

Dear Parents/Carers,

Given the recent media coverage of the impact of the coronavirus (including the questions posed on the possible developments in the immediate future) and the upgrade to the Delay phase, I write with our latest considerations.

Despite the challenges ahead, I wish to state that, as far as possible, we will do all we can to sustain our work in school – as of yesterday, the statement from the Prime Minister is that schools are to stay open. Of course, the level of urgency in the government's advice, and the amount of change in its content even over the week-end, means that even over the next few days, matters may change further. The implications of operating a school in such a context may mean we will need to make changes at short notice (depending on the suddenness of the need for staff to self-isolate) and we ask you for your understanding and support in such times.

The situation presently is:-

- We continue to remind our students and staff of the Public Health England advice.
- Some local schools have already taken the decision to cancel sporting events, which does impact on our extra-curricular activity.
- Given public gatherings are banned, we will judge whether assemblies can take place.
- We have considered how best to support our young people in their education, with a closed school (see below) and with partial closure. We will focus (and I am sure you will understand this) on exam years – Years 11 and 10, but we will also endeavour to provide support for the key stage 3 students as well.

Whilst the government has not stated that schools must close, their instruction on self-isolation may lead to an impact on us. If staff need to self-isolate, and do so in certain numbers, this may lead to a decision where we continue the operation of the school, but have a partial closure which means we will operate a curriculum for certain year groups only. Here again, we will concentrate our resources on supporting the older years. If self-isolation by staff occurs at an extreme level, we may need to close the school because we cannot deliver the quality of education we wish to provide. This has become increasingly possible given the government has stated all those in the household must self-isolate, even if only one individual in that household shows symptoms.

There are some students who are particularly vulnerable and we leave the decision as to whether to keep them away from school, even if they show no symptoms, to parents/carers. When you feel you do need to self-isolate your son/daughter, please inform us of this, along with the intended period of isolation.

The exams authority (Ofqual) is monitoring this outbreak, and they will consider the possible impact on staging exams, should we be told to close for a period of time. Any closure (depending on the timing and the duration) will impact upon us with differing degrees of severity, and we will do all we can to manage the impact carefully. In this respect, and on wider implications of schools remaining open, you may also have seen on the news recently

that the professional body representing school leaders is in discussion with the Department of Education.

Working remotely will be a challenge. We do not have the facility to deliver on-line teaching and spending five hours a day accessing work via a screen does not feel right for our young people. We wish to support our students by enabling parents/carers to support them and the main medium of communication will be through Show My Homework. The majority of students use this, but to ensure we cover as many as possible, we will re-issue log in details for everyone, by hard copy, over the next couple of days. Please ask your child to produce this and ensure that they can log on.

On that note, our default communication will be on-line. If you are unable to access the web-site and SMHW, then please let us know by return.

We have had a few requests for work to be sent home, because a family has chosen to self-isolate themselves i.e. the student is not ill, but the family are following procedure. Providing work for individuals (when requested) is something we will usually do, given the very few number who normally require this. Doing this for an increasing number requires significant work which we are unable to resource. We will, however, shortly post hyperlinks on our web-site, which allow students to access on-line learning resources, and will inform you of the detail at that point in time.

We will communicate with you via the web-site. If you have instructed us to make contact via hard copy, then we will endeavour to find a solution which keeps you informed of resources.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,