

Date 17 March 2020

To Parents and Carers (letter), all Staff (email) and Academy Governors and Trustees (email)

Update on the Coronavirus or COVID-19

We are writing to all our parents, carers, staff and governors to update you on the latest position. This has been an evolving situation and we will endeavour to keep you all informed as developments unfold.

Horizons Specialist Academy Trust is closely monitoring the national and local situation and is following the official guidance from Public Health England. We receive daily updates from Public Health and we are liaising closely with our colleagues in Local Authorities.

We have been updating our plans as to how we will respond to the potential detection and spread of the Coronavirus. This includes how we will manage either a partial closure of a school or schools due to staff absence, or closure of our schools if directed to do so by Public Health.

As you will be aware, we do have a number of vulnerable children and young people in our schools and we will continue to do what we can to support them in what is no doubt a challenging time both locally and globally.

The latest guidance from Public Health

16th March 2020 the government provided the following COVID-19 Stay at home guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>.

What to do if you have symptoms –

- A new continuous cough and/or
- A high temperature – above 37.8

- 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.
- 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
- 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.
- 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
- 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

This will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community

This guidance is for everyone – including the pupils, students, staff, parents and carers, who are part of our school communities.

If your child is experiencing these symptoms then please follow the guidance to ensure that your child stays at home and that all household members stay at home for 14 days.

We are limiting visitors to our academies and have issued guidance which says any person displaying the symptoms will not be allowed to enter the academy buildings.

Things we can do

The key emphasis remains on maintaining high standards of **hygiene** and regular hand washing to reduce the chance of the infection being spread. We are ensuring a good supply of hand wash in all the school toilets and are constantly reminding our pupils and students about good hygiene.

In addition, we are asking pupils and students to wash hands or use sanitising hand gel on entering school as well as encouraging regular hand washing throughout the day.

Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK

The most up to date guidance is advising that those are at an increased risk of severe illness from Coronavirus should be particularly stringent in following social distance 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 BMI of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

Others at even higher risk of severe illness from Coronavirus are:

- 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)

These people should follow the social distancing measures for the time being. However, NHS England will provide additional guidance in due course. Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Residential school trips

We have taken the decision to cancel any residential trips which were scheduled to take place between now and end of June 2020. We will continue to monitor the situation and seek further guidance regarding any residential trips planned for July.

Continuing education in the event of school closures

In the event of directed school closures, the academy sites will close. However, the academies will endeavour to support the ongoing education for those pupils and students who are able to complete set learning tasks at home. The Principals are currently putting in place arrangements for learning activities to be accessible via the academy websites. In addition, learning packs to support those students undertaking external examinations and non-examined assessments will be made available to relevant student groups.

I am aware that Principals are writing directly to parents and carers with the details.

Exam Boards are monitoring the situation closely. At present, there are no alterations to the exam schedule, with all external final examinations going ahead as planned. In line with normal procedures, the Joint Council for Qualifications in England (JCQ) suggest that all students should be available to sit exams up to and including 24 June 2020; should examinations be rescheduled.

Should this situation change we will follow the guidance from appropriate examination bodies and communicate this to you.

I have included additional links to further information which you may find helpful:

Coronavirus (COVID-19): UK government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Travel advice: coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Last updated 16th March 2020

We appreciate this is a worrying time and hope this letter provides you with some assurance that your schools are taking all the necessary measures to minimise the risk to our community.

Yours sincerely