very large groups as we would not be safely able to put this number of children in one classroom.

If the school arrives at a point where we do not have enough qualified staff to safely teach the children, we may have to partially or fully close the school.

At the moment, a number of staff are required to self-isolate due to underlying medical conditions or because members of their household are self-isolating.

Please be assured that we continue to follow Public Health England guidelines to ensure all adults working with children are safe to do so.

Will extra-curricular activities (clubs) continue?

Staff who run clubs will continue to do so where possible but if in doubt please contact the school office. Breakfast club and Twiglets will run as normal.

What will happen if the school closes?

The teachers will provide work for the children to complete at home. Further guidance on how this will be managed will be communicated to parents shortly.

My parents' evening was cancelled – when will this be rearranged?

I am aware that some parents were unable to meet with the class teachers last week due to staff absence. Parents who have missed parents' evenings will be offered a telephone parents' evening with a teacher. Further information about how to book this will be sent out to affected parents.

I am entitled to Free School Meals – can I access any help in feeding my family if the school closes?



Parents who are entitled to Free School Meals (not universal infant free school meals) will be issued a Food Bank Voucher for each week of the school closure. The Food Bank will do everything they can to continue to provide vouchers throughout school closures. Food Bank Vouchers will be issued to families from the school office by email.

I will as always endeavour to keep parents updated as the situation develops. I understand that many parents wish to continue working and are very concerned about children being sent home from school or schools closing. Please be assured we are doing everything we can to support you so that you can continue to work however our priority will always be to keep the pupils and staff safe and every decision will be made on that basis.

To all families, particularly those of you who have family members in the 'at risk' groups, I wish you well in the weeks and months ahead and I hope we all stay healthy and as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely

Jo Woolley

Headteacher.