

17 March 2020

## Dear Parents, Carers, Students, Staff and Friends of the school

We are continuing to see major impact upon our lives and the school community as a result of COVID -19.

**This is an update of yesterday's letter, and contains new important information.**

As the Covid 19 pandemic takes hold in the UK difficult decisions need to be made to maintain our educational environment. With this in mind, **I am writing to tell you that as of this Wednesday afternoon, 18.3.20, Notre Dame will be temporarily suspending on site lessons for our 6<sup>th</sup> Form.** Lessons will now be remote access and over the coming days staff will be sharing resources and lesson materials, using google classrooms (and we hope a video conferencing system called Zoom if possible). We know this is far from a perfect scenario but we are attempting to maintain a service under extraordinary circumstances.

For a great number of students, particularly those with examinations scheduled in the summer, this will generate considerable anxiety. At this stage we do not know what the national plan, with regard to A Level and GCSEs will be but will keep all of you up-dated as the situation develops and the Government make tough decisions.

If we are able to restart on site lessons for our VI Form then we will write to you but at present this is very unlikely for the foreseeable future.

We continue to follow the advice given by Public Health England, the Department for Education as well as professional organisations and our Local Authority. We will continue to be calm and measured in our response as well as being proportionate and decisive.

We are continuing to follow the COVID-19 guidance for educational settings which can be viewed here:

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

The Government published guidance as it enters the 'delay' phase of dealing with COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

We will do all we can to reduce the risks that our pupils, staff and parents face. We have decided that we will shrink the school into its core function. In practice this means that:

- Pupils and students will come to school, have their lessons etc. and then return home. **As stated above Sixth form students will not be taught on site on Thursday or Friday this week (19 & 20 March), and we have to be honest that it looks unlikely the VI Form lessons will resume on site next week.**
- There will be no trips allowed in or out of school.
- Any planned event involving large groups of people coming onto the school site will either be cancelled (school concerts, sports fixtures) or will be rearranged to be meetings by phone or similar.

- The Year 8 and year 10 parents evenings are now postponed. The year 8 parents evening will now be on the 11<sup>th</sup> June and the year 10 Parents evening on the 4<sup>th</sup> June.
- There will be no sports fixtures, both home and away, for the rest of term.

In addition to the above, we have actioned the following:

### **1. Focussing on the importance of handwashing and good hygiene practices**

The core advice we are sharing with pupils and staff is as follows:

- **Washing hands often** - (before eating, after coughing and sneezing, after using toilets and after travelling on public transport) with soap and hot water for 20 seconds
- Use alcohol sanitiser only if handwashing facilities are not available.
- **Covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue**, then throwing the tissue in a bin. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#). Tissues and bins are available in every classroom
- Use your elbow and sleeve to catch coughs and sneezes if you don't have a tissue
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands

The following video link may be useful.

[NHS Handwashing guidance](#)

### **2. Risk assessments**

For all trips, activities and visitors, we now are reducing these to the bare minimum to ensure we increase social distancing, following the **COVID-19 guidance for educational settings**.

### **3. Pupils in school and Absence or Self Isolation**

The Government and Public Health England **advise that any person with a new continuous cough or high temperature should self-isolate with their family for 14 days**. Therefore, if a child presents these symptoms at school we will follow the COVID-19 guidance for educational settings above, as set out in paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and contact parents to collect your child.

If your child needs to self-isolate for any reason, e.g. **they feel unwell or another person in the household feels unwell and you are sufficiently concerned that you think your child should self isolate then we will completely understand as a school**. This absence will be authorised and recorded as Other Authorised Absence. You should let us know that your child will not be attending school, and update us at the end of 14 days if your child is now in a position to return to school. Many children will be in the same situation nationally and if in doubt it is better to follow the advice to self-isolate rather than potentially put others at risk.

Families where a child or other family member display symptoms should self isolate for 14 days – please inform us if your child has to self isolate in this manner.

### **4. Home learning**

In the event that the school is advised to partly or fully close to pupils (for either a short or an extended period of time), we are now ready to continue to provide an education to our pupils and will use google classroom as a learning platform. This can be accessed by any electronic device, including smartphones.

Please find attached our new Home Learning Guidance for use in the event of a school closures. This will take effect from **Thursday 19th March for all 6th Form pupils** and for 7 to 11 in event of full school closure.

### **5. Keep in contact with us**

Thank you to all parents who are keeping in contact with us with any queries. We are continuing to review guidance on a daily basis to do all we can to make the school a safe environment for all. I must stress that we have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our school, but if we do get a case I will inform you. The school will continue to be honest, open and transparent.

To support us with this, can we ask all parents to:

- Make the school aware of any travel plans in the coming months.
- Keep the school up-to-date with any changes to your child's health.

### **6. Possible staff illness or self isolation**

Over the next few days and weeks we may have members of staff who have to self-isolate if they have symptoms or have to take care of children who have symptoms, following the Government guidance to take action, even if you do not have a diagnosis of COVID-19. This may mean we struggle to cover classes with teachers, but we will do our best to make sure our school continues to operate as close to normal as possible.

However if the numbers of staff unable to attend school means that we cannot operate as a school safely and classes might not have people to supervise them, or we cannot double up if needed then we may have to (*even if we have no confirmed cases of COVID-19*) consider partial closure or even full closure, with some or all classes not able to attend school, as is now the case with our VI Form.

While we hope this will not be the case I do need to share this possibility of further restrictions on what we can offer as a school with you, things are moving fast and we face challenging times in the next few days and weeks.

### **7. Department for Education coronavirus helpline**

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

**Phone: 0800 046 8687**

**Email: [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)**

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

### **8. Safeguarding**

In event of a full school closure parents/carers with any safeguarding concerns can contact David Butters DSL or Shirley Stevenson ADSL on 07771812227 or email [dbutters@ndhs.org.uk](mailto:dbutters@ndhs.org.uk) or [sstevenson@ndhs.org.uk](mailto:sstevenson@ndhs.org.uk) - Please note this mobile phone number is for SAFEGUARDING concerns only.

Parents/Carers can also contact the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) on 0344 800 8020

Thank you for your continued support and if you have any further queries on the above, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Pinnington (Head of School) & Brian Conway (CEO)