

Thursday 19th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Recent Announcement Regarding School Closures

As you will now be aware, the UK Government has now confirmed that all schools in England will be shut from Monday.

Schools will only remain open to those who are in receipt of an Educational, Health and Care Plan, those who have an allocated social worker, or those who are children of key workers (we are awaiting further guidance on who is defined as a key worker, and this guidance is expected later today). We will be communicating with the parents and carers of these students over the course of the next two days to ensure that arrangements from Monday are clear. Government advice is that students who do not fall in to these groups must remain at home, in order to limit the spread of this virus.

I am deeply saddened that we are now having to take this step, having worked so hard to remain open until this point. However, we also recognise the immensely difficult period we are working through, and respect the decision made to support the country's recovery from this crisis.

It is not yet clear how long we will be asked to remain closed for, but it has also been confirmed that all examinations due to take place before the summer have been cancelled. This includes all GCSE and A-Level examinations. We are reassured by the Government's statement that all students in years eleven and thirteen will be awarded the qualifications they have been studying for with the grades they deserve. At this stage, we are not in receipt of any detailed information that explains how this will be determined, but again are reassured that the process will be fair and equitable. We will provide you with any updates as soon as we have them.

The Trust and our Schools will continue to communicate with you throughout this closure period via websites, through our social media channels and by text message. We will also use these methods to confirm to you when we have been allowed to re-open.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, we have been working with our Schools to develop our plan for this situation. Thanks to the hard work of our staff we were prepared for this announcement, having planned a series of measures in recent days. We are now well placed to implement these measures, ensuring our students continue to get the best support possible during this closure period:

- Work will be provided for all students in all year groups in formats that all students can access. We will provide further work as we progress through this closure period to ensure that students are able to learn, and are well placed to continue their studies when they return to school.
- All students will be provided with a basic stationery pack before they leave School on Friday. These packs will also be available for collection from reception for students who are currently absent.

- A voucher for a local supermarket will now be issued to the parents and carers of any child entitled to a free school meal. Government have confirmed that they intend to implement a voucher system to be rolled out nationally. Until this is implemented, we will continue to issue our own vouchers on a weekly basis throughout the period of closure.
- Every student will continue to have contact with school staff throughout the closure period. Please be aware that, in some cases, this contact may be made by staff who are working from home, calling from their personal mobile phones. In this instance and for safeguarding reasons, staff will be instructed to withhold their number when making these calls.

Our Schools will write to you separately to provide further details on the implementation of the measures outlined above.

Until we receive any further guidance, we will continue to maintain a skeleton body of staff in school who will work to provide whatever support is necessary to you and your families throughout this challenging period. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything you think we can do to help.

I appreciate that this situation will be causing understandable anxiety and concern to you and our students. I am particularly mindful of the impact of these announcements on our students in years eleven and thirteen who will be wondering whether tomorrow will be their last day in school.

Please let me assert an absolute commitment that is shared amongst all of our schools. Our students in these year groups will have an opportunity to come back into school for a final celebration and they will have the opportunity to attend their prom. It is clear that the timing of these events may now be disrupted but we will ensure that these students have the opportunity to celebrate their time in School with staff and their fellow students properly. We will also continue to support these students on a one-to-one basis to ensure they have secured the destination of their choice for September.

This is a situation that is changing rapidly, and we continue to make the best decisions we can based on the information available. However, we are also developing contingency plans for different scenarios, and we stand ready to change our approach as the advice evolves. The Trust and our Schools will continue to communicate with you regularly to ensure you remain up to date with latest advice and changes to our response.

In the meantime, can I take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support through what has been an incredibly challenging time for our entire school community. The challenges we all face are unprecedented, and I continue to be inspired by the many positive stories of people pulling together and supporting each other.

With all best wishes



David Clayton
Chief Executive