

16 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I write to provide an update on the coronavirus and advice to schools. All schools in the Trust continue to follow government advice in managing the coronavirus. You will be aware that current government guidelines are that schools should remain open. Please understand that the government provides daily advice to schools and as you would expect, we have been strictly following this. Please be assured that our schools will update parents and carers of any changes, and in these uncertain times we can only communicate as and when we know more information.

Public Health England have announced new guidance for people with confirmed or possible infection. This means that those with a new continuous cough and/or high temperature should not leave their house for 7 days from when the symptoms started. This is in addition to the 14 day self-isolation for anyone who has had close contact with a confirmed case but has not shown symptoms. The full guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidancefor-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>. If your child develops such symptoms and needs to remain at home then please let us know and keep us updated. The current government advice is that other people in your household who have had close contact do not need to self-isolate.

The guidance for helping prevent the spread of infection (of coronavirus and other viruses) includes a strong focus on hygiene:

- Washing hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds at regular points during the day.
- If you need to cough or sneeze: **Catch it** with a tissues, **Bin it** and **Kill it** by washing your hands.

Please reinforce these key messages at home just as we are doing in our schools.

Obviously, these prevention measures have led to a significant increase on the hand washing facilities in our schools. Monitoring checks of these facilities have been increased across the schools but if a pupil discovers a soap dispenser which is empty or broken we would encourage them to report it to a member of staff so that this can be rectified promptly as we recognise these facilities are a key part of the prevention measures.

Last week the DfE launched a new helpline to answer questions about coronavirus related to education. Staff, parents and pupils can contact the helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

If you require any further information the government have pointed us towards the following in their regular updates:

- Updates on COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Guidance for educational settings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>
- List of countries and areas with implications for travellers or visitors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>
- Travel advice for those travelling and living overseas: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-covid-19>
- Coronavirus Government action plan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>

- Hand hygiene messages: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-information-campaignfocuses-on-handwashing>
- Latest DfE information: <https://twitter.com/educationgovuk> and <https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/>

The Department for Education update to schools included the following information with regards to the forthcoming exam series:

“We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer exam series. Ofqual’s advice currently is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal. Ofqual continues to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education to plan for a range of scenarios, as the public would expect. Our overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum. It is still many weeks until exams start and we will issue updated advice if necessary, giving schools and colleges as much notice as possible.”

Please note that Trust and school leaders have been working on contingency plans in the event of any school closures.

Please ensure that you stay familiar with, and follow, the current advice provided by Public Health England.

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Appleyard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julian Appleyard OBE
Chief Executive Officer