



17th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Coronavirus

I have no doubt you are following the news regarding coronavirus closely.

Please note the change in guidance following the Prime Minister's comments in that where any person in the household of a staff member or pupil is unwell with fever and cough, **the whole household needs to self-isolate for 14 days**. This is a change from the advice that was previously issued. We appreciate the situation is moving very fast.

Partial school closure

We are experiencing an extremely high level of staff absence. Many more staff have not been able to attend work today which has made it very difficult to run the school. Whilst, we have **not** had a report of any staff or pupil positively testing for coronavirus a considerable number of staff and pupils are having to self-isolate for various reasons.

Due to the above, looking forward, we have had to take the decision to focus our efforts in school on a smaller number of pupils. With regret, **lessons for children in Year 7, 8 and 9 have been cancelled for the rest of this week**. This measure has been taken in order to keep the school open. We aim through this to be able to support students in Years 10 and 11 as best we can in preparation for their GCSE and BTEC examinations. We will be reviewing the situation daily, but please be aware that we may not be able to run lessons for some year groups next week and beyond. Saturday School is also cancelled.

I urge parents to **please check the Gladesmore Website** regularly for updates. Key information will be posted there. We will also send email and text messages home where possible.

I appreciate that this comes at short notice and is liable to be difficult for a number of families. However, the position we find ourselves in is just not sustainable at school. We realise that some parents will be employed in front line jobs, for example with the NHS, and are essential to tackling the coronavirus pandemic. If you would like the school to look at accommodating your child in school due to such, please let us know so that this can be explored with you.

How can my child continue with their education?

Staff are preparing materials to help students to continue with their learning at home. In particular we will make use of 'Show My Homework' and all students can access the 'My Maths' online programme and should be in possession of a reading book. Parents should consult the Gladesmore Website which will be updated regularly with other useful links to online learning resources.



What if the virus poses a higher risk to individuals?

We are aware that parents are taking decisions in order to keep their families safe during this difficult period. Today, Tuesday 17 March, the School is running at about 60% capacity.

We are aware that some students may be, due to underlying health conditions, at greater risk from Covid-19. We do appreciate that parents will be particularly anxious in these circumstances and so we understand that **each family will need to assess the risk** that the virus poses to their own family as a whole.

We understand that you may feel it necessary to keep you child at home in order to protect anyone in the family who may be at particular risk. For instance, if anyone is in the high-risk group, such as those over the age of 70 years, or with underlying medical conditions. See Government Advice.

If parents decide to keep children at home to minimise these risks these absences **will be authorised** by the school. We fully understand that parents will need to take the action that they feel is sensible and necessary in order to protect their family.

I make this appeal to all our parents - please keep your children at home if they are unwell. If they have a cough and/or temperature, then they should self-isolate for 14 days. We must make every effort to keep our local community safe and well. This includes the teachers. If any child appears unwell you will be phoned to collect them.

Stay Safe

We appreciate that this is an anxious time for families. Please be aware that the school is receiving a very large number of contacts during this period. If you need to contact the school you may email us at admin@gladesmore.com

Once again, I thank you in anticipation for understanding that we have to make adjustments. I wish all members of our school community well. Let us continue to work together to make the best of a very difficult situation.

Yours sincerely

Tony Hartney CBE

Government Advice

We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.

This group includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- 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 as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

Note: there are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category, the NHS will directly contact you with advice the more stringent measures you should take in order to keep yourself and others safe. For now, you should rigorously follow the social distancing advice in full, outlined below.

People falling into this group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as:

- people who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- people with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- people with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

What is social distancing?

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
- Work from home, where possible;
- Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is pragmatic.

For those who are over 70, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant, we strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can, and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible.

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

