



18th March 2020

Coronavirus Update 5

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you will no doubt have heard this evening, the Prime Minister has announced that as part of the 'Delay' phase of the Action Plan, all UK schools have today been asked to close their buildings to students from Friday 20th March.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-colleges-and-early-years-settings-to-close>

I hope you will excuse such a late evening communication, but I was keen to be able to share with you what I can in an attempt to reassure you and your children at this difficult time for us all. As seems to be the case with all announcements currently, the headlines are published but the detail takes some time to become clear. However, I am very conscious of the additional anxiety this will cause to you all at a time when there is so much for everyone to comprehend and I wanted to offer my support to all members of our community and to share the details that I currently have.

As a result of this announcement, I am sorry to say that Halliford School will be closed to students from the end of Friday 20th March until further notice. Please could I therefore ask that you make arrangements to take home all of your son / daughter's belongings over the next two days. If you are working from home and have not sent your son / daughter in to school but need to collect any belongings, please contact us tomorrow morning and we will make necessary arrangements for you.

In line with government guidance, we will however remain open for the children of key workers and also to vulnerable children. We are pleased to be able to support these extraordinary families in any way that we can. Examples of these workers that have so far been disclosed include NHS staff, police and delivery drivers who need to be able to go to work. A full list of key worker categories will be published by the Cabinet Office tomorrow and I will write to you then with further details about these arrangements. In the meantime to all members of the Halliford community on the front line of this battle against the Coronavirus we send you our very best wishes.

My Senior Team and I have been preparing for this scenario for some time and we have put detailed plans in place to ensure that we can continue to run the school and continue the education of children with restricted access to school buildings if required. However, as yet it is still not clear what will happen here either.

The continuing education and most importantly the wellbeing of all members of the Halliford community is of paramount importance to me and I can assure you that I will continue to communicate with you throughout this period, however I wanted to share with you now, some immediate information that you will need.

Continuing Education

Our aim is to continue to work as normally as possible during published term time dates including using on-line learning and resources to continue to educate our students. Detailed information about the education provision for this programme is currently being finalised but those already at home will have seen some of the excellent early work that my colleagues have been doing to provide information for students via MS Teams.

Unfortunately, we are aware that due to the sudden usage of this platform by schools and business throughout the world it has placed unprecedented demand on the system and so we are going to do our best to set work for the forthcoming week using this platform but will review matters again before the recommencement of the Summer Term. Please do help us to ensure that your child follows the programme we have put in place as there is an expectation that all students will follow their usual timetable of lessons at home next week up until the end of the published term date of Friday 27th March.

GCSE and A level Exams

I met with all students in Year 11 and the Upper Sixth today to try and reassure them regarding the situation with Public Examinations. I am afraid that I had no idea that only a few hours later we would hear the decision from the government that GCSE and A level exams will not go ahead in May / June. I can only imagine the impact this has had on your children this evening, but please rest assured I will endeavour to do all I can to support them. My strong advice is that they should continue to study hard and complete the work they have been assigned so that we have as much evidence as possible to demonstrate the magnificent progress that they have made and the level that they are currently working to should this be required. The announcement this evening has clearly taken the examination body Ofqual by surprise and their latest statement this evening reads as follows:

We welcome the certainty that the Secretary of State's decision not to hold exams this summer provides in these challenging circumstances. We will now work urgently with the Department for Education to work through the detail of this decision and to provide more information as soon as possible.

As soon as we have further details of this I will write to update all students in Year 10, 11 and Upper Sixth immediately. I find it utterly disgraceful that our hard working young people have been left in this outrageous position and will be working hard to find answers for them tomorrow.

Communication

I will write further with details of how you can keep in touch with the school during this period of closure but please rest assured that I will continue to communicate with you and with students throughout this time. It would be wonderful to keep our social media channels running as usual and please do feel free to share with us any good news stories that you have to lift our spirits during the coming weeks.

Could I also ask that if during the time that students are away from school, they or anyone they are in close contact with tests positive to Coronavirus, please do contact us as soon as possible to let us know so that we can offer any support we can.

In the meantime, we're aiming to continue as normally as possible for the rest of the week and we will continue to teach our students and follow the usual timetable and I will be expecting the usual high standards of behaviour from our students. We won't however be holding any assemblies as an extra precaution. If your son / daughter has any underlying health issues or has weakened immunity, please do follow the government advice regarding staying at home and don't send them to school for the rest of the week. It

would be really helpful if you could contact us to let us know if this applies to your family. I will also completely understand if you would now prefer to keep your son / daughter at home for the remainder of this week.

I'm conscious that this is undoubtedly a very unsettling time for everyone, but especially for our students. We have detailed plans in place for this scenario and, as I've said before, I believe that it is important for the sake of our students, that we remain calm and maintain as much day to day normality as we possibly can. I hope that you will join me in trying to provide this for all members of our community.

In September 2021, Halliford School will celebrate our centenary and we have a proud tradition of being a strong warm-hearted community fiercely proud to know, respect and support every student. I am so honoured to be your Headmaster and I have been humbled by the messages of support that I have received from parents, students and members of the community over the last few days. We Hallifordians are resilient individuals and we will do whatever it takes to get through the coming weeks and I am sure will emerge as even stronger people if we all do our part and follow the guidance that has been issued.

Thank you again for all of your ongoing help and support and I will be in touch again tomorrow.

With my very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J.H.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.