



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

13th March 2020

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Public Health – Coronavirus – LETTER 1 (OF 1)

As the Government moves into its second phase of dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak, I thought parents would appreciate an update from the school. We have been following the advice from Public Health England and the Department for Education. In summary, their advice has been around the importance of hygiene and foreign travel. However, we have been considering different options whilst maintaining calmness!

Public Health England: The Importance of Hygiene

“Personal hygiene is the most important way we can tackle COVID-19, especially washing hands more; and the catch it, bin it, kill it strategy for those with coughs and sneezes.”

“Wash your hands more often for 20 seconds with soap and hot water.”

Public Health England recommends that in addition to handwashing before eating, and after coughing and sneezing, everyone should also wash hands after using toilets and travelling on public transport.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO): Travel Advice

The FCO has advised:

- Against all but essential travel to Italy
- Against all travel to Hubei Province in China
- Against all but essential travel to the rest of mainland China
- Against all travel to the cities of Daegu, Cheongdo and Gyeongsan in South Korea

Self-Isolation

You are probably aware that the Government has requested that anyone who has a high temperature or a new continuous cough should self-isolate for 7 days. Any pupil absence should be reported in the usual way.

Frequently asked questions

Will the school close?

At the moment, in line with the vast majority of schools, we are open. We expect to remain open and can adjust as and when required.

How will I find out if the school closes?

If the government places restrictions on all schools we will all be told through public information. I would expect to be in a position to inform parents and we will use the website, School Comms, emails and if possible, a letter. Ideally the letter would include arrangements that we would put in place. In this situation our priority will be Years 11 and 13 in view of public examinations.

Could the website say if the school is open?

Assume the school is open unless the website says otherwise. If a decision was made (similar to the adverse weather procedure) to close the school, we would put a message on the website.



What will happen to public examinations for Years 11,12 and 13?

At the moment, these year groups are very focussed on external examinations. Any decision and information about what would happen would be made by OFQUAL (Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation). They will be very mindful of the need to balance health with educational considerations.

Why had some schools already cancelled all school trips abroad?

Some schools had made the decision in response to FCO advice. We did not have any trips planned to Italy or China for example. **On the 12th March the Government announced that all school trips abroad are banned.** This will mainly affect Activities Week and we will look at the implications for this.

What about school trips in England?

Any decision here will be made with Public Health England and FCO advice. At the moment, there is no reason to think that things cannot continue as planned.

Will there be an Activities Week this year?

Given the announcement about school trips abroad it will be different this year. More information will need to follow.

What will happen to any events with large amounts of people?

Clearly all events are under consideration. We will need to review the 40th Anniversary Celebration Concert at Snape Maltings planned for the 26th March.

Is there soap in the toilets?

More frequent checks and replacements are being made. In the event that there is an issue, pupils should alert the School Office who have additional supplies.

Should I bring my own sanitiser in?

This seems a very sensible thing to do alongside having your own supply of tissues.

What information should I believe on social media?

Misinformation and rumour are not very helpful. Only trust credible sources such as from HM Government and Public Health England. School will contact you as mentioned earlier. Don't assume that lack of information means that we are trying to hide something. Any information we share will be carefully considered. Children will value a measured and calm response!

Summary

This is clearly an evolving situation and the school will respond appropriately. In the meantime, the key messages are around hygiene and public health.

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

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

I thank you for your support in this unprecedented situation. Our focus will be on the well-being of pupils and their education at this time.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher