

Dear parents, guardians and carers,

## **Re: Information and Guidance relating to Coronavirus**

You may be aware of the extensive news coverage regarding the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID – 19). As of 26 February, a total of 7,132 people have been tested in the UK, of which 7,119 were confirmed negative and only 13 positive.

The Department for Education (DfE) have issued the following information and guidance to schools, which we want to share with all our families and staff.

### **1. Information about the virus – what is it?**

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020. The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 and 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, it is unlikely that they have been infected. The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more affected than other age groups – very few cases have been reported in children.

### **2. How the virus is spread**

Spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

### **3. Preventing the spread of infection**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser. This is particularly important after taking public transport
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin
- people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work or any education or childcare setting
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

If you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child or colleague, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.

Face masks for the general public, pupils or students, or staff are not recommended to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments.

**4. What to do if someone becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19 (either through travel to a specified country or area or contact with a confirmed case)**

Call NHS 111, or 999 in an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk), and if appropriate, explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days. You can do this on their behalf if this is easier. People who become unwell should be advised not to go to their GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital. Make sure that children and young people know to tell a member of staff if they feel unwell.

**5. What to do if a case of COVID-19 (pupil, student or staff) is suspected in a school**

If anyone has been in contact with a suspected case in a childcare or educational setting, no restrictions or special control measures are required while test results for COVID-19 are awaited. There is no need to close the setting or send other learners or staff home.

**6. What to do if a case of COVID-19 (pupil, student or staff) is confirmed**

The school will be contacted by the local Public Health England Health Protection Team to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken. An assessment of each childcare or education setting will be undertaken by the Health Protection Team with relevant staff. Advice on the management of pupils or students and staff will be based on this assessment. The Health Protection Team will also be in contact with the patient directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts, and will be in touch with any contacts of the patient to provide them with appropriate advice. If there is a confirmed case, a risk assessment will be undertaken by the educational establishment with advice from the local Health Protection Team. In most cases, closure of the childcare or education setting will be unnecessary but this will be a local decision based on various factors such as establishment size and pupil mixing.

As I am sure you will be aware, information is being updated regularly and the guidance being issued may well change in the coming days and/or weeks. We will continue to monitor the situation as events change and update our advice and take further action, if required. Any updates will be provided on each school and college website. You can also access the latest government guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

Thank you for your support,