



12 March 2020

Principal: Mr S Brierley MA NPQH

Dear Parent/Carer

Coronavirus update 2

I am writing to keep you informed of our response to the rapidly-developing Coronavirus outbreak, and our plans for scenarios that may emerge as a result.

Ongoing hygiene

Please continue to encourage your son/daughter to wash their hands frequently throughout the day, and to catch coughs and sneezes. If it is possible, providing them with hand sanitizers and tissues will help in this regard.

Contact with suspected/confirmed cases

The symptoms of the virus seem to start with a fever, followed by a dry cough, then (after a week) shortness of breath. If your son or daughter shows symptoms of having been infected, please seek medical advice by ringing 111 or going to 111.nhs.uk – and please let us know through the usual channels (e-mail or 'phone) too.

If your son or daughter has been in contact with a suspected Coronavirus victim, current advice is that no restrictions or special control measures are required whilst test results are awaited.

If your son or daughter has been in contact with a confirmed Coronavirus victim, they *may* be asked to self-isolate: please ring 111 or go to 111.nhs.uk for advice.

There is no need to keep a student off school on the grounds that one of their relatives has underlying health issues.

School trips

A small school trip is due to return from Madrid today, and larger group is due to travel to the USA shortly. We are taking advice from Public Health England about both of these trips and will follow their advice carefully. We have been/will be in contact with the parents of students on these trips separately.

Preparing for closure

At this point in time, St Margaret's will stay open throughout this pandemic. We will only close the school if:

- we are advised to do so by Public Health England; or
- a shortage of staff means we are unable to continue operating safely.

In line with the principle of “*hoping [and praying] for the best, planning for the worst*”, however, we are planning carefully for the eventuality that we may have to close at some point in the future. If this does happen:

- we will make announcements through our website, www.stmargaretsacademy.com;
- please continue to notify us through the usual channels if your son or daughter falls ill;
- we will set work for pupils on a daily basis through Show My Homework; and
- we will provide feedback to pupils as often as we are able to.

Further details will be provided if we do actually close.

Please be mindful, however, that in the event of a closure my colleagues and I will still be working ‘normal office hours’; we will not be able to respond to ‘out-of-hours’ e-mails, and may not be able to respond to e-mails as promptly as we can do when we are in school. Likewise, we recognise that a prolonged period of school closure may create additional stresses for families; please let us know if there is anything we can do to help. Finally, I am aware that a school closure could cause particular difficulties for those entitled to Free School Meals; discussions are taking place across the City to address this issue.

External examinations

The Department for Education, working with the Office of Qualifications (‘Ofqual’), have offered the following advice about the upcoming external exam season:

“We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer exam series. Ofqual’s advice at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal.

“Ofqual continues to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education to plan for a range of scenarios, as the public would expect. Our overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum.

“It is still many weeks until exams start and we will issue updated advice if necessary, giving schools and colleges as much notice as possible.”

I wrote in last month’s *SMArtTalk* that the Exam Boards expect students taking external exams to be available for any rescheduled examinations on Wednesday 24th June, the ‘Exam Contingency Day’. It is also possible the Exam Boards may reschedule exams before that date too.

As I indicated last time, this is a fast-moving situation and it is possible that the advice will change. We will, of course, keep you fully informed if it does.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours faithfully,



Stephen Brierley

Principal