

Latest Information Regarding Coronavirus from Longbenton High School

15th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

The past couple of weeks has been a real challenge for us all as the Coronavirus pandemic has unfolded across the world and the impact that has had on our school. Throughout all that has happened the school's actions have been in response to directives from Public Health England. I have done my best to communicate with you and keep everyone informed as much as is possible. What is clear is that things are changing rapidly and that it is impossible to predict what the next challenge will be. As you will know from my letter on Friday, the Government's approach to the outbreak of Coronavirus has now moved from the 'Containment' to the 'Delay' phase and this means that only those displaying symptoms should self-isolate. Public Health contacted us on Friday to direct us to inform the parents and staff who were self-isolating after returning from Northern Italy that they only needed to continue this if they were displaying symptoms. This means that children and staff from the trip will be returning to school tomorrow.

We are working closely with Public Health England, the Department for Education and the local authority who communicate with the school at least daily. We will follow these directives closely. Current advice remains in place: no education or children's social care setting should close in response to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case unless told to do so by Public Health England. However, we recognise the concerns that parents may have around the potential spread of coronavirus over the coming days and weeks.

We have been planning for all eventualities including any potential school closure in the future. This seems prudent given that at the time of writing the only European countries whose governments have not closed their schools are Finland, the Netherlands and UK. We are working to ensure that students would be signposted to any work they can complete at home while prioritising those students who have upcoming public exams. We would publish guidance as to what these students need to be working on for each subject on our website.

We are confident that we can respond to any changes in advice as and when it occurs, but in the meantime we will continue to follow advice from Public Health in that we continue to function as normal and encourage hand washing to prevent the spread of infection. Within school we ensure that there are plentiful supplies of soap for handwashing, tissues in every classroom and that there is a continuous process of cleaning surfaces throughout the school day. We ask all parents to read the advice found at the link below around self-isolation, in particular that if any student who develops a new continuous cough and/or fever, however mild, should self-isolate for seven days. **Please use the NHS 111 Online coronavirus service for further advice.**

<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>

This advice from the Government is summarised below:

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature
- shortness of breath

This is all based on the current Government advice as of lunchtime on 15th March 2020. Please check the Government website <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> for any further updates.

I understand that each household is different and that in the current situation we all have people dear to us about whom we are worried. Some of you will be considering keeping your child off school or needing to self-isolate them. If your child is off they will need to follow Public Health guidance in doing so. They would need to:

- Stay at home and not go out – this includes not going to school, public places, shops or using public transport or taxis
- Where possible use a separate bathroom from other people in the home and to use separate towels and toiletries to other household members
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, cups, cutlery or other items with other people in the home when they have been used

Please follow the normal absence procedures if you decide to self-isolate your child and contact the school to notify us. The Local Authority have directed schools to code this absence with code Y which is used to indicate that a pupil is unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances. This is then not included as a possible attendance for that student and as such is not counted as an absence.

I have given consideration to school day-to-day activities and have decided that it is prudent that we postpone the Year 7 Parents' Evening scheduled for 1st April to a date in the Summer Term to be arranged. There will be no whole school assemblies next week and we are changing the venues of the Year 11 additional mock exams in English Language on Tuesday and physics on Wednesday to classrooms instead of in the Main Hall.

Once more I thank you for all of your support at this most difficult of times and wish you and your family the very best of health.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Quinn

Headteacher

Longbenton High School