



Leppington, Birch Hill, Bracknell, RG12 7ZX
Headteacher: Michael Dillon B Ed (Hons) MA

Wednesday, 11 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: COVID-19 PLANNING AND UPDATE

Although I am in Wales, I am still keeping abreast of the latest developments at school and with the Local Authority regarding COVID-19 and I would like to share with you our contingency planning. This is following advice from Bracknell Forest Council and the Department for Education (DfE). The letter contains a lot of information, so please take the time to digest it carefully.

Background

As you may be aware, COVID-19 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. It is understood that the incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. The symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a cough
- a high temperature / fever
- shortness of breath

These symptoms do not necessarily mean an individual has COVID-19 as they are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu. Bracknell Forest Council advice is that, if you are worried about your symptoms or those of your son or daughter, please call NHS 111 for advice and guidance. Birch Hill Primary School follows the advice provided by Public Health England and the Department of Education, through the following link in particular (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>). This means, as a school, that we have a safety plan, which is set out below.

Day to day safe practice

All staff and students are regularly reminded to:

- wash their hands (using soap and water or alcohol sanitiser) as part of daily good hygiene
- cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue
- avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- sing the 'happy birthday' song twice when washing hands.

We have used DfE materials here to remind students of good hygiene and encouraged hand washing at the usual times, such as:

- after using the toilet
- after sporting activities
- before eating any food, including snacks.

Soap dispensers are refilled regularly and monitored during the day to ensure that there is a plentiful supply. During appropriate lessons, teachers are taking the opportunity to educate children about the viruses and the prevention of their spread. All cleaning protocols are completed under the advice of Public Health England.

As suggested in guidance from Bracknell Forest Council, **Birch Hill staff and visitors to the school are encouraged to use the alcohol gel dispenser in the main school entrance or wash their hands upon arrival to the school.**

The school has a well-understood protocol that would be used if it were to be the case that a student, member of staff or any other person on the school site displays symptoms whilst at school.

Closure plan

Current advice does not advocate that there is a need to self-isolate or close the school unless under very specific conditions or directed to do so by Public Health England / NHS. However, you will be aware from the news that the Government are planning for a range of future scenarios, one of which includes the possibility of a temporary school closure. Whilst I sincerely hope this will not be the case, we have the following plans in place.

Day to day communication

We have remote access to email, Teachers2Parents and other communication methods, and our school database (SIMS) and will communicate with parents/carers to keep you updated in the event of a closure or plan for closure. This and our website will provide up to date information. Our Facebook and Twitter page(s) may be used, but do not rely on this; we would suggest that parents/carers monitor the school's official communications.

Remote learning

Given this critical time of the school year especially in respect to examination classes, if the school were to close, we have plans to allow students to complete some home learning. However, what is set and the extent of home learning will be based on the length of time the closure is planned for and what resources are available to the staff to set.

Educational Trips and visits

As a school, we will follow all Foreign Office (FCO) and DfE advice. This will ensure that insurances are valid and refunds are payable when necessary. Currently, all trips and events planned are still going ahead. Please note that if a parent or carer withdraws their child from a trip that is not cancelled, a refund will not be possible.

Staff absence

If the school experiences high staff absence due to illness, self-isolation or COVID-19, we will do everything we can to remain open, but there may be a point where we will have to open partially or close the school entirely. As with snow days, we have ratios that we must adhere to and uphold for the safe running of the school and, if we cannot meet these, we may need to close the school. However, this would always be a last resort.

Wellbeing

As Headteacher of the school, I am very conscious that students, staff and community may become worried about COVID-19. We will do all we can in school to reassure students and maintain a calm learning environment.

Attendance of pupils

Current advice is clear that students should attend school and there is no requirement to self-isolate unless under the conditions set out by Public Health England. Therefore, students should attend school as normal and absence will be monitored carefully.

Key websites

Recognising that COVID-19 is subject to rapid change, I would like to highlight Government websites, which offer factual guidance and advice:

- Gov.uk advice for the public
www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public
- The Government Coronavirus Action Plan; a guide to what you can expect across the UK
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan

Travel from Italy

On a final note, I would like to ensure you are all aware of the update in Guidance today in relation to travellers returning from Italy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk>

The change for Italy applies to travellers who returned from ANY PART OF ITALY on or after 9 March 2020.

Travellers should immediately self-isolate, even if they have no symptoms, and use the [111 online coronavirus service](#) to find out what to do next.

Travellers who returned from areas of Northern Italy that were under containment measures (please see the [area map here](#)) between 19th February and 8th March 2020 should self-isolate for 14 days. If they develop symptoms, they should contact NHS 111.

Travellers who returned from the rest of Italy before 9th March 2020 do not need to undertake any special measures, but if they develop symptoms, they should self-isolate and call NHS 111. Information on self-isolation can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

I would like to reiterate that not all family members need to isolate when someone has travelled to Italy. This will be advised on a case by case basis by NHS 111 when they take a full history of the case. At the current time, unless advised by 111 or Public Health to the contrary, other household members can attend their place of work or education. This advice can change though depending on individual circumstances of a subsequent Covid-19 test result emerges.

Advice

I do hope that you find our response to COVID-19 reassuring. However, please do contact the DfE helpline for further advice, or contact the school office:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

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

Yours sincerely,



Michael Dillon
Headteacher