



King Henry VIII Senior School
Warwick Road
Coventry
CV3 6AQ

Headmaster: Jason Slack BSc, MA Ed

10th March 2020

Dear Parents,

I thought I should update you on the school's continuing response to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Fortunately, the virus appears to have a less significant impact on young people in most circumstances. We are, however, mindful that a small number of pupils and staff are immunocompromised and for them the virus represents a greater risk. We will work with those members of our community to support them and ask you to get in touch with us if there are any concerns.

You will be aware that the first cases of the virus have now been reported in Coventry, although we are not aware of any contact with the school of these cases, at present. We are taking sensible precautions at the present time including giving advice to pupils through our normal pastoral care teams. We would be grateful if you would support this effort at home by emphasising the importance of washing hands, catching coughs and sneezes and disposing of used tissues. We are also asking visitors to school to avoid unnecessary physical contact including shaking hands. This measure has been extended to parents' evenings where we are asking parents to excuse the usual courtesy of a handshake at the start of teacher consultations.

Like all other businesses and institutions, the School's ability to give definitive advice is hampered by the uncertainty surrounding the potential spread and impact of the virus, both in the UK and around the world. Nevertheless, the Foundation continues to meet regularly, and have developed contingency plans for a variety of possible scenarios. Please forgive the length of this letter as I share these with you; my hope in doing so is that all members of the School family will be able to take confidence that we are well-prepared and will also be able to make their own plans accordingly.

Guidelines

- The School's Senior Leadership Team and Foundation Health and Safety committee will meet regularly to determine changes to the level of risk and assess all new information;
- Consideration of risk will include medical, educational, social, emotional, fiscal and reputational threats to pupils and the School;
- We will only act on credible, verifiable information and evidence;
- The safety and well-being of our pupils and staff will be our paramount consideration in all decisions and mitigation strategies;
- The School will follow (and not pre-empt) the directives of the UK Government and all official agencies;
- All changes to normal operation will first be considered in light of the impact on families before being implemented;

- We will balance the need to provide clear and reassuring leadership with the importance of not acting in haste or making promises that we cannot keep;
- A deliberate air of calm and confidence will be fostered in all sectors of the School.

Strategies

Reducing Contact to Minimise Potential Spread of the Virus

Are visitors still allowed in the School?

Since news of the virus first broke, we have been restricting visits to the School for anyone coming from a Category 1 region. This remains our protocol at present. However, if the UK Government moves from a Containment to a Delay Strategy, prohibitions on non-urgent visits may increase. Our general advice is not to visit the School if it isn't necessary or if the matter can be deferred or dealt with remotely.

Will the School still play sporting fixtures?

As above. Part of the UK Government's Delay Strategy may be the cancellation of mass events such as sports matches. Whether school sport would fit into this category is unclear at this time, but we are prepared for either eventuality. At present, our scheduled fixtures continue, with the added precaution that we are in touch with opposition teams beforehand to ensure that they have had no medical concerns amongst any of their players or supporters.

What about the School trips that are planned for the coming months?

There are several School trips currently planned for the next few weeks including the Easter Break. Some have already been cancelled (e.g. a Year 12 Careers fair at Leicester University). We expect that the same will happen for the others if the situation worsens. We will follow the Government advice regarding travel. That said, if our own assessment of risk leads us to believe that there is undue risk, we will cancel first. Parents whose children are currently scheduled to go on a School trip will be notified immediately that any such decision is taken by either party.

What happens if my child travels to another country?

It is likely that the UK Government will soon start to advise against non-essential overseas travel. As we are in normal term time, we do not expect pupils to be absent from School anyway. However, the Easter Break beckons, and many families will still be planning overseas holidays. If the situation has not changed by the time we return for the Summer Term, we will again be requiring all families to disclose any overseas travel and will be requiring a 14 day self-isolation period for anyone who has visited a Category 1 region, or for anyone who went to a Category 2 region and also develops key symptoms.

Closure

Will the School close?

We would only close the School if directed to do so by the authorities. At present, that is not the preferred option of the UK Government.

What happens to my child's education if the School closes for a while?

The School will continue to provide work and tuition via electronic methods e.g. Microsoft Teams and, regular email interaction with teachers and the provision of self-directed study modules.

What about the upcoming public examinations?

If the GCSE or A Level examination rounds are in any way altered or delayed, all schools throughout the country will be in the same position. We are aware that Examination Boards and Universities are already in discussion regarding possible alternatives should the normal schedule be impacted, and we will advise our own candidates as soon as we are informed of any changes. However, we remain confident that no pupil will ultimately be disadvantaged.

Caring for Sick Pupils

What will the School do if a pupil falls ill at School?

All staff, especially our nurse, are on alert for pupils who may display the key symptoms of COVID-19. Any pupil in that category will be moved to a safe, isolated room until their parents can collect them and take them home. If they are confirmed as having the virus, they will obviously be required to stay away from School until they are confirmed clear of it.

Communication

How will the School communicate updates or changes in plans to families?

We will continue to update parents frequently via email. Any urgent messages will also be posted on the website and our Twitter feed. Parents will understand that there is a significant increase in pressure on many staff as we work with any new arrangement; they may also have their own childcare issues or other complications. However, we remain committed to answering your queries as promptly as possible and still encourage you to make contact if you have a concern. We may not get back to you as quickly as usual, but we will always respond.

What else is the School doing to protect children?

We stepped up our education programme promoting good personal hygiene. Pupils are also being reminded about responsible social behaviour and are being encouraged not to be fearful or critical of others.

Although we teach our pupils the social etiquette of a handshake upon meeting, we are refraining from all such contact for a while in the hope of slowing the spread of the virus. The same applies to those who, when appropriate, might hug or kiss in greeting. All pupils, staff, parents and visitors are encouraged to forego these practices for a while.

It is important that our community is calm and pragmatic at this time and I am extremely grateful to all associated with King Henry VIII School for your level-headed support. The school continues to act on guidance from Public Health England and we will endeavour to keep pupils, staff and parents informed as appropriate. We receive regular information from the Department for Education and Coventry Local Authority. Parents can access information on the various websites, given below.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>

Staff, parents and young people can also contact the Department for Education's new helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding with regard to this issue.

Yours sincerely,



J. Slack
Headmaster