



13<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian

### **Coronavirus Update**

I hope that this latest update finds you and your family well at this time and not under too much pressure. There is so much going on and an ever changing picture that it can feel overwhelming at times. I'd just like to reassure you that we are doing everything we can as a school to keep our students calm and to help them to be resilient whilst supporting those who for various reasons may need a little extra comfort at this time. I am very grateful to all parents and members of the community who are being so supportive of our actions as a school and helping us to keep a sense of normality.

As you may be aware, the UK government announced yesterday that we have moved to the Delay Phase of the UK Coronavirus Action Plan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan/coronavirus-action-plan-a-guide-to-what-you-can-expect-across-the-uk>

The main difference for us from this advice is that we are now being asked to stay at home for 7 days if you are showing signs of any Coronavirus type symptoms. These are described as follows:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough

Please could I ask that you help us as a school community by following this advice.

School closures have not been announced at this time, however there is a strong possibility that this may occur in the near future. We are continuing to monitor the situation carefully and we will of course keep you updated as soon as the situation changes.

In the meantime, as per my communication last week, we have been spending a lot of time putting detailed contingency plans in place for all possible future scenarios that we can foresee without having access to a crystal ball!

I have spoken again to the school this morning to reassure them. We have sadly had a small number of unhelpful rumours circulating over the course of the week which has caused some unnecessary concern for members of the school community. Thank you to parents who have been in touch to talk about their concerns and for your support in helping to address and quash misinformation.

As part of the changes announced yesterday you will be aware that the government have banned all school trips. However, despite this headline there is no further information for schools today and as such it has been incredibly difficult for us to assess what the impact of this will be. As soon as we have clarification on

the situation I will be in touch with those parents involved in particular trips. Please could I just ask for your patience and understanding with this matter for the time being whilst we await further guidance?

As a precaution we have decided to postpone the LAMDA evening that was due to take place on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March in the evening and I have also taken the decision to cancel our Visitor Morning on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March.

In the event that schools are asked to close there is no information at the moment about if access to our school buildings would be restricted. Our intention is that we will continue to provide as normal a service as possible to our students, but clearly in a very different context. At this stage it is our intention to work in the following way:

- Continuation of education plans are in place for the school and this will involve the use of Microsoft 365 and in particular Microsoft Teams as a platform for distributing lessons and communication between students and staff. To that end I have asked all students this morning to check that they have access to Microsoft Teams at home and that if there are any difficulties that you let tutors know as a first port of call. Further information will be available for parents as we develop our systems here over the coming days.
- Within Microsoft Teams there is a sophisticated chat and video messaging service. We have enabled this facility now but have asked that the students do not use this yet. I have also explained today in assembly that when this facility is open to students it must be used responsibly and for school business only and that any misuse of the system would carry the usual school disciplinary sanctions.
- Remote working provision is in place for members of staff to enable us to continue to effectively run the school in the event of access to school buildings being restricted.

I am acutely aware of the fact that students preparing for Public Examinations in Year 10, 11 and the Upper Sixth are understandably concerned about the impact of any potential closure on their learning. At this time, Ofqual have provided the following statement to schools:

*'We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer exam series. Our advice at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal. We continue to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education and we have met 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.'*

We will clearly do all that we can to help our Public Examination candidates to prepare in as 'normal' a way as possible, but equally all students due to sit these examinations find themselves in the same position and we must help them not to forget this. In the event that Halliford School was forced to close whilst other schools remained open I have made contingency plans for our Public Examination candidates to continue to receive tuition in an alternative setting.

Once again, I would like to ask for your help if I may in the following ways:

- If you or anyone you are in close contact with has recently travelled to, or is planning to travel to a Category 1 or Category 2 country / region, (including during the Easter holidays), please contact us to let us know. Anyone this applies to will be required to remain away from school for 14 days

after returning to the UK. You can view the full list of countries

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk>

- If your child or anyone in close contact with your child is currently being tested for coronavirus; has been advised to self-isolate by a medical professional; or has chosen to self-isolate, please contact us to let us know.
- If you are planning to travel over the forthcoming holiday there is some incredibly useful information that has been issued recently: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/499/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice-for-travellers>
- Several parents have asked what self-isolation entails and I would recommend consulting the following government website which contains the full details <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/advice-sheet-home-isolation>

At the time of writing I can confirm that there are no families associated with Halliford involved with any symptoms or potential symptoms. However, I am very aware that many families will know friends and colleagues who have been affected in a myriad of ways by this outbreak and we send them all our very best wishes.

I also spoke to the students this morning in assembly about taking a moment to consider those at the front line of this outbreak and I know that many families involved with the Halliford School community work within the Scientific and Healthcare industries and we are incredibly grateful for the marvellous and courageous work that such people are undertaking to combat the effects of this disease at present.

I'm conscious that we are all being bombarded with troubling news from all parts of the world. While it's important that we are all vigilant and plan for possible future developments, I believe that it is also important for the sake of our students, that we remain calm and enable them to be resilient by maintaining as much day to day normality as we can. I hope that you will join me in trying to provide this for all members of our school community.

Along with my colleagues, I am currently trying to answer queries as quickly as possible as well as keeping the normal day-to-day business of Halliford School functioning as usual. I would just ask for your understanding if we are slightly delayed in responding to queries at this time.

Thank you for all of your ongoing help, understanding and support at this time.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JH', with a horizontal line underneath.