

Our Ref: SDN/KON

19 March 2020

ALL PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parents/Carers



Re: COVID-19 UPDATE - 19 MARCH 2020

Following last night's announcement from Government that schools will close to the vast majority of students from Friday 20 March 2020. I am writing to clarify what the next steps will now be.

We do appreciate that this news, although largely anticipated, when actually confirmed, can come as a shock to both students, parents and staff. We also recognise that this will affect different parents and students in different ways, dependent upon their individual circumstances. Please rest assured that we will endeavour to support you and your child as much as possible throughout this situation.

Government advice has now stated however that children who have the following conditions should **NOT** be in school:

- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary; disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis;
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure;
- chronic kidney disease;
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis;
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy;
- diabetes;
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed;
- a weakened immune system, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy;
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above) 99th centile for children.

At the moment, the Government are requesting that schools close to all students but remain open to those whose parents are classed as key workers and to those students who are considered 'vulnerable'.

We currently have no definitive list from Government as to who is classed as a key worker but we will update you with this as soon as possible. Please check your emails regularly today as we will send this information out in a separate letter.

If as a parent you are identified as a key worker we request that you contact us immediately to let us know that your child falls into this category if you know you will need to send your child to school. Key workers are under no obligation to send their children to school but can do so if no other childcare arrangements are possible. We are asking ALL parents to notify us by Friday 20 March 2020 at 9.00am. Please do not be offended if we ask for confirmation from your employer that this is the case. It would be helpful if you could also supply a work address and contact number when you contact us. You can contact us do this by phone on 01384 816935 or by email (info@dormston.dudley.sch.uk).

Any students in the identified groups who have no other childcare arrangements will be admitted to school on Monday as normal at 8.40am. They must register in the Atrium. Exactly how these lessons and timetable will run is currently being mapped out. It is likely however that we will be operating with a skeleton staff and students will be expected to follow the work that is being uploaded on GO4Schools whilst we provide supervision and support. As I am sure you can appreciate it will become impossible for staff to actually **teach** lessons to a mix of students from different year groups. The students will be kept together in one or more computer rooms (depending on numbers). **Lunches will be provided as normal, however please let us know if you are going to send your child in with a packed lunch so that we do not over-cater and waste food.**

We will be staffing and planning for these students to come to school so we therefore need your commitment and support in continuing to send them into school as directed, **providing they are not showing symptoms or are part of a household that is required to self-isolate.** As far as possible, once your child's name is added to the list they must attend every day and attendance must not be sporadic depending on your other possible childcare arrangements. For safeguarding reasons we will need to monitor attendance carefully and therefore the school cannot be used as a general childcare facility if we have no advance notice of your child's attendance.

In terms of those students who are working from home we will continue to upload work to GO4 Schools. A procedure for how this work will be submitted and how feedback will be provided will be shared shortly but it is likely to take the form of self-assessments and the submission of Key Assessments via email. We therefore recommend that your child is recording their work on Microsoft Word and creating different folders for different subjects to stay organised. As far as possible students should try and follow their timetable.

We will also shortly be writing to all students and plan to actively keep in touch with them throughout this process as we don't want them to feel isolated and disconnected from the school. Please therefore encourage them to check their emails regularly. Individual year group letters will also be following shortly. We will try and keep our already established parent update sheets going although they may have a different content/frequency in order to stay connected with you as parents and students.

We know that our Year 11 students and parents must be feeling confused and anxious with the announcement that their GCSEs are now cancelled. How exactly this major issue will be addressed is still to be directed by Government, although we now anticipate further guidance tomorrow. Staff have been talking to students about this today to try and allay some fears and worries. As soon as we are provided with any more information regarding the way forward we will let students and parents know. All I can say at this stage is how sorry both myself and all my staff are that this has happened. How the government will address this is open to much conjecture so until we have any definitive facts, it is unwise to make any statements or assumptions. Our current Year 11 have been a fantastic year and a thoroughly delightful group of students and we will support them in every way possible. This includes doing everything we can to ensure a Prom takes place at some point in the future. We need something to look forward to!

The Government have announced a voucher system for Pupil Premium students but as yet we have been given no more information. As soon as we know any more details we will let you know. If your child is Pupil Premium and you are experiencing any additional hardship as a direct result of this crisis, please contact us in order to discuss any ways we may be able to help. We are already looking into innovative ways to support you through this process.

We are sorry that we can't give you the answers to the many questions we know you must have but we thank you for your patience and understanding whilst as a school we navigate government guidance and instructions in terms of what this really mean to the students, parents and staff of Dormston School.

At the moment it feels like this situation doesn't have any clear timescale as to when it will be resolved. Like people all across the world, all we can realistically do is take things one day at a time and try our best to prepare and carefully consider each next step as it arises. If we continue to work in partnership for the benefit of the students of Dormston school we can tackle whatever obstacles we face, together.

I will continue to keep you updated as more information emerges. Thank you for your continued co-operation and on-going support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Dixon'.

Mr S Dixon
Head Teacher