

20 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Update

At the time of writing this latest update, we have just said goodbye to all our pupils. Sadly, from this moment, school is now officially closed.

It remains clear from now on, that the Government's key strategy in combatting the spread of Covid-19 is to promote **social distancing**.

"That is why the Government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend." (www.gov.uk)

At this stage no-one can say exactly how long schools will stay closed, though it seems clear it's more likely to be a matter of months rather than weeks, depending very much on how the pandemic progresses.

The Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, told MPs he would be "guided by scientific and medical advice" on reopening.

In practice, they could remain closed until the start of the next school year in September.

Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government's chief scientific adviser, said last week, that school closures would have to go on for 13 to 16 weeks, or longer, to have an impact.

Key Workers

Overnight we received further guidance from the Government regarding key workers. Thank you to those of you who have contacted us today to determine whether you fall within these critical categories.

We have now communicated with those families whose sons or daughters have been offered a place in school from Monday. However, I must stress, school will **only** be open for these pupils and **only** pupils with this offer of a place should attend.

We will continue do all we can to support those whose work is **critical** to the COVID-19 response, for as long as we can, whilst they cannot keep their child safe at home.

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This remains an offer to parents and carers working in these critical sectors at this time, though we accept this offer may be subject to change in this uncertain future. We can only do what we can do within the resources that are available to us. Priority for places therefore may need to be given to certain families in the future should the situation in school change, with places only being offered to a smaller group where the need is most urgent, for example, the children of A&E nurses and doctors.

Equally, there is no requirement for parents and carers to continue to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so in the future.

Provision in school remains the last resort.

Vulnerable Pupils

Our pastoral team in school have now contacted families directly to discuss their individual circumstances and offer of continued support where appropriate.

Voucher scheme to support free school meals pupils

Again, our pastoral team in school have contacted certain families directly regarding the voucher scheme to ensure that children who qualify for free school meals do not go hungry during the school shutdown.

Year 11

We have sent a separate letter to the parents of Year 11 today. Hopefully, this letter has addressed the most common concerns we have received from parents of Year 11 pupils over the last few days, including updates and further clarification on:

- Year 11 exams
- Monies owed - Lockers, School Lunch Balances and Buses
- Refunds for the Blood Brothers and Wembley Trips
- Year 11 Leavers Hoodies
- Year 11 Prom
- Careers Advice & Guidance

Please take the time to read this letter in full and should you have any further queries, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Finally

This week has certainly been the most challenging week for all of us. Yet, for our Year 11s, this has been a most despairing week. Despite this, I was sent the following message at the end of the day written on their behalf. The Year 11s have shown such maturity during this uncertain time and it's emails like this that make me remember why I am in education. I share it here with you:

We would like to convey a parting message to you, the entirety of the staff team and the pupils.

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It is with great regret that we are consigning a farewell to all of you under these circumstances. There is no doubt that we have been robbed of the culmination of our secondary school careers, but the journey

you have accompanied all of us on has been invaluable; our time at this school, building relationships with teachers, participating in events, encountering new experiences, learning to succeed from a rich profusion of subjects, has and will continue to shape our attitudes and perspectives.

Your collective dedication towards our progress has made a difference to our lives, and we will be forever grateful.

However, never forget that success has only ever come as a result of moving forward and persisting. So, persist; don't relent, because some of us will come back to see how our succeeding generations are doing in the future.

Just as you've held us up to high expectations and standards, we will always expect to see the same when we come back to gather together once again.

For the pupils reading this: succeed us and surpass us! For the teachers reading this: nurture them to succeed and surpass us!

Forward is the only direction possible, so that is where we are going.

Thank you, truly, for everything - and farewell for now.

Ad astra per aspera.

Kind regards,

Class of 2020

... 'through hardships to the stars' - wishing you and your families all the very best. Stay safe, stay well and I hope we will all be safely back in school as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher