

16th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

You will have seen the news that the government recently announced some new measures to deal with COVID-19 and also a change to its overall response, moving from the 'contain' to the 'delay' phase of its plan. As before, the advice remains that effective hand hygiene and using a tissue when coughing or sneezing are some of the most effective ways in which we can help reduce the spread of the virus.

The school is continually reviewing its response to ensure we do all that we can to maintain good hygiene and follow all the advice from Public Health England and Herts County Council. We also want to keep the environment as normal as possible for the children whilst they are in school. Our staff, along with external professionals who work with some children, will be supporting all our pupils in the weeks ahead and helping them to follow latest guidance.

Self-isolation and staying at home

As you know the government has widened their advice on who should self-isolate to include those that have coronavirus like symptoms - a new or continuous cough or a high temperature, however mild - should stay at home for at least 7 days to protect others and help slow the spread of the disease. All our staff will be expected to follow this advice, and we ask you to ensure that your children do so too. If your children are absent from school because they are ill, please continue to call the school every day on 01727 851056.

In certain circumstances you may be advised by medical professionals to keep your child at home even if they are not unwell. If this is the case please let us know and we will support your decision. I understand that parents are concerned about the risk of their children catching Coronavirus and that some may wish to keep children at home even though they have not had any medical advice to do so. However, we cannot agree to a child's absence for that reason alone. All children who are well enough to come to school are expected to continue attending as normal unless advised otherwise by Public Health England.

School Trips/swimming

As the COVID-19 situation in the UK is changing rapidly we will review the risk assessment for each trip before it goes ahead. In the week ahead we only have our regular swimming session at Westminster Lodge booked in the diary. After careful consideration, we have decided to cancel swimming for Year 3 for the next 3 weeks.

The possibility of school closure

Some parents have asked whether we could choose to close the school now. If we are ordered to close the school by Public Health England, because there is a risk to children/students and staff we will do so. If the government make a decision to close all schools we will do so, otherwise we will stay open and operate as normal. The Government has made it clear it expects schools to remain open unless public health advice has been given to close. This is based on the clear advice from the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government, Sir Patrick Vallance, on how best to manage this epidemic.

We are however preparing in case the school closes and we are looking at ways for managing a remote curriculum and contingency planning is underway regarding public examinations. We recognise that if closure is necessary this will have significant implications for many of our families with issues including the loss of free school meals, problems for families finding suitable childcare and the loss of daily structure that regular schooling provides.

Parents in school

In order to minimise any risk, we are asking that parents take sensible precautions and do not access the school building unless absolutely necessary. We ask that parents, including those with children in Nursery and Reception, drop children at the door rather than coming into the classroom. This also applies for breakfast and after school club, which will continue as normal.

We are also looking to reduce activities where groups come together beyond the children themselves. In looking at the diary for the week ahead we have therefore taken the decision to postpone the Year 1 phonics session planned for this week and the Reception class assembly. For children who are still keen to buy a book from the book fair we request that parents send in money with your children in a named envelope and we will encourage the children in making a sensible choice. No decision has yet been taken regarding the Year 3 and 4 play although the children will continue with their rehearsals.

Hygiene

We will ask that children continue to wash their hands before they eat at break and lunchtime. We are also requesting that children and staff now wash their hands immediately on arrival at school and before they leave for the day.

Keeping informed

Obviously, we will continue to provide updates as the situation develops and would ask that you inform the school of any contact your family have had with a person with symptoms or who has tested positive.

Thank you for your continued support.
Sharon Barton, Head Teacher