



Monday 16th March

Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to share with you some specific advice about the Coronavirus outbreak and our plans and thoughts for the coming weeks. As I am sure you will understand, it is hard to predict what the impact on schools might be, but we have taken steps to plan as best as we can for future events and would appreciate your support and understanding. Please feel free to share and discuss this letter with your children.

Action we are taking now:

Raising Awareness

The most important thing we can all do at present is follow the clear guidance given by Public Health England. This is constantly changing so it is important for everyone to access the new guidelines. We will do this through a link on Class Dojo:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

At the present time schools have been told to remain open even if we have students and staff who are self-isolating as a precautionary measure (which we currently don't). In school we continue to promote, at every opportunity, the importance of good hygiene by displaying visual prompts and reminders in key locations and we are telling students verbally through the day to wash hands before they come to school, when they arrive, when they go to the toilet and before and after they have eaten. We may consider further guidance around unnecessary physical contact if and when necessary.

Alongside this we are explaining to our students the importance of being good citizens at this time. This means being acutely aware of the more vulnerable within our own families and the wider community – older people and those with underlying medical conditions. For us to remain a caring community we need to fully appreciate that for many of us, especially our young people, this virus is unlikely to do us undue harm. But it is highly contagious; our behaviours need to be modified so we don't put more vulnerable members of our communities at greater risk.



Hand washing / Hand Sanitisers

We have increased our stock of liquid soap to ensure that students and staff can wash their hands more frequently. There is currently a global shortage of hand sanitiser, although we have deployed the last stocks we could obtain around school. We are asking students to use it sensibly. It is important to note the Public Health England advice that washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds is highly effective as a preventative measure.

Toilets

Given the need for frequent handwashing, toilets will continue to be accessible throughout the day although teachers will still need to authorise students to go and wash their hands during lessons to minimise disruption to learning. We will ensure soap dispensers remain topped up and aim to clean toilets more frequently.

General Cleaning

We have increased the levels of general cleaning around school and are prioritising certain areas of the building; the surfaces that people touch frequently such as door handles and handrails. Mr Kyle, alongside all staff, is working hard to ensure that the whole school is clean. All students need to play their part by putting rubbish in the bins provided and keeping the site neat and tidy.

Contingency Planning

As the Coronavirus outbreak develops, we will be following advice from the Department for Education and the Government. This might, at some point, involve temporarily closing the school on a full/partial basis to our students and possibly to our staff as well. If this happens, please note:

- We have remote access to the parent and student database and will send text messages to all families to keep them updated. Please recheck you have access to School Comms and Class Dojo. It would help us if you can check with friends that they also have access to Schools Comms/Class Dojo and if not ask them to get in touch with us so we can get them logged on.
- We can update our school website remotely and you should check this daily in the event of closure - www.st-roberts.northumberland.sch.uk/website. As well as this you can also follow us on twitter ([@StRobertsMorpeth](https://twitter.com/StRobertsMorpeth)).
- We would also ask that you only contact individual colleagues during weekdays and between 8.00am and 5.00pm.
- We will also continue to have a phone line to leave messages, while school remains open.



Student Learning

It is vital that, if the school closes, students continue to work. Whilst there is no substitute for being in a classroom with a teacher and learning support assistants, all children with access to a computer/smart phone with internet connection will be able to access a list of suitable websites to support their learning. If we get notice of closure, then we will send students home with the login details, books and materials we think they need.

You can help us by doing the following:

- Ideally accessing online learning will be on a home computer, laptop or tablet although we recognise that some students might not have access to these. Staff will send home some activities that require no ICT.
- There are a variety of websites that act as platforms for learning to take place remotely, students will be given reminders of login information. We will also share these with parents/carers so that we all know what is available.
- Making sure your child has somewhere quiet to work. In the event of an extended closure, we ask that parents try to ensure conditions at home are conducive to learning at appropriate times.

Staff Absence

It is possible that the school may need to operate as normal but with a higher number of staff absent than usual. Government action to 'relax' the law concerning class size does apply to First schools. We will, however, make sure that we have the correct staffing ratios to keep the children safe at all times.

Please be aware that staff will have to follow advice from Public Health England about attending work if they have been in contact with cases of Coronavirus or have cold/flu like symptoms. They may not be able to attend work for a period of time even though they want to do so.

Further Information and Avoiding Anxiety

The Government and the NHS have advice about Coronavirus (also called Covid-19) available on their websites. I recommend that you look to those sources of information for updates and news about the virus and avoid listening to rumour and secondhand information from other sources. This advice is updated almost on a daily basis, so it is important that we all check again for the most up to date information.

Clearly this is a developing situation and has the potential to create real anxiety amongst our children. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we support them during this time of uncertainty. You know your own child best, but together we should:



Do our best not to sensationalise or over dramatise the issue.

- Steer children away from some of the news coverage and social media channels.
- Stick to known facts rather than speculation.
- Avoid passing on our own concerns to our children.
- Look out for and protect our most vulnerable.

We all have our own levels for tolerating stress, anxiety and disruption and will react to situations like this in our own way. It is impossible for me to keep all parents/carers happy with any decision regarding school closure or other significant interventions. Our resources may be stretched for some time, so please try to avoid criticising or complaining, particularly on social media. Our staff will be doing their very best to protect you, your children and their education.

Yours sincerely

D Sutcliffe

Mr D Sutcliffe

Headteacher

For parents wishing to keep up to date with the latest situation, the following links may prove useful

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