



CANSFIELD

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

19th March 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Further to the briefing from the Education Secretary on Wednesday I have a series of updates for you about the foreseeable future at Cansfield. Perhaps the most important update though is that the headlines which speak about national school closures are somewhat misleading. Cansfield is open as normal until the end of this week and from next week we will be open to targeted groups of students. I, and the rest of my team, intend to do everything we can to support those of you who are involved in keeping the infrastructure of our country up and running during these difficult times. Likewise, we have every intention to keep our school open and continue to provide love and care for our most vulnerable students.

Below I have listed the questions I suspect you will have, along with answers. If you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. What I would say though is that my team and I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the support that we have received from parents and carers and by the outstanding behaviour of our students during these difficult times. It is often said that we find what we are made of during our darkest moments – what we have absolute proof of from the last few weeks is that Cansfield is more than just a school and that our community is made of the strongest stuff.

Who is school open for from Monday 23rd March?

The Government has stated that schools are to be open for the children of key workers and vulnerable students. However, they have still to define what ‘key worker’ means and I am not prepared to keep you waiting to make your plans. For the moment, we are defining key worker as anyone employed in the following areas:

- the NHS,
- the emergency services,
- nurseries and schools,
- care homes,
- prison and probation services,
- the armed forces,
- social workers,
- local authority planners,
- highway agency staff,
- environmental health workers,
- those involved in the manufacture and distribution of essential goods and
- delivery drivers.

At present this is based on our best guess and we will update this list for you as soon as we have further information. You will receive a text on the morning of Friday 20th March asking if you are a key worker and whether you will be bringing your child in. Please only respond if the answer is Yes stating the field you work in. Likewise, if your child is considered to be vulnerable then they should also attend school. We will contact the parents of these children throughout the day alerting them as to whether their child has been judged to fall into this category. As we get to grips with this,

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please feel free to ring me or email me at any point for further clarification – I will not leave school tomorrow until every query has been responded to.

How will school function from Monday 23rd March?

It is our absolute aim for school to run as normally as possible from Monday 23rd March. This means that we intend to teach lessons to students in year groups, as they would expect from any normal day at school. In the event of staff becoming ill or lots of students being off on a particular day, we may further merge groups and we may well need to explore different approaches to teaching these groups. The aim will be to provide all students with a level of normality that appears to be missing from other parts of life at the moment, in the hope that it supports their mental health as well as continuing to promote their educational development. The only difference will be that during the day every student will complete the 'mental health mile' with their peers and their teachers, on the field or in the Sports Hall, in an effort to promote the wellbeing of our community.

What is the school doing to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus from Monday 23rd March onwards for those students attending school?

We continue to complete a rolling deep clean of our school. Our site team are disinfecting areas that are regularly touched (e.g. door handles, tables, stair rails) on an hourly basis. Students are being reminded daily of good hygienic practices, handwash is being regularly refilled and handshakes continue to be replaced by elbow bumps. Sadly, from Monday 23rd March we will cease to have assemblies, ensuring that there are not large numbers in a single space. Likewise, we will stagger entry into the canteen more carefully to reduce the overall number of students in the canteen at any one time.

What provision is there for students who are not in school from Monday 23rd March?

As soon as we have established who is attending, we will be able to provide all students who will not be in school with resources to ensure that they continue to learn throughout this period. If your child is not attending, then they will be given access to a suite of e-learning modules and access to printed work packs that they will receive on Friday while in school or have delivered to their homes. They will also have the email addresses of their teachers and the phone number of school, meaning that they will be able to contact their teachers who will be available to give guidance and advice as necessary.

What will happen to our Year 11s?

The saddest aspect of the Education Secretary's updates yesterday concerned our Year 11s. Despite the incredible efforts that these students went to in their exam preparations, they will no longer be sitting their GCSE exams this summer. The exams have been cancelled and we await news from the Department for Education confirming how GCSE grades will be awarded. I will update parents and students as soon as we have further news on this. While we will be setting Year 11 students work to continue until June, and offering support for particular targeted learners, we will not expect the bulk of our Year 11s to come into school for formalised study. This does not mean goodbye though, and we will be hosting the greatest prom that Ashton-in-Makerfield has ever known as soon as we are able to do so.

What is the current advice for students who are ill?

Current advice from the Government is that if your child develops a new continuous cough or a high temperature then they should self-isolate for seven days. If they develop these symptoms while at school, we will ring home and ask that they are collected. If anyone else in your household develops these symptoms, then your children should self-isolate for fourteen days. We would ask that all students and families follow these guidelines with absolute rigour, thereby ensuring the continued health of all our community.

Will this situation change?

We are living through completely unprecedented times, with advice changing on a daily, if not hourly, basis. It is our absolute intention to ensure that our school remains open for all of those pupils identified by the Government for as long as is possible. As it stands, we have a healthy body of staff who are keen to continue to perform their duties. Looking ahead, Government advice may change and our capacity to deliver our intentions may falter, however be assured that we will do everything in our power to support you and your children through this difficult period. If there are further changes, I will let you know as soon as I am able to.

In the meantime, despite all of the issues that we face, I want to say what a pleasure it is to work with your children. The best part of my day continues to be welcoming them into school, albeit with an elbow bump as opposed to a high five, and I am absolutely convinced that in the face of this adversity they will continue to make us all proud of the fantastic people they are becoming.

If you have any questions or queries feel free to ring me at school or email me at g.baker@cansfield.wigan.sch.uk.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Geoff Baker,
Headteacher.