

9th March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: All years - Covid -19 Contingency Plan

To continue to keep you up to date with the latest information concerning Coronavirus, we are writing to you with further specific advice and our plans for the coming weeks and months.

It is very difficult to predict what might happen but we have taken steps in school to plan as best we can for future events and would appreciate your support and understanding.

Action we are taking now

Raising awareness

In science lessons this week, all students are being given a specific lesson about Coronavirus and the steps they need to take to help delay its spread. This primarily follows NHS 111 and Government advice and focuses in particular on washing hands regularly.

Hand sanitisers

We have purchased a number of wall mounted hand sanitiser dispensers and these have been installed in all key student assembly areas. As you will be aware, there is a global shortage of hand sanitisers, and we have not been able to procure as much as we wanted, and so we are asking students to use this sensibly and sparingly, and for you to support us by providing a hand sanitiser for your child where possible. However, the toilets all have a plentiful supply of soap and we are encouraging all students to wash their hands thoroughly at break and lunchtime as a minimum.

General cleaning

We are working with our cleaning contractor, Haywards, to ensure that particular attention is paid to high-risk areas. Our site team are also on hand throughout the day to respond to requests, e.g. where soap dispensers require additional filling due to increased usage during this period.

Contingency planning

The government is planning for a range of future scenarios, one of which includes the possibility of a temporary school closure but to date the government's preference is to keep schools open, given the knock on effect of parents having to take time off. This section of the letter sets out some of our plans if we do have to close.

School closure

As you will be aware, schools in Italy were closed last week for two weeks with no prior notice given. Should this happen to us, please note the following:

Day to day communication

- We have remote access to the parent and student database SIMS, and can email parents to keep them updated. This, and our website will provide up to date information. Please ensure that you check these regularly
- Our data, exams and finance teams all have laptops which will allow this part of the school to run as normal. This means we can respond to emails, process invoices, manage Wisepay, trips and visits and banking functions.

Student learning

- It is vital that if the school closes, students should continue to study at home. Whilst there is no substitute for being in a classroom with a teacher, we will set work regularly, electronically through email and/or through Frog, our VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Parents can help us now by doing the following:
 - o Making sure your son/daughter has access to their school email account from home, and they can login to the school website and to Frog. Ideally this would be using a laptop or PC, but we recognise that for many, access will be through their mobile phone or tablet.

- o Making sure your son/daughter has somewhere quiet to work. In the event of an extended school closure, we would ask parents and guardians to try and ensure conditions at home are conducive to allow four hours of quality work each day. Teachers will be available on email to reply to any queries.

School trips

The following overseas trips are planned:

- Spanish department trip to Granada- 19th-22 March
- Music choir tour to France and Belgium- 1st-7th April
- French department trip to Pre-Catalan – 19th-22nd June
- German department trip to Rhine Valley – 19th to 22nd June
- History department trip to the Battlefields – 17th to 19th June

Current guidance advises that foreign travel should go ahead as planned if it is not to a Category one or two country, please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus> . We will continue to advise the parents and guardians of all students going on these trips as we receive more information. Please note that we will follow all Foreign Office (FCO) and DFE advice. This will ensure that insurances are valid and refunds are payable when necessary.

Examinations

This is an area where we are still awaiting some more direction from JCQ, the body that regulates all public exams. Current advice is that we continue to prepare our students in Year 10, 11 and 13 for their GCSEs and A levels as normal. In the event of school closure, we will find alternative ways of supporting these students. However, as we get nearer to the exam dates, revision from home will be even more vital and staff will continue to support their exam classes via email. As we hear more from the Department for Education we will update you.

Staff absence

It is possible that for a period of time, the school will be open but a higher than normal number of staff may be absent. Whilst the government are “relaxing” the law regarding maximum class size, in reality this has no practical meaning for secondary schools. Rooms have a maximum capacity and students are taught by subject specialists. If high staff absence does become the case, we will do everything we can to remain open, but we will prioritise our exam classes and we reserve the right to open partially for other year groups. However, this would be a last resort.

Further advice for parents

This is a fast moving situation and at the time of writing this letter, the risk level is deemed low to moderate, although for parents/guardians wishing to keep up to date with the latest situation, the following links may be helpful:

- www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public
- The Government Coronavirus Action Plan; a guide to what you can expect across the UK – www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan

Mental Health and Well being

Students may well become more concerned about Coronavirus as the government considers moving from the *contain* phase to the *delay* phase. We all have a role to play in managing this. You know your son/daughter best but together we should:

- Do our best not to sensationalise or overdramatise this issue.
- Steer students away from some of the newspapers and social media coverage
- Not hide information from students but stick to known facts
- Not pass our own concerns or stresses to our children/students.

At the time of writing, out of a population in the UK of 67 million people, there have been 319 confirmed cases and three deaths. The risk to young people who are not suffering underlying health conditions is very low. There will be a small number of students, staff and your own family members with suppressed immune systems, so please do take advice from NHS 111 and government websites.

Finally, this is clearly a difficult and unprecedented situation for us all and we are doing our very best to react to and pre-empt situations as they arise, so we are asking for your continued support as we take those decisions in order to protect the health and welfare of The Holt community.

Yours sincerely

A Kennedy

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Mrs Anne Kennedy and Mrs Katie Pearce
Co Headteachers