

13 March 2020

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Student,

Please read the information contained in this letter carefully and also share it with Parent/Carers as appropriate for their information.

I am writing to you regarding the evolving situation with the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the increasing levels of national concern in relation to this. At the time of writing this update we do not have any diagnosed cases of coronavirus within our staff or student groups, but it remains important to be very vigilant, as well as to follow good habits in relation to personal hygiene and hand washing. None the less the announcements by Government following the COBRA meeting on Thursday 12th March have signaled a move to the 'delay' phase of the Government's response

The College continues to monitor and follow the guidance of the relevant Government Departments, including Public Health England. As a result, we remain open as normal and anticipate continuing to do so unless formally advised otherwise by the appropriate authorities, or if the disruption to staffing becomes extreme. Whilst we hope to remain open and to provide continuity, there is now the potential for disruption to our normal routines to arise and if that occurs we will communicate directly to all students through our college e-mail system, as well as using this to update you on any other guidance that we wish to send about how we are responding to the circumstances at any time. As a result, **we are asking you to ensure that you check your e-mails every day**, in case important information is being circulated or updated.

We have been regularly circulating guidance on the precautions all students should take in relation to personal hygiene and hand washing, as well as a range of official web-links, for your reference, should you wish to find further information from verified sources. The NHS have provided another useful film guide to the best approach for hand washing and you can access it via this link:

<https://youtu.be/bQCP7waTRWU>

The Department for Education, Public Health England and other government agencies are clearly working tirelessly to manage and delay the impact of this virus and we all have a part to play in helping those efforts further, placing social responsibility at the fore of this approach. Announcements yesterday have confirmed a new threshold for self-isolating, for seven days as a precaution, in certain circumstances. **You should take this decision if you have symptoms of either a new persistent cough or a fever.** Whilst this may still be unconnected with Coronavirus, those symptoms could be linked in some cases and so guidance is that you should still self-isolate for seven days. If you do have either of these symptoms, please let the college know as part of reporting your absence.

In summary, the most recent guidance is as follows;

Stay at home for 7 days if you have either:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home, but can read official [advice about staying at home](#).

However, you should use the 'NHS 111 online coronavirus service' at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> if;

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

To avoid overloading NHS support services, you are asked to **only call NHS 111 if you cannot get the appropriate help online**.

You can be assured that we have been preparing and stand ready to act further and I wanted to also provide you with some more information about the approach that our college might need to take if a positive COVID-19 case is identified in our college.

1. If a confirmed case is identified in our college, the relevant agencies will work closely with us in managing our responses and our actions will be taken with community health at the centre of our decision making based on their guidance and advice. In particular;
 - a. Public Health England are likely to support us to assess the situation and may wish the College to close temporarily or partially whilst this is evaluated. You may have already seen this happening in other areas where confirmed cases have been identified.
 - b. The appropriate agencies are likely to work with our college to guide us in relation to conducting any specialised cleaning of our facilities to ensure our college is safe for students and staff to return subsequently. We have already increased cleaning and have arrangements in place for more deeply cleaning key areas or locations as required.
2. Any partial or full closure decisions would be communicated through the college e-mail system directly and confirmed through the college website. Please note that the College does not normally use social media platforms for this type of communication and will continue to use our e-mails system and website for all important communications with you.

It is now also likely that the new thresholds for self-isolation will mean the college has to manage significant periods of staff absence in line with Government guidance and we are preparing for that. Continuity of learning is of course extremely important to us and, as in other exceptional or emergency circumstances, the College has online learning materials, found at WQE Online and accessible remotely through our website. That can be used by teachers to support continuing learning, alongside communications through the college e-mail systems. You should have folders and documents available to you remotely already on Office 365 and one drive and we advise that you continue to use this as it enables remote access to any key work or documents.

In some cases, staff who may need to self-isolate may be doing so as a precautionary measure and it is possible that they will still communicate with you remotely in those circumstances to support and guide your learning. If staff are well enough to work, but isolated from the college, they would generally be available to support and respond to you at the times when you would normally have a lesson, perhaps by using e-mail, WQE online and other technology. However, in some cases they

may be unwell and unable to, so in those circumstances we ask for your understanding, but we will continue to try to provide suitable work to support your learning.

3. Above all it is important to continue to:

- wash hands regularly with soap and water, particularly before and after eating, and after going to the toilet;
- use alcohol-based hand sanitizer as an alternative if soap or water is unavailable or hard to access (though soap and water is still considered the best approach);
- cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of the elbow and dispose of tissues in the bin immediately.

4. You can also find the latest information updates on COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Alternatively, these links to the latest Department for Education information are available as far as it remains important to use verifiable and official sources of information:

<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>

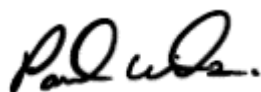
<https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/>

5. In addition to our vigilant in-college approach, I am also aware of the evolving global travel situation. At this time there are no international trips booked, but the college has traditionally offered a wide range of trips, visits, and event including in the UK and more locally. On that basis and in the interests of student and staff health, we will need to monitor and review the extent and types of trips, potentially limiting or delaying these in the short term. If you have plans to be involved in any such trips, I know you will have been looking forward to these. If these can be managed without unnecessary increases in health risks these may still go ahead, but I am sure you will understand if the context gives rise to a need to vary these or related travel arrangements. Any staff leading trips and visits will of course be in contact with likely participants directly to discuss the plans, as well as potential impacts of any decisions that may at be needed in relation to those.

To conclude, I would like to reassure you the College will continue to monitor the situation closely and will act swiftly on the advice of the relevant authorities regarding coronavirus. We will continue to provide information and support to all students as the national and local context evolves and remain hopeful that our collective care and vigilance by following the recognized guidance will limit issues and any associated disruption.

I thank you for your continued support in managing a dynamic and changing context.

Yours sincerely



Paul Wilson
PRINCIPAL