



Parent Newsletter

St Mary Magdalene Secondary

Issue No 9 | March | Monday 16th March

Dear Parent/carers,

As I am sure you will be aware, the Government announced that we are moving into the delay phase in the national COVID-19 strategy. Whilst this was a significant shift, it has not changed the day to day school opening and we will remain open until we are made aware of any change, following guidance from the Government, DFE and Public Health England.

In line with this guidance, please note:

- Anyone with a new persistent cough, and/or a high temperature must self-isolate for 7 days. More information can be found on the gov.uk website. If you have any concerns about yourself or your children please contact 111 and if there are any underlying conditions please contact your GP and contact the school with any updates. Full guidance on self-isolation can be found online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- In accordance to Public Health England self-isolate means that you should stay indoors and avoid any contact with other people to prevent the spreading of the disease. Therefore, if children/adults are self-isolating they should not be using public transport, be in public places, avoid visitors, deliveries should be left on the doorstep.
- The school is not able to make a decision about whether a child is fit to attend school.

As a school we are taking the following steps:

- Educating our students on the pandemic
- Promoting good health behaviours
- Cancelling all educational visits (including international residential)
- Cancelling parents' evening (next scheduled evening was on Thursday 26th March)
- Creating work for all of our students in the event of future school closures.
- Creating 'points of contact' for each subject area in the event of future school closures (email contacts to be shared)

Education trips

As mentioned above, all educational visits have been postponed. This is particularly difficult for us as a school considering the number of educational visits we lead and the importance we place on them within the curriculum. I will share more information with parents/carers who have paid for the trips to Iceland, Jersey, Barcelona and New York. At present we intend to re-schedule the trips planned, so there will **NOT** be any refunds in the first instance. However, this may well change and we will inform parents as the full picture emerges and, if need be, we will arrange for refunds. We ask that you please **do not** call the school office regarding these trips in the next few weeks so that we can keep phone lines open and office staff focussed on more immediate matters.

Safety

At school, we will teach our students what social distancing means and why it is so important at the moment. Please encourage your children to ensure they are going back home straight after school and not congregating around particular areas with their friends. This will be even more important in the event of future school closure, as your children will need to be encouraged and supported in social distancing.

Potential school closure

As the situation unfolds, it may become the case that staff shortages present us with difficulties in providing safe and lawful supervision for the children in our care.

We may need to implement a number of strategies to deal with staff shortages:

- We may need to **merge** classes. This would involve 2 classes which are depleted due to absence being taught by one teacher and a support staff member.
- Your child may be taught by a **different teacher** to their usual teacher.
- Your child may be **supervised** by staff who are not teachers. (Please be assured that every member of staff in school undergoes the same rigorous background checks into their suitability to work with children, regardless of role and anyone supervising children who is not a teacher would be acting under the close supervision of a qualified teacher. We will only do this with staff who I am confident can supervise the children safely and effectively.)
- We may, if necessary, introduce a reduced timetable for different year groups if staff shortages are unmanageable with the above strategies. This means we may introduce partial closure for one or more classes. For instance, Years 7 and 8 may have a morning timetable and Years 9 and 10 an afternoon timetable.

We will of course inform you at the earliest opportunity about any significant changes in your child's timetable/school day via our text messaging and online letters.

We understand that this situation can be distressing for children and adults alike. In school we will not be drawing unnecessary attention to the situation and instead focusing our attention on learning as usual. If students do ask, we will emphasise how low the risk is to children in an age-appropriate way and reassure them as much as possible.

If you have any further questions at this point, please do contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Mr R Hussain
Principal