



Heart of the Forest Community Special School

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Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to you with some specific advice about the Coronavirus outbreak and our plans for the coming weeks. As I am sure you will understand, it is hard to predict what the impact on schools might be, but we have taken steps to plan as best as we can for future events and would appreciate your support and understanding.

Action we are taking now

Awareness in Assemblies

In assembly last week, we talked about washing hands and how it was important to do this regularly. This was based on NHS and government advice about the importance of regular handwashing and avoiding coughing/sneezing over other people but delivered in a way, which our children would understand. Posters reinforcing this advice are now displayed around the school site.

Hand washing / Hand Sanitisers

We have a good stock of liquid soap to ensure that students and staff can wash their hands more frequently.

There is currently a global shortage of hand sanitiser, although we do have some stock, which we are currently using in our sanitiser dispenser in Reception. We are ensuring pupils are washing their hands regularly at snack time and lunchtime. Please feel free to send hand sanitiser into school for your child if you feel it is necessary.

Toilets

Toilets are always accessible throughout the day and we will ensure soap dispensers remain topped up. All toilets are cleaned daily with antibacterial cleaner.

General Cleaning

Due to the nature of some of our children, we always prioritise certain areas of the building; e.g., the surfaces that people touch frequently such as handrails and door handles.

If the situation arises and Public Health England advise that we need to do a deep clean this will be arranged and parents/carers will be kept informed.

Contingency Planning

As the path of the Coronavirus outbreak develops, we will be following advice from the Department for Education and the Government. This might, at some point, involve temporarily closing the school on a full/partial basis. If this happens, please note:

- We will send messages to parents via Parentapp.
- We can update our school website remotely and you should check this daily in the event of closure
- Senior Management will have access to laptops and will be able to pick up messages sent via the website/parentapp. Please note that any enquiries sent to the admin e-mail will not be answered.

School Trips and Work Experience Placements

As present, all our planned trips and visits are going ahead. We are monitoring official advice and will communicate with parents/carers on a specific basis should this become necessary. Please remember that short-notice changes to itineraries may be necessary due to circumstances beyond the school's control.

Examinations

The Government and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), the body which runs public exams are monitoring the situation with the Coronavirus. As any impact on exams will affect the whole country, we will follow any official guidance and keep parents updated.

Staff Absence

It is possible that the school may need to operate as normal but with a higher number of staff absent than usual. We are constrained by the physical size of our classrooms and by the availability of our specialist staff. Therefore we will consider:

- Amalgamating classes to make best use of our available staff
- Sending some classes home in order to maintain safety for all pupils. Clearly, this would be a last resort as our intention is to educate all pupils as normally as possible.

Please be assured that our pupil's safety is paramount and any action we take will be after careful consideration of the situation to ensure a good outcome for all.

Please be aware that staff will have to follow advice from Public Health England about attending work if they have been in contact with cases of Coronavirus and may not be able to attend work for a short period even though they want to do so.

Further Information and Avoiding Anxiety

The Government and the NHS have made lots of advice about Coronavirus (also called Covid-19) available on their websites. I recommend that you look to those sources of information for updates and news about the virus and avoid listening to rumour and second hand information from other sources.

Clearly this is a developing situation and, at the time of writing, the risk to health and the smooth running of the school is deemed low to moderate. However, that alone can cause anxiety to our children.

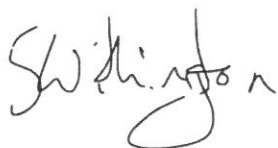
You know your own child best, but together we should:

- Do our best not to sensationalise or overdramatise the issue.
- Steer students away from some of the news coverage and social media channels.
- Stick to known facts rather than speculation.
- Avoid passing on our own concerns to our children/students.

There are a small number of pupils with suppressed immune systems. They and their families will know best how to stay safe but we will support these groups as best as we can, taking into account advice from the NHS 111 service and government websites.

We all have our own levels for tolerating stress, anxiety and disruption and will react to situations like this in our own way. Our staff will be doing their very best to protect you, your children and their education.

Thank you for your support

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Withington'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Withington
Headteacher