

16 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carers

Coronavirus Update

I would like to reassure you that we are continuing to do everything we can to keep students safe and prevent the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). I am also committed to ensuring that when the school receives new information this is shared with the school community.

The school received notification today of a confirmed case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) of a relative of one of our school community. This case does not relate to a member of staff or student and I can also confirm that so far, no members of staff or students have tested positive for the virus. The school is also not aware of any members of staff or students being tested for the virus.

On receiving this information, the school consulted the appropriate authorities and based on current advice the school remains open and operating as normal. Please can I assure you that we will contact families directly if necessary, so there is no need to contact us to find out whether your child is directly affected.

The school have met with Kier Facilities Management who are responsible for the maintaining and cleaning the school and they have confirmed that they will adjust their daily cleaning schedule after school so that it focuses on cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly. This is in line with latest Public Health England Guidance.

We of course remain extra vigilant and are encouraging students, parents and staff to continue taking additional precautions, This includes maintaining high levels of personal hygiene, regularly washing hands and following the *Catch it, Bin it, Kill it* advice when sneezing or coughing. As you would expect, we already promote these practices at school and we would appreciate your support in continuing to encourage the same at home.

The government today (16 March 2020) issued updated guidance for education settings on Coronavirus (COVID-19). The advice says:

- 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 should be sent home.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual using your standard cleaning products.

The latest advice is also very clear that no education or children's social care setting should close in response to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case unless advised to do so by Public Health England.

The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the impact of closing schools on both children's education and on the workforce would be substantial, but the benefit to public health may not be. Decisions on future advice to education

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or children's social care settings will be taken based on the latest and best scientific evidence, which at this stage suggests children are a lower risk group.

I am aware that a number of parents have taken the decision today for their child to self-isolate. Please can I reiterate Public Health England guidance on self-isolation:

1. Try and keep two metres (three steps) away from other people - especially older people or those with long-term health conditions.
2. Make sure any room you are in is well-ventilated.
3. Ask friends and family and delivery services to deliver food and medicine - but avoid contact with them.
4. Sleep alone if possible.
5. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds on a regular basis.
6. Don't have visitors and ask people to leave deliveries outside.
7. Don't leave the house, even just for a walk.
8. Use separate facilities where possible. If sharing, these should be cleaned before use by others.
9. Use separate household items like towels, bedding, toothbrushes, cups and dishes.
10. Try to keep away from your pets. If you can't avoid it, wash your hands before and after contact.

I would like to confirm with parents how schools have been instructed to record absence.

Where a student is in self-isolation, in accordance with latest information and advice from Public Health England, the student should be recorded as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances in the attendance register. Code Y (Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) will be used in this instance.

If a student does not attend school, despite the school operating as usual and against the advice from Public Health England, they should be marked as absent. It is at the discretion of the school to determine how this absence will be recorded. The school's current position is that if a parent chooses to keep their child off school who is not ill or against Public Health England guidance then the absence will be recorded as O (absence from school without authorisation).

Where a student cannot attend school due to illness, as normally would happen, the student should be recorded as absent in the attendance register and in most circumstances the school will authorise the absence. Code I (Illness) will be used.

During the course of the school day, the school have also contacted parents to collect students that have a continuous cough or are complaining of a fever. The school will continue to do this.

There are also a number of other preventative measure the school has put in effect from today that will affect the day-to-day running of the school.

- We are limiting the number of external visitors to the school therefore apart from non-essential meetings we will not be routinely meeting parents. Communication will be via telephone or email.
- All whole school events, such as the upcoming Y10 Parents Consultation Evening on 25 March, will be postponed.
- Year group assemblies will not go ahead unless there is a need for an extraordinary assembly, for example if there is a partial or full school closure.
- All planned UK trips/visits/school events will not go ahead.
- The school is seeking clarification regarding planned overseas trip due to take place during this academic year. Parents potentially affected will be contacted separately.

I will be sending out a further letter to parent/carers of children that are in Y11 or in the 6th Form which have planned public exams in the summer. I can confirm that the latest guidance that we have received is that public examinations will take place as usual and therefore we need to take steps to help make sure students are prepared.

Please can I reiterate that the school has put in place plans to allow students to continue to access learning resources in the event of a partial or school closure and if required details regarding this will be shared.

I appreciate that you may have some concerns about the contents of this letter. Please can I assure you that we are acting on the best advice available at this time and I would urge you to continue to send your child into school if they are well. It is important that we all do our best to ensure that our children's education is disrupted as little as possible. If you have any further queries please can you raise these with your child's Head of Year and if they cannot answer your query they will refer on.

The Senior Leadership Team are meeting daily to review the current situation and ensure the appropriate course of action is taken and I will of course continue to update you if there is any change to the national guidance or current circumstances that affect Welling School.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Pett', written in a cursive style.

Mr R Pett
Headteacher