

## Update on Coronavirus

Dear students, parents and carers,

We have delayed today's coronavirus update to enable us to respond to the announcement from the Secretary of State for Education. This afternoon's update from the Department for Education is included at the end of this message.

**This is a first response to provide communication and information to parents. It is being written as the government announcement is made, and as such will be subject to further clarification and detail later. We will be able to share more once the detailed planning has been shared with schools.**

The announcement is that schools will be shut for most students at the end of Friday 20 March. Schools have been directed to remain open for children of key workers and the most vulnerable children. This will obviously take some organisation and planning across the school system and we will keep you informed.

While we await detailed instruction from the government, we would ask that parents notify the school if they work in any of the following sectors:

- NHS
- Other health care
- Social care
- Front line services – police, fire service etc
- Education
- Food distribution

We have plans in place for the continuity of learning in the event of partial or full closure of schools. These will be shared with parents soon.

The government announcement indicates that they will make provision for food and vouchers for students in receipt of Free School Meals. We are grateful for Abingdon Learning Trust for sourcing food and care packages for students in receipt of free school meals across our three schools. We will be in contact with parents about distributing this food and the next stages in government provision.

The government has announced that GCSE and A Level exams will not take place as planned this summer. We will provide further information when it becomes available.

Where parents have informed the school that their son or daughter is absent as a result of self-isolation within the family, the English and maths faculties have provided some work to support students in this initial period. As well as this work and other available on-line resources we recommend reading quality fiction to support literacy and learning, as well as being greatly enjoyable. There are a wide range of short stories and novels available on-line.

In the next two days we will be giving students their exercise books to take home so that they are able to revise, work on homework and consolidate their learning.

Students will also be asked to empty their lockers and take the contents home with them. As well as ensuring that packed lunches are not left to mature over a period of time, this will make sure that students have all of their possessions (keys, coats etc).

We ask that parents and students please make sure that they have any extra bags that they will need in order to transport the books and belongings home.

Students are understandably anxious about the developing situation, and schools are sharing strategies to help reduce worries and talk to young people about the situation. The Coronavirus video series from [CBBC Newsround](#) should be helpful, explaining what is happening in a child-friendly way. Parents may also find these Top Ten Tips for [Talking to Your Children About Scary World News](#) from the Mental Health Foundation helpful.

We have also been alerted to ongoing cyber security phishing scams around the Coronavirus. Scammers are starting to distribute fake emails pretending to be an employer, with an option to sign up to get the latest updates on coronavirus, whereas it is really a scam to harvest personal details. <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/cyber-experts-step-criminals-exploit-coronavirus>

In these uncertain times we will continue to do our very best to support our students, staff, families and our community. Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Very best wishes to all the Fitzharrys community and their families.  
Jonathan Dennett  
Headteacher  
Fitzharrys School

### **Daily update from Department for Education**

#### **Statement from the Education Secretary**

Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, will be making a statement to the House of Commons at 5pm. Further updates will be circulated following this statement.

#### **COVID-19 Emergency Bill**

Information was released yesterday on the COVID-19 Emergency Bill, which is to be published later this week. The Bill will include:

- › a power to remove or relax some requirements around education and childcare legislation in order to help these institutions run effectively in the event of an emergency
- › a power to require schools, further education and childcare settings to stay open or re-open, operate in ways to support continued education and childcare such as enable pupils / students to attend different premises, to enhance resilience of childcare and education sector
- › a power to close educational institutions or childcare providers. This will happen only where necessary and proportionate, to help minimise disruption to everyday life. The measures would only be put in place for the period of time required to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak
- › powers to bring additional social workers onto the register of social workers held by the regulator, Social Work England

The measures in the Bill are temporary, proportionate to the risks, will only be used when strictly necessary and will be in place only for as long as required to respond to the situation.

This Bill will ensure the government has the powers it needs, when it needs them, to allow our vital public services to keep functioning and to save lives.

Further detail will be available when the Bill is published later this week.

### **Updated advice for non-essential travel worldwide**

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) now advises British people against all non-essential travel worldwide. This advice takes effect immediately (from 17 March) and applies initially for a period of 30 days.

The latest travel guidance can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

### **Funding for free childcare offers to continue in the event of coronavirus closures**

Yesterday, the Chancellor has confirmed the Government will continue to pay for free early years entitlement places even if settings are closed on the advice of Public Health England or children are not able to attend due to coronavirus. We expect local authorities to follow the Department's position, and to continue early entitlements funding for all childminders, schools and nurseries. We will not be asking for funding back from local authorities.

The Government's advice remains that childcare settings should stay open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England, and yesterday's announcement should help settings to continue to do so. This will minimise both longer-term disruption to parents and any income losses that providers may otherwise experience.

The full statement can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-childcare-offers-to-continue-during-coronavirus-closures>