



17 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: 2nd COVID-19 update (including school closure update – see below)

I am writing to give you further information about the Coronavirus and the possible effects on school as a result of the government news conference last night. Apologies for the length of the letter but I wanted to ensure that you were fully informed of the ongoing situation.

Self-isolation advice and absence

Please carefully consider the implications to others when deciding whether to send your children to school. Please remember that the advice has changed. If a new cough develops, or a high temperature develops (not just a combination of these symptoms), then you and the members of the household **must** self-isolate. The self-isolation period is a minimum of 14 days from the date that the first person got ill. Students will not be penalised for absence for self-isolating but please only keep children off school if they have the specific symptoms. We have a special registration code to use so please do follow our guidance sent yesterday and email absence@testbourne.school with the reason “self-isolation” and your child’s name and tutor group. To keep phone lines clear, **please do not phone in for absence unless you have no access to email**. The NHS advice this morning is as follows (refer to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>):

How long to stay at home

- *if you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days*
- *if you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms*

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

Read our [advice about staying at home](#).

Please also see the “main messages” on this government site as I feel the information is clearer: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

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We are taking further precautions as outlined in this letter, but these precautions will be undermined by parents sending children who should be self-isolating to school. We have some children, staff and families who fall into the vulnerable categories. Please do not put others at risk.

Additionally, please note that there are no members of staff who are medically trained. If we are asked by parents whether children should be sent to school, we refer them to the above website only. If you, your child or anyone in the same household has developed a new cough or a temperature, **you must self-isolate**.

We will ask parents to collect any child with a new cough or temperature that becomes apparent during the school day. We will take similar steps if we learn that other family members have symptoms. This is to safeguard the health of all of our staff and children.

We continue to monitor and follow advice from Public Health England and the NHS.

Social media

Please be especially careful about what you post on social media. If you have any concerns, please contact the school to check your facts before you post anything. Inaccurate and sensationalist posts can be very unhelpful, can cause anxiety and panic and divert school staff from their primary roles as they respond to panicked parents contacting us to verify or refute social media rumours.

At the time of writing, I can state that there are no confirmed cases of coronavirus for any children who usually attend the school. If a child is affected, communication will come from me.

Postponement and cancellation of school events and visits.

In order to preserve staff efforts in addressing our core business of providing lessons, minimise risk and due to cancellations by several venues, we are now postponing non-essential school events and trips. Cancellations include:

1. **Wednesday 18th March** – Astronomy event
2. **Thursday 19th March** - Dance Showcase (for audience members).
3. **Friday 20th March** – QMC Year 11 MFL and English workshops.
4. **Thursday 26th March** – Year 11 Parents' Consultation Evening*

These events occur before Easter. We will continue to review the situation going forwards for events scheduled after Easter.

In addition, there will be no school sport fixtures or any other engagements.

We are also cancelling all assemblies as an extra measure to reduce the amount of large gatherings in school.

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Year 11 Parents' Consultation Evening

Sadly, we will have to cancel this evening. I am asking staff to email home some general advice in most cases. Please bear in mind that several staff are away, the situation may further progress, and that there is a lot of pressure on remaining staff. Staff will do their best to fulfil my request, but we appreciate your understanding where this is not possible.

Partial closure now necessary

Although the school currently remains open, we will regretfully need to close the school to **Year 8** students from tomorrow (**Wednesday 18th March**) and for the foreseeable future. You will be notified when they can return. Year 8 have been selected as they have not yet begun their GCSE courses and because parents are more likely to feel comfortable leaving these older children at home than Year 7 students. We have weighed this up carefully. This step has regrettably become necessary because many of our staff are currently in self-isolation because either they or a family member have developed a cough or fever. This means that it is not possible to safely run the school at full capacity. This self-isolation will last for at least 14 days so it is likely that the partial closure will also last for at least this length of time. We will continue to monitor the situation and as soon as we are able, we will reopen to all year groups.

Students should access our online resources and links and should try to complete work adhering to their usual school timetable, in order to maintain routine.

Please remember that students can download all Microsoft software, free of charge (this is part of the school's license fee). Staff are continuing to update the work available on the Student Portal (<https://testbourne.sharepoint.com/sites/students>). Students can also take advantage of our software licenses for Educake, GCSE Pod, Kerboodle and My Maths for example. Additionally, there are free online resources such as YouTube, Seneca Learning and BBC Bitesize that can be helpful. It does not now seem that we will have the capacity to deliver any virtual learning.

Please note that we will do our best to provide resources but appreciate your support and understanding of the fact that not all subjects lend themselves to this, teaching staff may be ill or teaching staff may have to look after dependents themselves. Priority will be given to Year 11 at this critical time. Please also understand that staff who are currently able to attend school are under considerable pressure dealing with the children who are in attendance, so may not be able to provide work immediately.

Possible extension of partial closure or full closure

Please note that we continue to review the staffing situation. It may be necessary to close to one or more additional year groups as time goes on. If this is the case, we will let you know as early as possible.

Exams and NEA assignments - reminder

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Year 11 students who are absent, or in the event of a closure, should use revision guides and online resources to prepare for their exams. The exam boards also have good resources on their websites in terms of past papers, mark schemes and examiner's reports. At this time, students should assume that NEA deadlines and exam timetables will remain unchanged until otherwise advised. Students should not be worried about NEA deadlines and work that still needs completing. Unless we are told otherwise, students must not complete NEA work at home (as this is a breach of exam regulations). We will act upon information as soon as we are made aware of it and will put in place as much contingency as possible. In other words, please encourage your children to not worry about things out of their control.

We have been overwhelmed by the support of families and the attitude of students at this difficult time. I hope that we can continue to count on your support as we all come to terms with an unprecedented situation.

Students who are self-isolating

Students who are self-isolating should access work as above. Trying to maintain their usual school schedule will help preserve routine and order in the day.

We continue to be grateful for the support we are receiving from families, staff and children during this difficult time. We know that the situation is causing a lot of distress for several members of our wider community and we give our best wishes to those people. Please look out for more vulnerable people in your community and please take the NHS guidance seriously so that we do not put others at risk.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Beck
Headteacher

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