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Headteacher: Mr J Parr BA Hons

5th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you following the announcement yesterday by the Prime Minister, informing us that all schools in our country must now close, from 05th January until 15th February 2021. It remains an unsettling time for us all and we have appreciated the messages of support and understanding from parents and carers.

The aims of our in-school provision have therefore changed as we are now operating a 'skeleton' in school service.

- Our primary duty is to provide education for vulnerable pupils to: promote equal success in education; to help keep vulnerable pupils keep safe and well (such as those with an EHCP and families supported by a social worker).
- Secondly our duty is to allow critical workers to carry out essential work that our society relies upon during the pandemic: to help families where all adults are employed in essential, critical roles (such as those working in Covid medical care).

Parents and carers are asked to look for alternatives to using school-based provision wherever possible. This is because we realise that at the present time, we are all duty bound to reduce the spread of infection by staying at home wherever we can. We were shocked to hear from our Prime Minister last night that: the numbers of people currently under hospital care due to Covid-19 is 40% higher than last April; there is a very real risk that the NHS is going to be overwhelmed; that although he believes schools although safe in themselves, have been 'vectors of transmission' by children passing the infection across families.

It may be helpful for parents and guardians to refer to and consider two non-school based options designed by the government to support child-care.

1. Some parents have been able to use the furlough scheme specifically for child-care reasons, as this is a legally acceptable use of furlough. See www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52135342
2. Parents are currently able to create a childcare support bubble. See www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-childcare-bubble-with-another-household

We currently have provision for children of parents/carers who had already applied for the in-school service. Each application will be checked against the criteria and also, against the school's capacity/numbers on particular days. For this reason, parents are asked to apply in advance using [this application form](#) and await a reply from school regarding the success of the application.

Transport:

Message from Mr Longhurst: Due to the closure of school to the majority of students, transport will be significantly reduced with some routes being combined, and others not running at all. With this in mind, please note that during the lockdown period, the usual pick-up times in the morning will be **approximately 10 minutes later** as we do not require students to be in school until 8.50am. The return journey home will also arrive **slightly earlier** with buses leaving school at 15.00 and with less drop off points on route. If your child is in the vulnerable pupils or critical workers group attending school and no longer require school transport, please can you let school know so that we can update the bus companies accordingly.

Executive Headteacher

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Distance learning:

We know that it is important to provide our young people with some routine and engagement over the next few weeks. We want you to stay in touch with us please, especially to let us know about any health or welfare matters. Can we remind you all, that the systems we are using to provide ongoing education and support for your child/ren will be Go4Schools along with elements of 'live lesson' support through Microsoft Teams. We think it will be fit for purpose but are aware that in the short term there may be some frustrations. Thank you very much for your understanding. As the vast majority of students are at home, we have adjusted the timetable to remove staggered lunch times to aid clarity. The timings of lessons and break times are as below (we will revert back to the staggered break/lunch times when students return to school):

09:00 – 10:00 Lesson 1
10:00 – 11:00 Lesson 2
11:00 – 11:20 Break
11:20 – 12:20 Lesson 3
12:20 – 13:00 Lunch
13:00 – 14:00 Lesson 4
14:00 – 15:00 Lesson 5

It is critical that students 'attend' remote lessons and complete the work set to avoid any gaps in knowledge or understanding opening. We are allocating key staff to check that students are completing the work being set. Where we find that students are not engaging, staff will be in contact to check why and help solve any problems. If we find that students are not engaging at all, we will likely provide a place within the vulnerable / critical worker group so that we can monitor their engagement with the MS Teams lessons in school.

Message to our students: Students, we want to wish you every success in this big change to the way we will all be working. It will be worth remembering that everyone in the country is having to cope with the same challenges and we need you to do your best, we know it won't be easy. We want you to talk to your families if things are very hard or not working well for you, so that they can help and they can let us know. We are very proud of the way you have coped already this week with distance learning. Your teachers are all using your current timetables as the basis for your work at home. They will be looking at how you are doing at the time that they would normally teach you, expecting and taking a register of attendance at MS Teams lessons, setting work to complete, and requesting work to be returned / submitted so that they can keep track of how you are doing.

Message to our Year 11 students: We know that the changes in schooling and announcement about examinations have been especially hard for you all. You have worked so hard and were getting yourselves in gear for the mock exams next week before the final push to the summer exams. Your teachers were too. At the time of writing, we have not yet received any further information from the government regarding how Year 11 students will be awarded their GCSE grades. As soon as we do, we will be in touch to inform you. In the meantime, please continue to work hard and revise for the mock exams – we will likely hold them still when you eventually return to school. Seek support from your class teachers and complete the work set, as the work you continue to do, and the evidence of your work being done at home may be invaluable as we go forward.

Unresolved and emerging issues: Obviously, as school is closed, please bear with us if there is an outstanding issue that you are waiting for a response to. We have had to prioritise our work this week to manage this situation. There are several implications of these changes that we have not yet started working on. Thank you for your patience.

Yours sincerely and stay safe,



John Parr
Headteacher