Coronavirus Update – March 17th 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you to provide further guidance on the current position regarding COVID-19 coronavirus and the school’s response following the briefing from the UK government on March 16th 2020.

National Guidance

UK guidance for schools was updated yesterday to include the following information:

- Staff, young people and children should stay at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature to avoid spreading infection to others. Otherwise they should attend education or work as normal;
- If staff, young people or children become unwell on site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they will be sent home.

Whilst we currently have no confirmed cases of COVID-19, we continue to follow the guidance above.

In addition, main messages arising include:

- If you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started. (See ending isolation section for more information)
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill
- It is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- For anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period. (See ending isolation section for more information.)

If you have coronavirus symptoms:

i. do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital
ii. you do not need to contact 111 to tell them you’re staying at home
iii. testing for coronavirus is not needed if you’re staying at home

- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser
- If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999
If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they will be sent home and advised to follow the staying at home guidance provided by Public Health Wales.

**Implications for School**

This new guidance is placing considerable pressure on school as it affects all members of the school community, including pupils, parents and families, teaching and support staff, and the catering and cleaning teams. Whilst the school is continuing to operate under these challenging circumstances, we have planned contingencies should the school be unable to function normally.

This may include partial school closure and, in this circumstance, examination classes will be prioritized and the school would close to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. We will always try to remain open if possible, but this will be dependent on the availability of staff and whether or not it is safe to do so. Any decision to close the school is taken following a carefully considered risk assessment and in consultation with the local authority and Welsh government. We will inform you of any closure by text/email and the SIMS app, and updates will be posted on the School and Council websites. Please ensure that you provide up to date contact details on the SIMS app so that you are able receive important information.

Should we need to close at short notice, we will inform you by text and/or email. Please discuss with your children any instructions on where they should go in the event of a school closure (e.g. to go home, to a neighbour or relative).

We will try focus our attention on essential preparation for summer examinations. In light of this issue, Qualifications Wales are discussing whether any additional measures are needed this year with exam boards, fellow UK regulators and government departments. We await further guidance and, in the meantime, students should continue to prepare for the summer examinations as usual.

We are receiving a number of calls and emails regarding attendance. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer any further information or guidance beyond that provided by UK Government (please see above). We are presently being inundated with requests from parents to supply work for pupils who are currently self-isolating. Unfortunately, we are unable to respond directly to individual requests due the sheer volume. We are, however, preparing learning resources for all pupils to be able access work to cover in the eventuality of a full or partial closure. This is a considerable task and staff are currently busy preparing these learning resources as well as meeting the learning requirements of the pupils still in attendance. Details on how to access these learning resources have been attached.

We are trying to organise methods of home working which are realistic, manageable and sustainable. The main method for distribution of work for all year groups to complete at home is the ‘ClassCharts’ platform. You can access this via the app or any web browser. This will be communicated via the ‘Homework’ function in ClassCharts. In addition, teaching staff are communicating with pupils using Microsoft TEAMS where this is more appropriate to the learning activity and, in some instances, paper resources have been shared with pupils. Please see attached also a useful article to support home-working (‘Setting work for a long-haul shut down’ – Tom Sherrington – March 15 2020)

We appreciate your ongoing patience, support and understanding at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely

RK Pawar