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Chair of Governors: Mrs Anne Camm

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

## Re. Coronavirus Update

We do hope you are all keeping well & safe & would like to thank you warmly for your continued support as we journey together in these difficult days.

This week we have been working very closely as school leaders across the Diocese Sheffield Academies Trust to plan ahead for any possible eventuality that may face us as a group of schools due to the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak. We are writing to you today to keep you informed about some of the planning that is being put into place.

Government updates are changing daily. At the time of writing, government advice is to:

- **Stay at home for 14 days along with anyone in your household if anyone in your family develops a new cough or fever.** Please do not send your child to school if **anyone in your household** has these symptoms.
- **Avoid social gatherings & crowded places.** We wrote to you last week to explain how we are already limiting opportunities within school for large events such as assemblies or whole school activities.
- **Those at risk will be asked to distance themselves socially** (the government has a list of those who fall in this category, but they include people over 70, those who are pregnant, other adults who would normally be advised to have the flu vaccine).

This recent guidance is likely to have an impact on staffing levels, as some of our staff fall into these categories. It is possible that there may come a time when we have insufficient teachers for all classes due to self-isolation of staff, & we have been working hard to make contingency plans for this possible scenario should it happen, which we will outline below.

The government's current advice is to keep schools open &, unless staffing levels drop to a level that necessitates us to rethink our position, this is what we will do. ***We intend to stay open for as long as it is safe & possible to do so or unless directed by the government to close.***

We are monitoring staffing levels daily as a school as well as at trust level. Staffing levels have already been affected in our school since the new guidance from the government this week. Please be patient with us if some of the usual activities & routines in school are not carried out as often or as well as usual, such as homework, for example, as we have less staff in school managing their job in difficult circumstances.



If staffing levels continue to fall significantly, then we will need to consider some of the following to enable us to stay open:

- Mixing classes
- Teaching assistants helping to cover classes where possible.
- Simplifying lessons, focusing if needs be on caring for pupils & engaging them in activities rather than continuing with the curriculum as it stands now. This will mean we can keep the school open for a longer period if we have staff shortages.
- Considering carefully partial closures if staffing levels become very low, which may include, as one example, closing to all students other than those whose parents/ carers work for the emergency services.

Some of our families are already in the situation where they need to self-isolate. We have provided work for those families on our website with different ideas & links to keep busy. **If the school closes altogether, then teachers will set tasks on a daily basis to supplement the ideas for activities as well as links to websites, etc. These can be accessed through the following link:**

<https://www.st-marys.sheffield.sch.uk/copy-of-coronavirus-closure-homewor-6>

Thank you again for your continued support & please be in touch if you have any further questions or concerns.

With very best wishes for the good health of you & your families,

Karole Sargent  
Executive Headteacher

Karen Miller  
Head of School

