



Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School

Educating Women of the Future

Dear Parents and Carers

Tuesday 17th March 2020

I am writing to update you of current guidance to schools and what we have in place to continue supporting the learning and teaching of our students, while being mindful of everyone's continued health and wellbeing.

We have delivered the same assembly, to two different year groups yesterday and today. The remaining year groups will have the assembly tomorrow morning. It is important that students receive the messages they need to hear, about taking steps to minimise risk of contracting Covid-19. At the same time it is important for them to know what next steps might look like for the school in terms of staying open and also what they can expect from the school should specific year groups be asked to stay at home, partial closure, or subsequently because of full closure due to staffing level issues.

You may be aware that currently schools cannot close to safeguard against possible contact with the virus. While the government insists schools try to remain open, our priorities at this time are to ensure the school community remains safe and we continue to provide education. We have increasing numbers of staff who are now not able to come into school as a precaution following the latest announcements, yesterday. Regrettably this means we can no longer open for all year groups.

From Wednesday 18th March 2020, we will only be open for Years 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Following the PM'S briefing yesterday when vulnerable adults and children were advised to self-isolate as households, several staff have chosen to do that to minimise risk to vulnerable family members. They are not necessarily exhibiting any symptoms at all. Those at risk of developing more serious illness are as follows:

If you catch coronavirus and you:

- are over 70 years of age
- have a long-term medical condition – for example, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer or high blood pressure
- have a weak immune system (immunosuppressed)

There are many things that can cause a weak immune system (immunosuppressed).

These include:

- cancer treatment
- treatment for autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis (MS) and inflammatory bowel diseases
- HIV
- having an organ transplant or a bone-marrow transplant

Other lung viruses can cause severe illness in people who have a weak immune system. This is likely to be the same for coronavirus. This is why you should take extra care if you have a weak immune system.

Where cover from agency staff has been unavailable today due to high demand in London, some classes have been supervised by senior staff in the Main Hall. Dependent on the year group, various activities have been supported.

The current guidance we have from the DfE and Department of Health and Social Care, and information on this from school is as follows:

- Staff, young people and children should stay at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature greater than 37.8 to avoid spreading infection to others. Otherwise they should attend education or work as normal.
- If staff, young people or children become unwell on site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature (greater than 37.8) they should be sent home.
- Once a staff member or student or a member of their household exhibits a symptom or is in one of a number of government identified vulnerable groups, the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days.
- We should clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual, using standard cleaning products and advise students to ensure they wash their hands for 20 seconds, at specific times and more often than usual where possible with soap and water or hand sanitiser and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues.
- As you are aware students have been encouraged at every opportunity and by our poster campaign to wash hands at times according to guidance for educational settings: when they arrive in school, after sports activities, before and after lunch and before they leave school to travel home. All toilets have been open at the relevant times to allow this to happen. 1100 students wandering the site to wash hands throughout the day, during and between lessons would pose an unmanageable safeguarding issue.
- 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 advised to do so by Public Health England.
- 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. Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday), 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday).

The above are all guidance points that we are supporting and implementing.

In terms of reporting absence, please email the school as the high volume of voicemail messages is impacting school response time. When a voicemail is left, please speak clearly giving your daughter's first name and family name and her Year group. Please see the guidance on our website under "Attendance" in the "Parents and carers" area.

Handshakes are not allowed on site. From today, only essential visitors are allowed on site – they will be required to sign a declaration and answer questions to certify their level of risk of passing on the virus. If there is any disclosed risk, they will not be allowed on site. Visitors will be expected to wash their hands in the facilities by reception before starting their visit. If someone refuses, the visit will not take place. Generally all visitors to school are very aware of our expectations and their obligations to support us to keep the school as risk free as possible.

Yesterday the decision was taken to cancel all planned offsite UK trips and visits that are not vital to an Exam curriculum. That is why the KS4 Geography Field Trip has gone ahead today. Happily the recently cancelled Finals of the UK Big Bang Competition 2020 for Young Scientists and Young Engineers will now go ahead as a digital competition. Mr Reay will contact students with further details in due course.

The Year 10 Parents' Evening this week has been cancelled. Those families involved will receive a separate message with their daughter's report and details of how they can communicate with staff should they have specific queries or concerns to raise. Staff will be contacting families where they have identified concerns around progress in learning.

After-school and other extra-curricular activities apart from learning intervention and homework clubs have been cancelled. I am seeking to find extra time in the day for teachers to prepare resources for online learning in case of closure as well as planning their current daily lessons.

Arrangements are being made to ensure our students who are in receipt of free school meals, are not penalised by school partial or full closure. Those families will receive a separate communication from school.

During 14 day self-isolation:

During a 14 day self-isolation period, or partial closure, like any short term sickness absence, the school would not send work home for students to complete

Students can

- complete unfinished homework, continue reading their book and start a new one if able to
- research any current topic of learning in greater depth
- revise learning to date & use My Maths, Kerboodle, BBC Bitesize etc. - see the school website (Learning Resources area)

On their return to school students will be expected to catch up with work missed.

If the government requests me to close the school or during Partial Closure:

Students will be expected to stay home in self-isolation for the duration of the school closure including during school holiday time if the closure coincides with a holiday. During term time they will need to do all the above plus log in to their Google Classrooms where they will find work. A dialogue with their teacher will be possible and they will be able to hand in work and receive feedback.

Staff will be working with all their classes in that way so please do not expect an immediate response to a query; within 48 hours would be reasonable. Staff may be unwell themselves - where we know they are unwell, we will let you know - in that case please contact the Head of Department.

Staff will not be able to have video contact with students - communication will be via the Chat facility on Google Classrooms.

Please be patient as we move to this new remote learning format for whole year groups – it may take a couple of days to get into the full swing of it.

The school will update families through the InTouch communication system when there is further advice and guidance to share.

Current information is that all Public Exams are going ahead as planned. We will aim to sustain learning and teaching for our exam groups, Years 11 and 13 and also 7, 10 and 12 for as long as possible to support our exam students and to enable you to make childcare arrangements.

The challenges schools are facing are unprecedented and significant. Our aim is to minimise negative impact on our students' academic progress and personal development. Students, staff and families, form our learning and teaching community. The success of our community relies on relationships and we are seeking to continue these whether in school or working together online. We are aware of heightened sensitivities and levels of anxiety but the government reports that the majority of those who catch the virus will demonstrate mild symptoms, in particular, the young.

Rationale for our decision making processes has been shared and agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Local Authority has also been informed. We will keep you updated of developments. I am aware there may be new guidance later today. If anything changes regarding announcements for full closure of schools, we will keep you informed. Also if further partial closure to year groups is necessary in the coming days, I will aim to alert you as early as possible.

Thank you for your continued support. I would like to take the opportunity to praise all staff who will be focused on sustaining the education of your daughters and keeping our administration and business commitments functioning as normally as possible.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Violet Walker". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Violet" and last name "Walker" clearly distinguishable.

Violet Walker
Headteacher