



Tuesday 17 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to keep you updated on our school situation during this unprecedented health pandemic and to share some information about our actions to date and plans. We continue to follow the developing situation on an hourly basis and take advice from Public Health England, the Department of Education (DfE), NHS and the Local Authority.

Communications:

Could I ask that you follow closely the school lines of communication which are via our text service, Parent Pay and Facebook. We will also be using the website later this week for updates. I would ask that you continue to show restraint on social media to avoid unnecessarily causing anxiety, panic and confusion.

School Closure:

We've had many calls this week enquiring about this. St Catherine's will stay open until we are told to close by the DfE. The other circumstance which may lead to closure is if staffing levels reach crisis point where we cannot safely staff and supervise our classes or run the school safely. That will be my decision as Headteacher. With the support of the Governing Body, my decision will be made in full accordance with developing advice from DfE and UK law. As soon as any such decision is made we will alert parents through the above channels of communication if a closure is forced upon us.

Illness:

The latest advice is for children displaying symptoms of the virus ie cough, high temperature to stay at home for 14 days. This has now been extended to include all family members whether showing symptoms or not.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

School Closure Learning packs:

We will be giving staff time this week to prepare resources which can be used in the event of school closure or self-isolation. These will be located on the class page on the school website. Some of these resources will be online, some will be non-screen based. We recognise that parents working from home may also require internet facilities so we are aiming for balance in this. We'll also provide an exercise book for children to record work.



As part of a dynamic Risk Assessment for Coronavirus at St Catherine's we have put the following precautions in place.

Precautions in School:

- Introduced multiple whole-class handwashing regimes across the school
- Ensured hand-wash, soap and paper towels are available for all school users
- Reduced sharing of cups with all children now having their own drinks bottle-thank you!
- Installed hand-sanitizers at entry and exit points to school and the dining hall
- Reminded children about regular hygiene and hand-washing
- Spoken with children about the virus to help to reduce anxiety and maintain calm
- Revised cleaning routines to ensure that public areas and touch points are cleaned regularly throughout the day
- Consulted with Facilities Services to ensure that additional measures are in place to ensure the highest standards in our kitchens and cleaning service.
- Reduced the number of children in the dining hall at one point by extending the lunch service
- Reduced large gatherings so whole-school and key-stage assemblies have been suspended.

We are in continued discussions with the LA and Ford Castle about next week's Year 5 residential. No decision whether to proceed or cancel has yet been made but we will continue to seek and take advice on this.

This is a fast-changing scenario and it is difficult to plan ahead when we don't know what lies ahead. However, our aim in all of this is to remain calm, follow professional health guidance, avoid speculation and to steer our school community through this difficult time.

Finally on behalf of everyone at school I want to reassure you that we are doing everything in our power to keep your child safe and to continue their education as much as possible. I want to take this opportunity to thank every member of our fantastic staff team who have risen to the challenges we currently face with absolute determination and dedication to do the right thing and also to thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Best wishes,

Michael Ewing
Headteacher