

16 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Update on COVID-19

I am writing to update you on actions and plans Furze Platt Senior School have taken and are planning to take in relation to COVID-19.

I am sure you have been following developments as the UK Government and Public Health England (PHE) have moved us from the 'Containment' to the 'Delay' phase. Before moving on to our plans as a school I wanted to remind you of the guidance issued last week to anyone that may become unwell. The guidance is:

Stay at home for 7 days (self-isolate) if you have either:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough

This will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious. You should not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact NHS 111 to tell them you are staying at home (unless symptoms worsen). NHS and Public Health England will not be testing people who are self-isolating with mild symptoms.

This means if your child has symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19) they must stay at home and not leave the house for 7 days from when their symptoms started. Please call our absence line if your child is unwell or self-isolating. The full advice can be read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

As a school, we have taken actions to educate students and minimise the spread of the virus. These include Science colleagues teaching a specific lesson about Coronavirus including detailing the steps needed to delay its spread. We have also increased our cleaning regimes and secured wall mounted hand sanitisers.

There has been considerable talk in the media about school closures. At the end of the last week, I was in Birmingham to hear the Education Minister, Gavin Williamson, detail that schools will remain open at present. We will continue to follow government advice. However, we have made contingency plans in case we are asked to shut. Today tutors shared these plans with students and I wanted to inform parents and carers of the instructions given to students.

In preparation for a potential school closure, we have asked students to ensure they:

- Know their school email and password.
- Check with parents/carers that we have an up-to-date phone number and contact details.
- Know their logins for online learning platforms (Show My Homework, My Maths, Quizlet etc.)
- Talk to their tutors if they do not have IT facilities/ digital media at home.

Should we be shut then staff have been asked to set work using Show My Homework. It will be a student's responsibility to check and complete work.

Parents and carers will recognise that there are some particular students who we will need to prioritise. These include those due to sit examinations this summer, as well as students who would normally receive additional support in school. School staff are likely to contact these students directly via email or by telephone.

Staff have been asked to set a mixture of tasks based on the year group and activity. For some tasks (e.g. practice exam questions or essays) it will be appropriate for students to send work to their teachers. However, others will be research or investigation tasks linked to work they would have studied in school. We will also be using any closure as a means to increase the breadth of students' cultural knowledge.

Parents and carers will appreciate that staff illness may hinder their ability to set work and I ask for your patience with this. Likewise, staff may need to spend time looking after children or loved ones. I have therefore asked colleagues to work flexibly. Work may therefore be set outside the normal school hours. I would suggest students log on each morning and plan tasks for that day.

Even if we stay open, it is likely that with the new advice we will see significant staff absence. We will endeavour to cover all classes as best as possible. However, with high staff absence, this may not always be possible and we may have change the timetable, including in extreme circumstances, the partial closure of the school.

We have various events and visits booked in future months. We will keep all of these activities under review and act in accordance with advice at that time, informing parents and carers as events draw close.

I will write again with a further update when advice changes. Finally, I would like to end by addressing the role we all share in supporting each other at this time. In particular, we need to reassure our young people. At the time of writing, the risk to young people who are not suffering underlying health conditions is very low.

Thank you for your support with this unprecedented situation. All at Furze Platt Senior School hope that you and your families remain safe and well.

Yours sincerely

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