



NEGLECT NOT THE GIFT THAT IS IN THEE

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Tuesday 17th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

As you know we have been sending you the daily updates for educational settings from the Department for Education regarding COVID-19. This letter gives you an update from the school regarding what we have been doing to minimise risk, our decisions relating to school events and our plans to support the learning of your child in the event of a full or partial school closure. Please note that, at the current time, the school remains open-our attendance has remained high this week-but over the next few days I do envisage that this situation is likely to change following the government guidance last night on social distancing:

<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>

Attendance

We have been receiving a number of queries around attendance and whether parents should be sending their children to school. As a school we can only refer parents to the government advice. According to that advice:

- Students should stay at home and self isolate if they have a high temperature or a persistent cough- they should remain at home and the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days.
- Students should stay at home if a member of the household has a temperature or a persistent cough-they should remain at home and the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days.
- Students who have an increased risk of complications from infection due to an existing medical condition should stay at home and self-isolate for 14 days and then review.

If parents/carers are in any way concerned about making this decision, we would urge you to refer to the NHS website or contact your medical provider (in most cases this will be the GP) for further advice. The school is not in a position to give any medical advice. **We do expect you to leave a message on the school absence line to inform us of any current absence and reason.** If a household is self-isolating, it is not necessary to report absence each day, as it will be assumed that the self-isolation will continue for 14 days.

Action we are taking now:

It is very difficult to predict what might happen but we have taken steps in school to plan as best we can for future events and would appreciate your support and understanding.





Raising Awareness and General Hygiene

- Last week we led assemblies for every year group regarding the virus-that link is available in my Greensheet letter from last week. We have also given advice to students around good hygiene practices through assemblies
- Students are advised by members of the Leadership Team to wash hands on arrival at school and are spoken to individually on entry to the Dining Hall at break and lunch time.
- All the toilets are open in every building with plentiful soap. These are cleaned throughout the day.
- Notices are posted around the school to remind students to wash hands regularly.
- The advice from Public Health England is that hand sanitisers can be used if soap and water are not available (although soap is more efficacious). Some students have their own sanitisers; however, we have been unable to provide this due to a national shortage.
- Tissues are available in every classroom.

General Cleaning

We are working with our cleaning contractor to ensure that particular attention is paid to key areas. Our cleaners have been provided with a new cleaning solution which is more stringent and are applying this product to surfaces, including door handles and bannisters.

The catering contractor, Olive Dining has taken additional precautions of wiping down tables between sittings and also serving hatches.

School Trips and Events

We also wanted to update you on the status of any planned trips and events in the medium term.

The following trips and events for the remainder of this term have been cancelled or postponed:

- 20th March: **Year 9 -Globe Trip** -cancelled (parents to be refunded via sQuid)
- 26th March: **Year 10 Parents' Evening** -postponed until summer term (date to be confirmed)
- 26TH March: **Year 7 Unicorn Trip** -cancelled (parents to be refunded via sQuid)
- 1st/ 2nd April: **Year 10 Geography Field Trip to Walton on the Naze**-postponed until 24th/25th September
- 2nd April: **Steel Pans Concert**-postponed until summer term (date to be confirmed)
- 3rd April-10th April- **Ski Trip**-cancelled (full refund to be transferred by BACs)

We are currently reviewing trips that are planned to take place in the summer term. Trip leaders will contact parents/carers separately about the status of those trips when decisions are made. We are in contact with African Adventures regarding the status of the trip to Zanzibar and ensuring that we protect the interests of our students and their parents.



School Closure

The government is planning for a range of future scenarios, one of which includes the possibility of a school closure, but to date the government's preference is to keep schools open. This section of the letter sets out some of our current plans should this happen in the UK, so please note the following.

As we have decreasing capacity to deliver the full curriculum to all year groups, with increasing numbers of staff required to self-isolate, we will be considering partial closure. This will mean reducing the school by one or more year groups at a time.

Day to Day Communication

In the event that we need to have a partial closure (closed to some year groups), we will meet with students to explain expectations and how they should organise their independent work. We will then communicate plans through e-mail, text and through the website.

In the event that the government directs a national programme of school closures, we have remote access to the parent and student database and can email you to keep you updated. This, and our school website, will provide up to date information. Please ensure that you check these regularly.

Also, for obvious reasons, it is essential that we have up to date contact details for you. Please inform the school if you have recently changed your mobile number, for example.

Student Learning

It is vital that if the school closes, students should be able to continue to study at home as far is practical. Whilst there is no substitute for being in a classroom with a teacher, we will set work for students to complete at home.

Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will be issued with a work pack which includes 4 weeks of work to be completed. They will be issued:

- A literacy booklet
- An English project booklet
- A Maths work booklet
- A Humanities project booklet
- An exams revision booklet which highlights topics for revision for the End of Year Exams to be taken in 5 subject areas.

You can help your child in Year 7, 8 and 9 by ensuring they complete a full school days' worth of work from their packs (i.e. 5x 1 hour lessons with breaks). Students will not need access to electronic devices for this work, though it would be useful to your daughters if they can access revision resources on-line.



Students in Years 10 and Year 11 will be expected to **follow their timetable from home** (following the timing of the school day) and their class teacher will be setting work on Microsoft Office365 “Teams” live. We have identified students who have limited access to technology through a student questionnaire and have made provision for the students most in need. On the occasions when “Teams” fails (due to high levels of global usage) teachers will endeavour to group e-mail the class work and correspond with them through the lesson by school e-mail.

Parents can help their children in Years 10 and 11 by ensuring that they are up and ready to start work at 9:10am each day and that they follow the timings of the school day. They should be given access to a computer or laptop if possible. Where they have non-examined subjects, they should focus on more general revision.

Full guidance will be issued to students and parents in the event of a school closure.

In the event of an extended school closure, we would ask parents and carers to try and ensure conditions at home are conducive to allow five hours of quality work each day. I appreciate that with several family members in a confined space, this may be challenging, but KS4 students should be given priority over younger siblings.

School day timings to be followed by Year 10 and Year 11 students:

| | |
|-------|--------------------|
| 9:10 | Period 1 |
| 10:10 | Period 2 |
| 11:10 | Break (25 minutes) |
| 11:30 | Period 3 |
| 12:30 | Lunch (1 hour) |
| 1:30 | Period 4 |
| 2:30 | Period 5 |

Examinations

This is an area where we are still awaiting some more direction from JCQ, the body that regulates all public exams. Current advice is that we continue to prepare our students in Year 11 for their GCSEs, as normal. In the event of school closure, we will find alternative ways of supporting these students. However, as we get nearer to the exam dates, revision from home will be even more vital and staff will continue to support their exam classes via email. As we hear more from the Department for Education, we will update you.

Further advice for parents and carers

Please see the links below for any further information.

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public



- The Government Coronavirus Action Plan; a guide to what you can expect across the UK
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan

Finally, this is clearly a difficult and unprecedented situation for us all and we are doing our very best to react to and pre-empt situations as they arise, so we are asking for your continued support as we take those decisions in order to protect the health and welfare of our school community.

Thank you all for your support and understanding at this challenging time for us all and, most importantly, stay healthy.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meryl Davies', written over a faint, light blue grid background.

Meryl Davies

Headteacher

Walthamstow School for Girls