



Orchard and Shepherdswell
Academy
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17 March 2020

Coronavirus Update

Dear Parent/Carers,

I wrote to you yesterday about the current coronavirus situation. This letter is a further update and contains some new information based on changes to NHS and government guidelines on what you should do if you or your child show symptoms of COVID-19.

Firstly, at this point we still have **no confirmed cases of coronavirus amongst any of our staff or pupils. It is really important that you do not send your child to school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 (listed below). Equally, you yourself should not come to school if you are displaying symptoms.**

When you or your child should stay at home

You may be aware that the government changed their advice late last week on self-isolation. This was updated again on Monday evening. The advice from the NHS is now:

Stay at home if you have coronavirus symptoms.

You or your child should stay at home for 7 days if you have either:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

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.

How long to stay at home

- if you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- **if you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms**

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

You should only use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days.

See www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/ for more information on staying at home and a link to the NHS 111 online service.

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Absences at school

Due to of the change in guidance about self-isolation, we have had an unusually high number of pupils who have not been in school on Monday and Tuesday. 12% of our children were absent on Tuesday morning. We have spoken to the families of all these children. In most cases, it seems that they may have a cold and a cough and so are being kept away from school as a precaution. This is absolutely correct and follows the current guidance. We have had one staff member in this same position – they have a heavy cold with a cough and so have made a sensible decision not to come to school for the next 14 days, as the guidance says. In some cases, parents have reported their child as having a high temperature and a cough. Of course, it is absolutely correct that these children be absent from school for the recommended period of 14 days. As of Monday night, the government guidance says that everyone in the household should stay indoors for 14 days.

What we are doing at school

We are trying to reduce the number of visitors coming into school and are asking the visitors we do have to wash their hands as they enter the building. As well as directing cleaning staff to focus on disinfecting as many touch-surfaces as possible (door handles etc.), I have spoken to all children again in assembly on Monday about the importance of us doing our bit to protect vulnerable members of our community. We can do this by limiting the spread of germs. We have been directing the children to wash their hands as often as possible and have implemented a new system of ensuring the children wash their hands before they eat their lunch. Alongside this, there is a hand-sanitizer gel station in the hall for pupils to use. Our stocks of hand-soap and anti-viral cleaning spray are currently good following the norovirus bug outbreak we had before Christmas.

In assembly, I reiterated the current NHS advice on avoiding catching or spreading coronavirus:

Do

- ✓ wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ always wash your hands when you get home or into school
- ✓ cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- ✓ put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- ✓ try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

Don't

- ✗ do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Please continue to talk to your children about this advice at home. You yourself should see the most up-to-date advice on the NHS website.

Family Consultation Evening

Under normal circumstances, I would have sent a letter home to you yesterday about our Family Consultation Evenings due to take place next week. However, following discussions with Shepherdswell Academy, we have taken the joint decision to postpone these events.

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We are considering the possibility of alternative ways of communicating with you about your child's progress. We would like to hold telephone conversations with you, though we are currently looking into whether or not we have enough telephones and telephone lines in school to be able to do this effectively. We will certainly try to send you some written information about your child's progress next week, whether or not we feel we can arrange a telephone consultation. I will write to you again in due course about this with our finalised plans.

Breakfast Club / minibus and after-school clubs

As things stand currently, we intend to keep Breakfast Club, after-school clubs and our minibus service running as normal. However, please be aware that should staff need to stay at home and self-isolate in-line with government guidance, we may be forced to cancel these clubs and services. If this does happen, we will give you as much notice as we possibly can.

Sports Fixtures

Milton Keynes School Sport Partnership have today postponed all upcoming sports fixtures until after the Easter holiday. This includes hockey and athletics this week.

Residential Trips

We have been in contact with Whitemoor Lakes and the Frank Chapman Centre about our upcoming trips. Currently they have reassured us they are deep-cleaning the centres regularly and are intending to proceed as planned. Should this situation change at any point, I will write to you with further information when I have it.

Will school need to close at some point?

I would again re-iterate here that we currently have **no confirmed cases of coronavirus in any of our staff or pupils**. If this changes, I would be required to contact Public Health England who would advise us on our course of action and whether or not to close the school. If we face a situation whereby many of our staff are required to self-isolate, this may mean I need to take the decision to close the school due to safety concerns. If either me or the government chooses to close the school over the coming weeks, you will be contacted by text, letter and on our website / Facebook page / Twitter. As you will have no doubt seen from my letter last week, we are already making plans on how to support the children in their learning if they are not at school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. C. Brown
Headteacher

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