

Dear Varndean Families

Coronavirus update 17th March 2020

Many of you will have seen yesterday's news and noted the updated guidance regarding the steps that we all need to take in our lives to delay the spread of the virus. The expectation is that schools stay open while recognising that increasing numbers of students will need to isolate because they, or someone in their household, is exhibiting the symptoms. If your child is in that situation then please make sure the school is informed and a clear reason for the absence is given so we can be clear whether they will be absent for 7 or 14 days. Please can I remind you that children **cannot return** to school during the isolation period.

The revised guidance also affects staff attendance. There is very limited supply cover available locally and increased staff absence is creating significant pressures on normal, safe school operations. We have been able to run fully today but will not be able to do this tomorrow. Therefore I have taken the decision to open the school to all year groups with **the exception of year 9** on Wednesday 18th March.

The situation is far from settled and we will need to review our capacity in context each day. Please be aware that this means that we may have to amend our plans at short notice which could affect specific year groups or parts of the day. In this situation our aim is to give you as much notice as possible and at **the latest will post the news on our website at 7am on the morning of closure**, emailing all parents as soon as possible afterwards if this hasn't been done already.

Our contingency plans for setting work and supporting students in the face of an extended closure are developing at pace and we are confident we can provide students with relevant learning to complete if they can't come to school. However I need to point out that these arrangements do not, and cannot, extend to students who are currently self isolating given the strain this will place on our capacity. Please bear with us while we work through these unprecedented challenges.

Please do remember to let school bases know if your child (or another child you know about) will be without access to the internet, or a functioning device, during a closure period so that we can make alternative arrangements.

In the meantime we have made several adjustments to school routines:

- Sports fixtures and after school clubs will be cancelled until the end of term
- Assemblies have been postponed this term

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- Visitors to the school kept to a minimum (please use email or telephone to contact the school where possible)
- All other trips and school events, including the Duke of Edinburgh practice expeditions scheduled for 28-29 March and 3-5 April, will be cancelled or postponed

In addition please continue to remind your children to wash their hands regularly and take advantage of the hand sanitiser that is available at school, especially before eating and after having used shared equipment.

These are challenging times for all of us and I know how stressful it is for our students - please reassure them that we will be doing all that we can so that they can continue their learning. Please may I take the opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support.

Given the speed with which this situation is evolving I will update you again tomorrow.

Kind regards

William Deighan

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

