

Wednesday 18th March 2020

Dear Parent,

Re: Closure of Schools across the United Kingdom

Earlier this evening, the Government announced the closure of all schools across the country from the end of Friday 20th March, and until further notice, to further mitigate against the Covid-19 pandemic. We are living through extraordinarily challenging times and Huddersfield Grammar School is, of course, duty bound to support the national effort to combat this disease.

I know you will appreciate that the Government is yet to reveal much of the detail surrounding this announcement and we are anticipating further details to be shared by the Department of Education tomorrow. That aside, I can confirm to you that our school site will continue to operate as normal tomorrow and on Friday, albeit with significantly reduced staff and pupil numbers at this time of ever-increasing self-isolation.

The school is now preparing to move towards the next phase on its contingency planning: that of remote and then online learning. As previously communicated, the school will provide remote learning materials for pupils to complete over the first five days of closure (Monday 23rd – Friday 27th March). From Monday 30th March, the interactive element of our online educational offer will commence. There will be change to our term dates at this time, with the Spring Term concluding on Friday 3rd April and the Summer Term commencing on Wednesday 22nd April.

Over the course of tomorrow, you will receive specific details about your child's online learning programme via one of the following staff members (as appropriate to your child):

- Early Years Lead: Emma Howarth
- Head of Pre-Prep: Fiona Smith
- Head of Prep: Samantha Nash
- Head of Middle School: Angela Fitzpatrick
- Head of Upper School: Gayle Doyle

In keeping with Government guidance, the school is currently exploring the means by which we will offer supervised care *in school* for children of key workers and those with Educational and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) from Monday 23rd March. If you fall into this category, please confirm this by contacting the Headmaster's PA, Mrs Hayley Kelly, **by close of school business tomorrow (Thursday 19th)**.

Mrs Kelly can be contacted at hkelly@huddersfield-grammar.co.uk or via the School Office telephone number.



I fully appreciate that this news is unsettling but would like to reassure you of the steps that we will be taking to provide support for our pupils and parents during the closure. As I have previously shared with you, we have been working closely with Cognita colleagues across Asia, where some countries have had mandatory school closures for many weeks and, more recently, in Spain and Switzerland.

Our plan for Huddersfield Grammar School is informed by the practice that our sister schools have put into place and we are confident we have an effective strategy for our children to continue learning. Indeed, I am confident that we will lead the locality in such provision.

As many of you recall, the school refreshed all digital technology in the school over the course of last academic year and conducted high-quality training in its use, which has left our teaching staff well equipped to make the transition to digital learning for your child.

Clearly, this will be a new way of working and learning for us all and we fully expect the programme to adapt as it progresses, both as we quality assure the process and respond to feedback from our pupils and parents. I would be most grateful for your continued understanding as we prepare to launch this new approach.

As confirmed in the Education Secretary's briefing earlier this evening, there will now be no public examinations taking place this academic year. I fully appreciate the enormity of this announcement, for our pupils, parents and teachers, and we will communicate further with affected parents and pupils as more exact information becomes available.

To clarify: this information was shared with schools at the exact moment it was shared with the British public, but we will respond robustly and in the appropriate way.

As the father of two young children at Huddersfield Grammar School, I can fully empathise with working parents as they consider the impact of this evening's announcement. With that in mind, we have produced the attached *Be Well Tips* for parents on how to best support your child during a school closure.

I would like to put on record my thanks and sincere appreciation for the superb efforts of my colleagues at Huddersfield Grammar School, who have been preparing so well for the prospect of school closure whilst doing all they can to keep your children safe and happy at this most uncertain of times.

Thank you, too, to all of you, for your wonderful support of the school in the face of this public health crisis. I have received many emails from parents in recent days, so please do bear with me at this busy time as I respond to each query in turn.



Moving forward, all of our efforts will be concentrated on two priorities: maintaining the wellbeing of our school community and ensuring the continuity of learning in the days or weeks to come. The school will continue to communicate closely with you throughout this closure and will update you as events further evolve.

Please note that I will write to you again tomorrow to confirm the key points of contact in school during this period of closure. Each contact point has been furnished with a business phone and so will be contactable whether working in school or remotely.

Please do not hesitate to contact me personally should you have any further questions at this time.

With warmest wishes,

Mr M Seaton
Headmaster

mseaton@huddersfield-grammar.co.uk