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Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to share some further information with regards to Covid-19 virus pandemic and its impact on our schools.

#### DELAY STAGE

You have probably seen from the news the government has announced and is planning some new measures to deal with COVID-19. The government has also changed its overall response, moving from the 'contain' to the 'delay' phase of its plan.

As before, the advice remains that effective hand hygiene and using a tissue when coughing or sneezing are some of the most effective ways in which we can help reduce the spread of the virus. Our schools are continuing to do all that we can to minimise the spread with good hygiene; we continue following all the advice from Public Health, DfE and Herts County Council. This includes for example cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces more often and supervising children to wash their hands.

#### SELF-ISOLATION AND STAYING AT HOME

As you know the government has widened their advice on who should self-isolate to include those that have coronavirus like symptoms (however mild).

The symptoms are

- a new or continuous cough
- or a high temperature above 37.8C

A student or a member of staff, who has these symptoms should stay at home for at least 7 days to protect others and help slow the spread of the disease. Otherwise they should attend school and work.

If your child is absent from school please inform the school about the reasons for this.

In certain circumstances you may be advised by medical professionals to keep your child at home even if they are not unwell. If this is the case please let us know and we will support your decision.

Our parents are understandably concerned about the risk of their children catching Coronavirus. Some of our parents may wish to keep children at home even though they have not had any medical advice to do so. However, we cannot agree to a child's absence for that reason alone. All children who are well enough to come to school are expected to continue attending as normal unless advised otherwise by Public Health England.

If young people, children or staff become unwell on site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they will be sent home.

#### SCHOOL TRIPS

The government advice is that school trips within the UK can at present go ahead safely. However in light of rapidly changing COVID-19 situation we have made a decision to suspend all of our out of school visits and 'out-of-school' activities for time being.

#### SCHOOL CLOSURE

Some parents have asked whether we could choose to close the school now. If we are ordered to close the school by Public Health England, because there is a risk to children/students and staff, we will do. If the government make a decision to close all schools we will do so, otherwise our intention is to stay open and operate as normal.

The Government has made it clear it expects schools to remain open unless public health advice has been given to close. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the impact of closing schools on both children's education and on the workforce would be substantial, but the benefit to public health may not be. The government has said that their decisions on future advice to education or children's social care settings will be taken based on the latest and best scientific evidence, which at this stage suggests children are a lower risk group.

We are however preparing in case the school closes and we are looking at ways for managing a remote curriculum. This scenario is very challenging for us as delivery of teaching and learning for our students is very much depending on specific environment, resources and staffing.

We recognise that if school closure is necessary this will have significant implications for many of our families; with issues ranging from the loss of free school meals to problems for families finding suitable childcare. We have been liaising with 0-25 team to share our concerns about impact on families in case of school closures.

We have also added 'an evening window' for staff to inform any absence for the following day. This is to ensure that we can inform the parents and carers as early as possible about a school closure due to a high staff absence rate. A high staff absence rate may cause a whole school closure or partial school closure.

#### KEEPING INFORMED

We will continue to provide updates as the situation continues to develop. Please inform the school of any contact your family may have had with a person with symptoms or who has tested positive.

Currently we don't have any confirmed cases of COVID-19 virus amongst our students, parents or staff.

We have a very small number of students and staff who are 'self-isolating' due to symptoms described in the beginning of this letter. It is likely that we will have an increasing number of these cases.

Thank you for your continued support.

Further information:

Public Health <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

DfE guidance for educational settings

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

NHS

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

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Kind regards,  
Merja Paakkonen