



18th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the most recent guidance from the government and the phone calls, queries and discussions we have had with a number of you over the last two days, I felt it was important to share with you the most up-to-date government advice with regard to the Corona Virus and school's current position on how we are dealing with this unprecedented situation.

As you would expect, we have been following advice provided by the Government, Department for Education and Public Health England in relation to the spread of coronavirus and how this is currently to be managed in schools. I am sure that the children have told you that they have been washing their hands more regularly, including after play and before and after eating; we have advised that they wash them as soon as they return home also. We also have some additional cleaning measures in place to ensure surfaces and frequently touched objects such as door handles are wiped more regularly with anti-bacterial sanitiser.

In the coming days, in light of the most recent guidance from the government, it is very possible that we will be more directly affected by the impact of the virus - this may well be through its impact on staff numbers in school, or through being directed to close by the government or one of its agencies. I have a duty of care to support my staff to follow guidelines from the government regarding self-isolation, whether due to their own underlying health conditions or of someone who they live with; I am sure you can appreciate that the strain to operate normally will therefore become increasingly difficult to manage, although at present, we are managing to cover all classes.

As advised by the government, school will continue to operate, so long as we have enough staff to do so safely. I will update you as frequently as I can in this ever-changing situation but in the meantime please follow the guidance below.

Children should attend unless they, or someone in their household present the main symptoms, or are categorised in one of the 'vulnerable' categories which mean they are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Main symptoms:

- **new continuous cough, *and/or***
- **high temperature (37.8°C)**





Vulnerable categories:

Current guidance states:

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

Offsite activities and gatherings

Because of the update to the guidance about social distancing and not to attend gatherings, I have also taken the decision, along with associated agencies to suspend any sporting offsite activities where children might come together, not hold assemblies with all of the children together for now and cancel the trips that were planned for the weeks up to Easter (those planned for after Easter will be reviewed with each guidance update from the government and its associates).

The latest guidance can be found at the link below:





<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>

The main messages are:

- if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for **7 days** from when your symptoms started. See [ending isolation](#) section for more information
- if you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill
- it is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- for anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period. See [ending isolation](#) section for more information
- if you can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period
- if you cannot move vulnerable people out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible
- if you have coronavirus symptoms:
 - do **not** go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital
 - you do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home
 - testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home
- plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home and consider what can be done for vulnerable people in the household
- ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home
- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser
- if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the [NHS 111 online](#) coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

Please take the advice seriously; making difficult decisions about self-isolation are helping to keep the elderly and the most vulnerable amongst us safer.





DOWSON PRIMARY ACADEMY

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Please be assured that we are also planning for the event of school closures and will communicate how this will work and what you and your children need to do from home if this occurs. This does include the setting of work. There will be an element of paper-based resources but we will also be sending out a set of other ideas and activities that you can have a go at and lots of links for those who can access internet based resources. Teachers are working tirelessly to prepare for this and I ask for your patience if you are already in self-isolation. Until teachers can give you further guidance, you can use some of the links you already know of such as TT Rock Stars or Espresso or indeed have a look at some of the online offers that are out there for parents and professionals, coming from many companies who are preparing to support us through such a time as this. Some links can be found on our website in the parents section of 'how to help at home' to things such as the lists of words your child should be able to read and spell. Practise of things like this and reading are just as important.

Finally, I want to thank my staff who in such uncertain and challenging times, even with their own families and selves to think about too, have continued your children's education and kept school a cheerful and productive environment that children feel safe and happy to learn in – they are amazing and I am so grateful for their support and resilience at this time.

If you have any concerns or queries please ensure you seek advice from the correct channels rather than through social media. As a school we will continue to provide up-to-date information as and when we receive it.

As always, thank you for your continued support. Keep safe and healthy.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathryn Thornburn

Principal

