



17 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will be aware, the guidance provided by the government last night regarding COVID-19 has altered the situation with regards to self-isolation and social distancing. Despite really hard work to continue as normal by our staff and students, absence has increased today. Given that there is a real shortage in the availability of supply teachers, it has been difficult over the past two days to staff our school fully. As outlined in my previous letter to you, my priority has always been and continues to be, the health and safety of our students and staff.

As you are aware, schools have been informed that we should stay open unless directed to close by Public Health England. However, being open is contingent on the school having enough staff to run efficiently and safely.

As a result, and in consultation with senior colleagues and the Chair of Governors, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that we cannot open to all students for the remainder of this week.

**As such, Whitstone School will open for Year 7, 10 and 11 for the remainder of this week.** The decision not to run lessons for Year 8 and 9 has been taken for a couple of reasons. Firstly, we want to protect as many of the Year 11 lessons as possible as they are very near to their examinations. Year 10 are also closer to their examinations than all of the other years. In the short-term I can appreciate that alternative arrangements for parents may be more of an issue with regard to the younger students in Year 7. This has been a consideration given the relatively late notice.

Work will be provided to students through Epraise by individual teachers. Students in Year 8 and 9 are able to use their time over the next three days completing home learning tasks, reading class notes or a book of their choosing and completing tasks set by their teachers using Epraise. Students can communicate with their class teachers using Epraise. Please do bear with us regarding staff response time given the increased number of messages and possibility that individual teachers may be currently ill.

If your child is in Year 8 or 9 and is eligible for a free school meal, they are welcome to come into school on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week wearing full uniform between 11.30am and 12.30pm to collect a free packed lunch from Reception.

Please be aware that Year 8 HPV vaccinations will be postponed and completed at another point during the academic year in conjunction with Public Health England. The Non-Uniform Day on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March will also be postponed in order for all students to be involved. We will let you know the dates of both of these events as soon as we are able to.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding during these difficult times. We will continue to communicate with parents, carers and the community through the school website, Facebook page and Epraise software. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have further questions or queries.

Yours faithfully

Mr Guy Swallow  
Headteacher

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