



CANSFIELD

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

16th March 2020

Dear parents and carers,

In light of the ongoing focus on the Coronavirus in the media, I wanted to write to you directly about the issues that this has raised for our school and our community. I am receiving regular updates from the Department for Education and the Local Authority and while I have every intention of keeping the school open unless directed otherwise, we are prioritising the safety of our community.

Keeping the school site safe

You will no doubt have seen on Twitter that we have had our site team completing an ongoing deep clean of our school for the last few weeks. There has been a particular focus on keeping door handles, tables and other surfaces clean, as well as water dispensers and toilets. In addition to our caretakers, Mark and Steve, we also have a Housekeeper, Linda. These colleagues work tirelessly in the service of our school as it is, and our students quite rightly treat them with a great deal of respect, but I have been particularly proud to note the number of students who have gone out of their way to thank them over the last few weeks for the work they have been doing.

Keeping our students calm and safe

The media is saturated with updates on the Coronavirus, which is generating a great deal of anxiety. There is also a significant amount of 'fake news' in social media, which is adding further unnecessary panic to an already alarming situation. I and our Head of Years have been discussing Coronavirus in assemblies to try to ensure that students have an understanding that is based on facts. Our students have been incredible in these assemblies – when given an opportunity to ask further questions there seems to be a focus on what they can do to help others, indicative of their values. If you have any concerns about the mental wellbeing of your children during this period, please let me know – we have a team of trained Mental Health First Aiders who we can deploy to offer emotional support to students as needed. We have given advice and put posters up around the school noting what can be done to obstruct the spread of the virus and we have fitted additional soap dispensers in all toilets. The impact of this is evident in the fact that record amounts of handwash have been used over the last few weeks. We have also noted that students are clearly making efforts to cough into their sleeves. Finally, while a highlight of working at Cansfield is a handshake or high five at the gate and on classroom doors, we have moved to elbow bumps!

Trips

The government has placed a ban on school trips abroad until further notice. In light of this I am sorry to say that I have cancelled the trips to Munich and Madrid. This is obviously a dynamic situation and we are taking advice from the Local Authority about claiming refunds. I would ask that you bear with us as we navigate the legalities and processes with regard to this. We will provide respective parents and carers with an update as soon as this becomes clear. We have also cancelled all other trips until Easter, a position we will review when we return after the holidays.

Year 7 Parents Evening

I have thought long and hard about this and have come to the conclusion that postponing our Year 7 Parents Evening, originally planned for 2nd April, is in the best interests of our wider community. In addition to avoiding a large gathering, our Parents Evenings are not only attended by parents, but also grandparents,

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who may fall within the demographic particularly vulnerable to Coronavirus. In the event that we cannot reschedule in the summer term, members of staff will ring individual homes to provide updates on the progress of your children. Our Year 7 cohort have had an amazing start to their time at Cansfield and we are very keen to celebrate this.

Reporting illness

Guidance from the government as of today is that if your child experiences

- a new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature

you must notify school using the normal absence procedure and self-isolate your child for 7 days. In all likelihood these systems will indicate normal coughs and colds. However, if the symptoms do not improve during the 7 days you must seek further advice by ringing 111. At this point please update school of your situation. If you have had contact with a confirmed Coronavirus case, even if you have no symptoms, you should seek advice from 111 or Public Health England as each case is considered on an individual basis depending on your relationship with the infected person. Please clarify your situation when you ring school to report your child's absence so we can monitor accordingly.

Possibility of school closure

It is clear that the government are considering the possibility of partial or full school closures for a period of time in a bid to reduce the further spread of Coronavirus. We are watching this very carefully and putting in place plans to ensure that our students can continue to learn and that we can work with you to keep them safe in the event that this happens. We have established a task force of subject leaders who are preparing learning packs and guidance on accessing e-learning resources. Rest assured that our students will not be left without work to do over any period of school closure. Likewise, we will ensure that students have contact details for their teachers.

Year 11

One of our most pressing concerns is the impact that any measures to curtail Coronavirus may have on our Year 11s and their preparation for their exams this summer. Unless we are told otherwise, we must move forward in the expectation that school will not close and that exams will go ahead as planned this summer. However, we are putting in place a number of contingency plans that will ensure that no student is disadvantaged by any closures. We have packs of work prepared, access to SAM Learning and textbooks and will allocate all Year 11 students a mentor who will make contact with home throughout any periods of closure to offer support.

Everything that we are reading suggests that in the forthcoming months we all face a significant challenge. We are lucky to have access to the NHS, one of the best health care providers in the world and one that is free at the point of entry to all people. What I want to assure you, is that whether or not the school is open that we will be there to support you and your family. Effective communication between staff, students and home will be essential in getting through these unprecedented times.

If there is anything at all I can do to support you or your family during this period, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at: g.baker@cansfield.wigan.sch.uk or ring me at school. You can also see any relevant updates immediately on our Twitter account @cansfield1. As always, your children make it a pleasure to work at Cansfield and we remain grateful for your support.

Best wishes,



Dr Geoff Baker,
Headteacher.