

Tuesday, March 17th, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Just another update for you.

Based on the changing government advice of yesterday, we will now be cancelling all paid & non-paid school clubs for the foreseeable future. We are not in a position at the moment to clarify the re-scheduling of any club sessions which may have been paid for in advance but we will ask the paid providers to contact you in due course.

We are also cancelling all school events which would be considered to be a “gathering” – that will include the upcoming Book Fair, the London trip meeting for parents, the music recital etc. Benson Buddies will continue to provide morning & after-school wraparound provision for the moment but that will depend on staff availability. We will keep you updated.

As you would expect, we are being vigilant with regards to any staff or pupils exhibiting the symptoms of high temperature or a persistent cough. We are very grateful to you for being so proactive and supportive too. The current advice is that if anyone in a household shows symptoms, then the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days.

Please do not be offended if we do have to ask you to take your child home. We have had to send some children home yesterday morning and again this morning because we have been aware that either a household member has been self-isolating or because the child has been exhibiting the symptoms. Where this is the case, we would not expect to see these children back in school until after Easter. We appreciate that this could be a bit of a shock for you at the start of a day if you had not planned for it but we have to do our utmost to keep the school community safe.

With regards to the coding of pupil absence we are following current government guidance as of 16.3.2020

- 1. Where a pupil is in self-isolation, in accordance with latest information and advice from Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England, the pupil should be recorded as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances in the attendance register. Code Y (Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) should be used in this instance.*
- 2. If a pupil does not attend school, despite the school operating as usual and the pupil is not self-isolating, they should be marked as absent. It is for headteachers to determine whether or not the absence is authorised depending on the individual circumstances.*
- 3. Where a pupil cannot attend school due to illness, as normally would happen, the pupil should be recorded as absent in the attendance register and the school will authorise the absence. Code I (Illness) should be used in this instance.*

We will endeavour during this manic period to get our codings right on the day but it may be that we will have to re-check again after the Easter holidays. With regards to point 2, it may be that some children are not in school due to a member of the household being in a high-risk category. Where this is the case the school may ask for medical evidence to be provided or it may be that the headteacher will have a discussion with them. Medical advice can always be provided at a later date (and codes can be reviewed) as we appreciate that the NHS is under great strain at the moment and medical evidence like this is not a priority for them.

We would like to make you aware that the school does not have the capacity to give parents individual advice on symptoms and isolation. As you can imagine, we are already dealing with very high levels of phone calls at the moment. Please check out the Public Health website as the guidance is very clear.

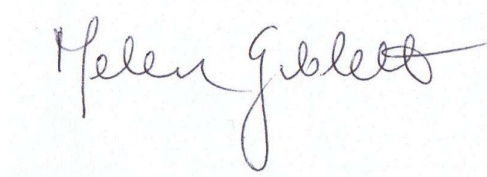
Equally, we are not in a position to deal with individual requests for home learning for those children who are absent at the moment. As you know we are very busy at the moment planning for home learning in the event of school closures. For all absent pupils, we would ask that they do as much reading as possible as well as working on spelling and tables. Parents can check the class dojo page for weekly homework and related class activities. The BBC & CBBC have great online learning activities. We would encourage absent children to do some personal research on their class topic. There should also be some time for music, art and physical activity.

As a piece of what we hope is helpful advice, we would suggest to the parents/carers of any child/ren who are absent from school to think carefully if you and your child/ren are planning to be out in the local community at this time. The government guidance does say that it is alright for families who are self-isolating to go out for exercise as long as it is safe to do so and we agree with this entirely. We just want to make parents aware that being out in public could be reported to the school by concerned neighbours and parents as can your social media postings. While the school would not look to be involved in the private lives of our families, we wanted to make you aware that such reporting has happened already so that you can take this into consideration as part of your self-isolation arrangements.

Once again, many thanks for your continued support and good wishes at this challenging time.

We will continue to keep you updated.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Helen Giblett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and a long, sweeping tail on the 't'.

Helen Giblett

Headteacher