

17th March 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians / Carers

**Update regarding Covid-19**

Boris Johnson delivered his first daily news conference regarding the Covid-19 virus at 4.45 pm yesterday.

Key changes for us in school are:

* Anyone showing symptoms of fever or a new and persistent cough should now self-isolate for 14 days and the **family** should also self-isolate.
* We have been issued with very specific ‘coding’ guidance for absence related to symptoms of Covid-19 which will not result in prosecution for absence
* We should all be aiming to reduce non-essential ‘gatherings’ and non-essential travel
* Those with the most serious health conditions will need to be shielded from contact with others for 12 weeks (possibly more)

The information regarding school closures remains unchanged largely due to the impact on society as a whole and in particular potentially, the NHS. The Government have stated that closures may be necessary in the future, but that it needs to happen at the right time in line with the evidence linked to the spread of the virus. To take action that differs from that which the Government states would be irresponsible to the wider population. Somerset remains one of the lowest affected areas with areas such as London significantly further ahead in terms of spread of the virus.

It is also important to remember that symptoms do not automatically mean someone has the Coronavirus and only those with severe symptoms will be tested. Most will have mild symptoms only and will recover within 7 days but the impact on the most vulnerable can be far more significant. Public Health England and the NHS both have very clear guidance on their websites.

In response to Monday’s news conference, we will be taking the following immediate steps in addition to those shared previously.

* We have no confirmed cases of Cornoavirus, however, a number of boys do have a new and persistent cough and/or temperature. We have been advised to treat each boarding unit as a home and therefore the decision has been made that because there is a boy in each boarding house with the symptoms that we will be sending **all boarders** home. Technically, this should be for 14 days however, I feel it is prudent at this stage that it will be until the Easter holidays. We are not closing the school and it will remain open for out-boarders, however, they should note the information below:
* We ask you to ensure you self-isolate your family should anyone within the family home develop symptoms of Covid-19 and that you remain isolated as a family for 14 days. Please inform us on **Day 1** and we will agree the date of day 14 for us to make contact and receive an update. You do not need to contact us every day if absence is due to Covid-19 symptoms.
* We will review our list of students with serious underlying health conditions (as outlined by the Government’s Chief Medical Officer) and ensure we have joint understanding in place with these families.
* We will ensure any staff with symptoms isolate themselves and their family for 14 days.
* Assemblies will not take place until further notice.
* Tutors will again go through the hygiene guidance with tutees.
* Non-essential travel ie trips, visits and fixtures will be postponed on a fortnightly basis until advice changes - all trips and visits between now and Easter are postponed.
* We will seek advice and share with you in due course information regarding refunds for any trips that have been paid for - please wait for this information to be distributed rather than contacting the finance or school office.
* All non-essential staff meetings and training have been cancelled to reduce disruption to lessons.
* On the advice from the RFU all rugby will now stop, however, Chads and fitness will continue.
* Where practicable after school clubs and activities will continue.
* We will continue our enhanced cleaning procedures concentrating on all high use hard services

It is now inevitable that there will be a partial school closure for out-boarders soon, as more and more staff are forced to self-isolate. We will prioritise Years 11 and 10 staying in school to minimise disruption to their GCSE’s. We are still awaiting guidance from the DfE about how the exams themselves will be affected. **Please be aware we may be forced to partially close the school at very short notice.**

I thank you once again for your patience and support in this ever changing situation and ask that we all take our social responsibilities seriously by following the advice as it is issued by the Government and by not sharing ‘fake news’ or assumptions and predictions from unreliable sources.

I appreciate the difficulties faced by parents with my decision to send the boarders home, however, I believe the consequence of not doing so are too great. I am not prepared to take a risk with people’s health and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely



**Mark Thomas**

**Headteacher**