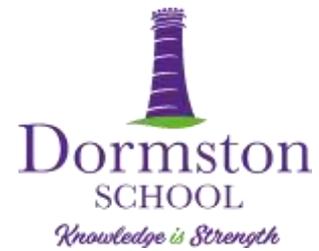


Our Ref: SDN/KON

5 January 2021

ALL PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parents/Carers



Re: COVID-19 UPDATE - 5 JANUARY 2021

Following last night's announcement from Government that schools will close to the vast majority of students from Tuesday 5 January 2021, I am writing to clarify what the next steps will now be. As I am sure you are aware, the guidance for education has changed rapidly, particularly during the Christmas break, therefore all information we provide is, unfortunately subject to change depending on national guidance. We will also be writing to all students, in all Year Groups, by the end of the week. Our school phone lines will be back up and running as from Wednesday 6 January 2021.

We appreciate that this news must be frustrating for both our students and parents/carers, but we will do our utmost to ensure your child's educational entitlement and emotional well-being is affected as little as possible and we plan to build upon the provision and experience we have gained from the last lockdown in March 2020. Please therefore rest assured that we will endeavour to support you and your child as much as possible throughout this situation.

At the moment, the Government are requesting that schools close to **ALL** students until after February Half Term (22 February 2021) but remain open to those whose parents who are classed as key workers and to those students who are considered 'vulnerable'.

Government advice is that students who are clinically extremely vulnerable should remain at home. You will have previously received a letter from the NHS or from your child's GP if this is the case and your child may have been advised to shield in the past.

Key Worker/Vulnerable Students

If as a parent/carer you are identified as a key worker we request that you contact us immediately (if you have not already done so) to let us know that your child falls into this category if you know you will need to send your child to school. **Key workers are under no obligation to send their children to school but can do so if no other childcare arrangements are possible.** We are asking ALL parents/carers who have not already notified us to email info@dormston.dudley.sch.uk by Thursday 7 January 2020 at 3.00pm. **Please do not send your child into school until we have confirmed that they have been allocated a place.** Please do not be offended if we ask for confirmation from your employer that this is the case.

Key Workers have been identified as:

- National Health Service;
- Armed Forces;
- Teachers and Childcare staff;
- Care Home workers;
- Social Workers;
- Police Officers, Community Support, civilian staff;
- Prison Officer or other Probation staff;
- Firefighters;
- Local Authority planners;
- Environmental Health Officers;
- Highway Agency Traffic Officers;
- Supermarket Workers;
- Lorry/Delivery Drivers.

Any students in the identified groups who have no other childcare arrangements will be admitted to school as normal at 8.40am. They must register in the Atrium. They will be expected to wear full uniform. We will be operating with a skeleton staff and students will be expected to follow the work that is being uploaded on GO4Schools or take part in live lessons, whilst we provide supervision and support. Students must ensure they bring their own earphones to school with them for this (not wireless). There will be a mix of students from different year groups and they will be kept together in allocated rooms. Unfortunately, there will be no catering provision and students must provide their own packed lunches and snacks.

We will now be requesting that ALL staff and students wear masks or visors at ALL times unless they are medically exempt from doing so. With this new strain of the virus becoming increasingly transmissible we have to take every Health & Safety measure available to us. We hope you understand our reasons for doing this and that you will support us with this. We appreciate that nobody enjoys or likes wearing a mask/visor but if we all do our bit I genuinely believe we can at least try and reduce transmission and protect students, their family members and the wide community from becoming unwell.

A few parents have queried about shift work as they won't necessarily require their children to come into school every day. We are willing to support these key workers in any way we can and we are able to be flexible with this; all we ask is that you tell us at least 2 weeks in advance when your child will be in. If you can give us your shift pattern until the end of January 2021 that would be even better. We hope all our key workers are coping with the current demands of their job and want to reassure you that as a school we are 100% behind you in the task ahead of you once again. **With this new strain of the virus it is more important than ever that only students who genuinely need this provision access it.**

Our behaviour standards, whilst students are in school, will however need to be maintained and we ask that you speak to your child about ensuring they are clear of our expectations.

We will be staffing and planning for these students to come to school so we therefore need your commitment and support in continuing to send them into school as directed, **providing they are not showing symptoms or are part of a household that is required to self-isolate.** As far as possible, once you have informed us of your requirements please ensure that you commit to sending your child to school on these day as we are having to monitor attendance carefully and we will be staffing according to the numbers we have. For safeguarding reasons we will need to monitor attendance carefully and therefore the school cannot be used as a general childcare facility if we have no advance notice of your child's attendance.

Years 10 & 11 GCSEs

We are aware that many of our Year 10 & 11 students will now be feeling anxious about their GCSE examinations and the uncertainties of the future ahead. I would like to point out that the Government have not yet stated they are cancelling formal examinations. The Education Minister will let us know very shortly what evidence we will need to provide to generate the GCSE grades should there be a full cancellation of examinations. We will update you as soon as we have any further guidance and information. However, it is vital that students continue working hard and that students in Year 11 do not see this as the end of their time at school. Quite the opposite, this is their opportunity to further impress their teachers and excel in any assessments or coursework they produce. All GCSE students must continue to log in to live lessons and ensure their work is of the highest possible standard so that we have clear evidence of attainment. We have decided to move the next set of Mock Examinations to WC 29 March 2021. This will allow us more time to prepare students and ensure they are able to perform to the best of their ability. Any students who missed the first set of Mocks will be contacted by Mrs Bassan shortly.

Students Working from Home

This week the vast majority of our Year 11 lessons are live on Microsoft Teams. From Monday 11 January 2021, **ALL** students will be invited to live lessons for the majority of their timetable and they should check GO4Schools carefully.

There may be some exceptions to the delivery of live lessons i.e. staff illness, staff covering Key Worker/Vulnerable students and some instances where Curriculum Leaders judge that the lesson can be better delivered through guided individual study etc. For a small number of subjects i.e. PE, Drama it may not always be possible to offer live lessons. Students should log in to GO4Schools to ensure they know if the lesson is due to take place live or if other work has been set. All students should know their log-in details as we have provided these many times in school. Once again, we have attached the guidance on how to reset the GO4Schools password.

We would like students to follow their normal school timetable and ensure they stay in a routine. Students will be invited into the lesson by their teachers. We will be monitoring attendance carefully and a register will be taken at each lesson. If a child fails to attend we will notify parents/carers. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday **ALL** students will be invited to a Live Registration with their Form Tutor at 8.40am. This will ensure that we are keeping students in a routine and we are able to pick up any issues as they arise. It is vital that students attend registration.

We do not envisage any students misbehaving online. If anyone does behave inappropriately they will be immediately removed from the lesson, you will be informed and your child will most likely be banned from further online lessons. Microsoft Teams is constantly being monitored to ensure no one behaves inappropriately. Senior Managers will be present in some live lessons.

All students must have their microphones turned off and must not do anything to hamper the smooth running of the lesson in any way. This includes typing of emojis and inappropriate comments in the chat box. These lessons will be monitored by additional members of staff and appropriate action will be taken with any students not following these rules.

We encourage your child to email the work they produce to their teachers if directed to do so. Teachers will make their expectations clear about this in the lessons themselves. Staff will provide regular feedback on the learning that is taking place but please be aware that this may be done in a number of different ways.

We recommend that your child is completing their work on Microsoft Word for most subjects and creating different folders for different subjects to stay organised.

Any students who are experiencing difficulties with ICT equipment should email the school on info@dormston.dudley.sch.uk and we will endeavour to support in any way we can. You will be aware that the government have allocated us a small number of laptops that we are willing to issue as necessary. **If you have no ICT access at all please notify the school by Friday 8 January 2021. Thereafter, any remaining laptops will be allocated to students who may be sharing within a family.**

We respectfully request that our students are working inside rather than being allowed to spend time during the day socialising with large groups of friends out in the local community. Our key workers will be doing their very best to ensure we are all kept safe and we want to help them by ensuring our students are following government guidance and being good citizens.

Communication

We will ensure a good communication strategy is in place with both students, parents and staff throughout this lockdown and envisage that as things settle down, we will be able to communicate with slightly less urgency. We are planning however to continue with our Weekly/Monthly Update Sheets and we will be writing directly to students to ensure they feel connected and we plan to actively keep in touch with them throughout this process as we don't want them to feel isolated and disconnected from the school. Please therefore encourage them to check their emails regularly.

Please also look out for the letter from your Year Strategy Leader that will be coming out shortly which will have specific information pertaining to your child's year group.

We will also be re-instating our Curriculum Briefing sheets so that parents/carers are fully aware of what subjects and topics are being covered currently in each subject. You will receive the first set at the end of this week.

Free School Meals

As previously, the Government have committed to a voucher system for Free School Meal students and we will ensure this is distributed as soon as possible. You will receive a text or email as previously. If you have trouble accessing your vouchers please contact info@dormston.dudley.sch.uk. If your child is Pupil Premium and you are experiencing any additional hardship as a direct result of this crisis, please contact us in order to discuss any ways we may be able to help.

I will continue to keep you updated as more information emerges. With a vaccine on the way we are optimistic that things will start to improve for us all during the Spring and Summer.

Thank you once again for your patience, resilience and co-operation during these very difficult times. If we can continue to work in partnership for the benefit of the students of Dormston School we can tackle whatever obstacles we face, together.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Dixon
Head Teacher