

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Trust Response to Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

I wanted to write to you all to reassure you of the Trust's work to support our schools in responding to the significant challenges we are facing following the outbreak of coronavirus. It is clear that we are all living and working through extraordinary times, and you will be aware of the measures that our Government and Public Health England (PHE) have announced in response.

At this time, we have been asked to keep schools open and we are committed to ensuring we are able to do this. However, as you will also be aware, PHE are also recommending widespread social distancing measures, particularly for those who are considered vulnerable. Attached to this letter is a summary of the guidance issued following the Prime Minister's press conference on Monday.

The health and wellbeing of our students, staff and our local communities has always been, and must continue to be our absolute priority. For this reason, we have taken steps to ensure that all students and staff who are in one of the vulnerable categories remain at home as advised by PHE. In addition, we have significant numbers of staff and students who are self-isolating because they, or a member of their household is suffering symptoms.

We will continue to ensure that our schools remain open for as long as possible, and for as many students as possible. However, we will also be reviewing on a daily basis the number of students in attendance to ensure we can keep them safe. We will not compromise the health and safety of our students. With that in mind, it may be necessary to consider a partial closure (i.e. where the school is closed to specific year groups) or, in the worst case scenario, a temporary full closure to all pupils. These are incredibly difficult and tough decisions for us to make and, whilst we will do everything we can to prevent them, I ask for your support for our schools should they be forced to take these very difficult steps.

I also want to take this opportunity to explain the steps we will take in the event of any closure to continue to support our students and communities to the maximum extent possible.

- In the event of a partial closure, we will continue to make provision for any children of key workers (i.e. those in the NHS, Care Industry or Emergency Services). This is the right thing to do to make sure we support those who are working to keep our communities safe.
- Staff are preparing work/learning materials to ensure that students can continue to learn from home. These resources will be made available to all students in the event of closure. We will also ensure that resources are available on paper for students who do not have internet access at home.

- All students will be given a basic stationery pack in the event of closure to ensure that they are able to complete the work provided.
- We will issue a £10 voucher for a local supermarket to the parents and carers of any student entitled to free school meals to support with the provision of lunch. For as long as we are able, we will continue to issue these vouchers on weekly basis for as long as schools remains closed. Please note, we will not be able to issue vouchers during normal school holiday periods.
- We will continue to maintain regular contact with all of our students throughout any school closure period.

Our schools will, of course, write to you in the event of a full or partial closure to communicate specific arrangements with you.

I am incredibly proud of our school communities for pulling together at this difficult time, and I am thankful for the commitment of our staff whose determination to serve our communities is enabling us to remain open. These are unprecedented times, and you have my absolute commitment that we will continue to take unprecedented steps to support you, your children and our colleagues to the absolute best of our ability.

I thank you sincerely for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DCL', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Clayton  
Chief Executive

### Vulnerable Groups

Current guidance identifies the following groups as vulnerable, and therefore advises individuals in these groups to be particularly stringent with regards to social distancing:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 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

### Social Distancing

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information;
- Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.