



6 March 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – update**

As indicated in my previous letter, I will be sending updates to parents on an ongoing basis as the situation with the Coronavirus develops.

### **Steps we are taking**

As you know, a number of steps have been and are being taken to minimise the risks at HMS. These include:

- notifying staff and parents of key symptoms of Coronavirus and what to do if they have been to a high risk area;
- giving guidance to pupils on the importance of good personal hygiene, particularly in relation to handwashing and use of tissues;
- increasing cleaning of key areas with emphasis on touch points, e.g. door handles;
- installing hand sanitisers;
- providing tissues in all classrooms and offices, and
- regularly checking that hand wash is available in the toilets.

We are continuing to monitor the situation regarding trips abroad and will liaise with trip leaders on the position as it develops.

### **The current situation and how it may develop**

Currently we have no known cases of pupils or staff having the Coronavirus. However, given the recent increase in cases in the UK and the Government's Chief Medical Officer's pronouncement that an epidemic in the UK is now highly likely, it seems inevitable that we will be affected to some degree at some point. As and when we do receive notification of a confirmed case, we will inform you and will adhere to government guidance.

Another way in which staff and pupils may become affected is to become a primary contact. This means that they will have been informed that they have been in contact with a confirmed case and are required to self-isolate as a consequence, even if they are not displaying symptoms. After 14 days of self-isolation without symptoms, they can come out of isolation. We do not intend to notify parents if individuals are required to self-isolate as a consequence of being a primary contact. This is because current advice is that primary contacts are unlikely to be contagious unless they experience symptoms, in which case they will be tested. A secondary contact is someone who has been close to a primary contact and the advice is that no action needs to be taken in such a circumstance.

## Individuals with underlying medical issues

For most people, the COVID-19 virus is mild and young people do not appear to be particularly vulnerable. However, for some people, particularly the elderly and those with underlying medical issues, it can be more serious. Anyone who has an underlying medical condition, or may be more vulnerable, needs to be aware that it is highly likely in the coming weeks that we will see increased cases in the North East and therefore may be exposed to the virus. They should seek advice from their GP or other health professional as required.

## Contingency planning

With the possibility that staff and pupils may have to self-isolate over the coming weeks, we are putting in place arrangements to enable pupils to have access to resources online, so that they do not fall behind. This will be particularly pertinent for those preparing for SATs. Specific details regarding this will follow in due course.

## Key actions for parents

- Please continue to encourage your son or daughter to maintain good hygiene, including washing hands regularly.
- Please provide your son or daughter with tissues to bring to school, to catch a cough or a sneeze. Used tissues should then be put in a bin as soon as possible.
- If you think your son or daughter may have been in contact with someone with Coronavirus and/or they develop symptoms that are a concern to you, please take the appropriate medical advice available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>.
- Inform the school immediately if you think your son or daughter may have the virus or become a primary contact.

## Further advice

The Department for Education has launched a Coronavirus helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and young people can contact the helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

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

We understand that this is a time of uncertainty, which can cause increased anxiety. We will continue to review the situation and will adapt how we respond as things evolve, in accordance with government guidance. We will continue to keep you updated. If anyone has any concerns or questions, please contact us at the school.

Yours sincerely



Mr Atkins  
Executive Headteacher