



12th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to provide you with an update on our current contingency planning in relation to Covid-19. On a daily basis, we are studying the updates from the DfE as well as the guidance issued by Public Health England and the NHS. We are using these updates to help us develop and inform our contingency planning.

Current context

In terms of our daily routines in school, our cleaning regime has been strengthened with a particular focus on frequent touch surfaces such as door handles and touch screen devices. We regularly check toilets to ensure that they are fully stocked with hand soap and additional sanitisers have been placed strategically around school.

We are currently reviewing each school trip on a case by case basis. As you may be aware today's guidance has changed regarding overseas trips and we will communicate directly with parents/carers of students due to attend planned trips abroad. It is possible if Public Health England Guidance changes further that we may need to consider the cancellation of additional UK trips if we are not assured of appropriate contingency provision. If we need to make these difficult decisions, we will write to parent/carers explaining the current situation. We are also carefully considering proposals for any new trips and visits in-line with the government advice taking into consideration the welfare of students and staff in the delay and mitigate stages of the national strategy.

Scenario Planning

Over the past week we have been planning for a number of different scenarios.

1. Instruction to close the whole school for a limited period.
2. Instruction to limit the number of people in one place for a limited period.
3. Infection affects a member of our school community and a case is confirmed.
4. High levels of staff illness/absence, making it impossible to staff all classes.

Throughout our contingency planning, every attempt will be made to avoid disruption to learning; particularly for students in Year 11 and Year 13 who approach their examinations. Below is a summary of our current plans but as I am sure you will appreciate this is an ever evolving situation and we will undoubtedly have to change and react to situations as they evolve. Our hope in sharing these plans is that you fully understand that we will do all that we can to keep our students and staff safe, whilst at the same time continuing to provide them with a valuable education.

Headteacher: Miss D Martin

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1. Instruction to close the whole school for a limited period.

Sadly, we have had some recent experience of this with our roof closure and so the plans we had in place during this would continue and develop further.

How you can help us prepare:

Please ensure that your child has full access to their Office 365 email account ending @bentonpark.net. This is not the Google classroom email account. We recently circulated a link for you to complete to advise us if your child hadn't been able to access their account. Any response to this will be followed up in school. If you still need to advise us of issues your child is having logging in, please complete the form on the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/wb2vk9l>

Our teachers are being provided with guidance on a range of strategies for sharing work and support and if we find ourselves in this scenario, we will issue specific instructions to students and parents. We will use our email communication channels to update you and to also inform you when the school would be reopened.

As well as communicating with parents/carers we would need to be able to communicate directly with all of our students, hence the importance of them accessing their email accounts.

2. Instruction to limit the number of people in once place for a limited period.

In this scenario, we would focus on maintaining the provision for examination classes; primarily Year 11 and Year 13, along with students in Year 12 taking external examinations. Students in other years would follow the plan outlined in scenario 1, whilst working from home.

3. Infection affects a member of our school community and a case is confirmed.

In this scenario, the school would have to follow direct guidance from Public Health England.

4. High levels of staff illness/absence, making it impossible to staff all classes.

In this scenario, we can cope with a certain level of staff absence, this may include combining teaching groups. If, however, the levels of absence became too high, we would adopt a partial closure and redeploy staff to the teaching of examination classes, similar to scenario 2 above.

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Examinations

The advice from the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal. That latest guidance from the DfE indicates that Ofqual continues to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education to plan for a range of scenarios, as the public would expect. Their overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum.

We are currently recruiting for additional invigilation staff to ensure we have enough staff in preparation for the summer exam season.

Communication

During this period, we ask that parents follow the normal absence procedures relating to students which can be found at

<http://www.bentonpark.org.uk/attendance/68289.html>

As you may be aware the advice from Public Health England has changed as of 12th March 2020. The current advice is for individuals with a new persistent cough or high temperature of 37.8C or above to stay at home and self-isolate for seven days. If any absence is linked to suspected Covid-19 please ensure that you speak to either our Attendance Officer directly or contact main reception on 0113 2502330 or attendance@bentonpark.net.

Guidance on how to self-isolate to ensure this is effective can be found on the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/advice-sheet-home-isolation>

Other events such as Parents' Evening

Our current plans are to run these events as normal, but we have advised our staff not to shake hands with parent/carers. Please do accept our apologies for this and we hope you will support our reasons behind this. Should plans change for these events we will advise you using our normal communication channels.

General Guidance

We will continue to encourage children to wash their hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water. Also, to reduce the spread of germs, we will continue to encourage children when they cough or sneeze, to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue, or their sleeve (not their hands) if they don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately.

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General advice can be found on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

We hope that this letter updates you on our current planning whilst recognising that the landscape continues to evolve. Please continue to keep us informed should your personal situations change in respect of this virus. Please also be reassured that we will continue to make measured decisions in the best interests of the whole school community, whilst following the guidance provided by the DfE and Public Health England.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we plan for these potential scenarios.

Yours sincerely

Delia Martin
Headteacher

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