



DOWNSEND SCHOOL

16 March 2020

Dear Parent

We are all aware that these are unprecedented times, where the normal rules change almost hourly. Notwithstanding this, over 90% of Downsend pupils and staff have attended school today as we continue to exist as normally as possible given these circumstances. Whilst we await any updates from HM Government's Cobra Meeting, the COVID-19 Guidance for education settings has been updated today (16 March 2020) and can be found [here](#). Please note that this guidance has substantially changed.

The main messages are:

- staff, young people and children should stay at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature to avoid spreading infection to others. Otherwise they should attend education or work as normal
- if staff, young people or children become unwell on site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they should be sent home
- clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual using your standard cleaning products
- supervise young children to ensure they wash their hands for 20 seconds more often than usual with soap and water or hand sanitiser and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues
- posters and lesson plans on general hand hygiene can be found on the eBug website
- unless directly advised to close by the local Public Health England Health Protection Team, we recommend all education settings remain open

As always, high standards of personal hygiene remain our greatest barrier and we have reinforced this with increased regimes of frequency today, including immediately before and after lunch. With effect from tomorrow, we are asking parents to avoid coming onto the site where possible; as always, we know we have your unequivocal support for the measures we are putting in place to safeguard all within the Downsend, and wider, community.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise parents about the issue of self-isolation in light of the new guidance above. The current government advice is for those with the specific symptoms of a fever and/or a new persistent cough to self-isolate for seven days. This precautionary measure is a responsible approach to ensuring that any virus is not spread widely throughout the school community. I have been in self-isolation since Thursday evening, as have Mr Moore and Mrs Hawes. Mr Watts, Mr Newland and Mrs Mercer were placed in self-isolation over the weekend. None of us have tested positively for Coronavirus and we all continue to improve. I will continue to respond to E-mails, as will my colleagues, and I have held a number of online meetings today with colleagues and we continue to support the school through these testing days. For on site issues, please refer to Mrs Kirkham (Lower School) and Mr Silva/Mr Albert (Upper School), all of whom have held the fort admirably today.

Finally, I would just like to update you that the Year 7 Production and the Spring Concert will be postponed until the first half of the Summer Term, meaning that all those involved will be able to enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Thank you again for your continued support; we will continue to follow HM Government's advice closely in order to keep everybody safe, happy and educated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Thorpe', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ian Thorpe
Headmaster