



17th March 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Coronavirus Update 4

I hope that you are safe and well and that you managed to enjoy the weekend amidst this current situation, it was wonderful to see our students out enjoying their Sport on Saturday and to see many of our Year 9 students enjoying their Duke of Edinburgh Award training session on Sunday.

As you will no doubt be aware, last night the government issued new guidance as part of their latest daily briefing. We are doing all that we can to react to these briefings as a school and to be as quick to react as we possibly can but I did not write last night as I wanted to see the latest guidance to schools following this briefing so that I could give you the most comprehensive information.

This information is that, 'If anyone within a household has the symptoms of Coronavirus – new continuous cough and / or a high temperature, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14 day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. For anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period.'

There is very clear advice available via the following link which we would like to ask you to follow:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infectionn>

We would greatly appreciate it if you could continue to let us know if your child or anyone in your household is showing symptoms so that we can continue to monitor the situation carefully.

In the meantime, please do remind your child of the importance of **washing their hands** regularly with soap or hand sanitiser, and of **catching coughs and sneezes** in a tissue (Catch It, Bin It, Kill It).

School Events, Trips and Sports Fixtures

Events, trips and sports fixtures are really important to us as a school community and we know they are to the students as well, however I'm sure that you will agree that at this time we need to take a sensible approach to these activities and follow the advice that has been issued last night. As you may have seen, the government has advised schools not to undertake any overseas trips until the current situation has been resolved and we will be following this guidance. We have already cancelled all trips up until Easter and will continue to monitor the situation in relation to the overseas trips planned for the Summer Term.

With this in mind, I have to let you know of the following changes to plans for this week:

- The Theatre Trip due to go this evening cannot now take place due to the guidance not to attend Theatres at this time. The Society of London Theatres has now closed all theatres in the capital from last night until further notice.

- All sports fixtures this week and most regrettably our Rugby 7s competition due to take place this Friday have now been cancelled based on the latest advice. The RFU issued guidance last night to say that they have suspended all levels of the game until 14th April.
- Our Lower Sixth Parents' Evening is cancelled but Mr MacLean will be in touch with further details regarding this event for those parents involved.
- Our Parent Talk scheduled for next Monday is postponed and will be re-scheduled for a future date.
- The Halliford Young Musician Competition scheduled for next Tuesday, likewise will be postponed and re-scheduled for a future date.
- The Public Examination briefing for parents scheduled for next Thursday will be cancelled but full details will be sent to parents next week.
- Following the news that Canada have now closed their borders, I'm afraid that we have also taken the decision to cancel the Ski Trip and will be writing to all those involved with further details shortly.

I know that those involved with all of these events will be so disappointed as are we, but I hope that they and you will agree that we need to put their safety and wellbeing first at this time and that we must follow the advice we are receiving.

Day-to-day operation

You will be aware that despite many other restrictions, the advice still remains for schools to remain open. Whilst I am 100% committed to keeping our school open for as long as we are allowed to and doing all that I can to support our students and parents I hope you will understand the unprecedented and fast changing position that we find ourselves in currently. Our guiding principle continues to be the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff while managing this challenging situation in a calm and proportionate manner.

With this in mind, the latest advice has put a significant strain on the school community with many parents and staff now finding that the revised information impacts them and we send our thoughts and best wishes to all who find themselves in this position.

Over the coming days for those students able to attend school as normal we will continue to run as normal a programme of lessons as we can, but if staff absence dictates, we may have to modify the timetable and events to do our best to fulfil our duty of care to students. We will, where we possibly can also prioritise those students due to sit Public Examinations this summer. As yet, there has been no update from my previous letter regarding the forthcoming Public Exam arrangements and we will continue to prepare as normal.

If you are keeping your child at home, please can I ask that you email or call reception to let us know. In these circumstances, if you are at all concerned about your child being at school and wish to keep them at home I will fully respect this decision and will of course authorise such absence. Where we can we will then endeavour to send work home to you as soon as possible. This work will be set on Microsoft Teams and absent students who are well enough should be trying to follow as normal a daily timetable as possible, as if we move to remote teaching, this would be our expectation as I have set out below. However, as we are currently operating in a situation where we have limited staff in school supervising students and others working from home and all staff under considerable pressure, I would please ask for your patience and understanding at this time whilst we set up this system for you.

Please can I also ask for your understanding with regards questions and queries to staff via email. If we move to remote teaching we have a plan in place for this, but for now please can I ask for your support in recognising the additional pressure my colleagues are under.

In order to help staff to work most efficiently at this time, I have decided that we will no longer set any prep for students in Year 7 – 9 as very soon I suspect we will be in a situation where all work will be done at home. Staff will continue to monitor student work and provide suitable feedback to aid progress. I hope you will understand my reasoning behind this difficult decision.

The possibility of closure though does remain and we have been working incredibly hard to prepare for this so that students will be able to receive tuition at home. Last night we had an excellent staff training session to share good practice and prepare all of our staff for the possibility of remote teaching.

We are still unclear if schools would be required to close at some point in the future and if they were what arrangements for access to the site might be. We must therefore plan for very limited or no access to the site.

In this scenario, we would expect students to follow the same academic timetable each day as they normally do when they are physically in school. For each lesson on their timetable they will either be set a piece of work to undertake via MS Teams or there will be other resources available for them to use. As far as practical, staff will be available to interact with classes via MS Teams during these sessions as well.

Could I ask once again for the following help to ensure that your son / daughter is fully equipped for remote learning by checking that they can access Office 365 from home and specifically that they have access to their emails and MS Teams. If there are any problems, please let us know as soon as possible.

We will issue further information for parents on remote teaching if this action has to be taken, but for now I wanted to reassure you that we are planning for this and will do our utmost to provide you and your children with the best service possible.

Support for the local community

At this time as a community it is vitally important that we do all we can to look after each other but also to consider those within our community who find themselves in very challenging circumstances. Whilst I appreciate that finding food in some supermarkets is becoming something of a competitive sport, I wonder if you might consider helping us to support the work of the Manna Food Bank and the Greeno Centre who we support at Harvest time. If you are able to bring in any tinned or dry goods that we can then pass on to them to help the neediest at this time, I would be incredibly grateful. Any donations can either be sent in or dropped off at reception over the coming days and we will then arrange for these to be taken to the charities at the end of term.

Along with my colleagues, I am currently continuing to try and answer queries as quickly as possible as well as keeping the normal day-to-day business of Halliford School functioning as usual, not to mention trying to stay abreast of the advice being issued. I would just ask for your understanding if we are slightly delayed in responding to queries and thank you for all your wonderful help, understanding and support at this time.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

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