



HORLEY INFANT SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr Jason Walters



Thursday 19th March 2020

Dear Parents,

The Secretary of State has given an update regarding schools' position in response to the country's efforts to reduce the impact of Covid-19. **Horley Infant School will be closed to the vast majority of pupils as of Monday 23rd March 2020.** At this stage, we do not know when we will re-open and will continue to be in contact with you via Studybugs during this difficult time.

The Government has announced that it would like, where possible, schools to stay open to provide childcare as opposed to education for "key workers" and "vulnerable children". We are told that further information regarding what qualifies these two groups will be issued by the Government to schools later on today and further information on how this will be applied e.g. in relation to single parents or whether both parents in a co-parenting setup would need to be eligible. The term "vulnerable" can mean many things and isn't a judgement on parents or parenting; it is a term used to identify children who may have needs that require a little more support than others. We ask that you *please* respect the difficulties and pressures this will place schools under, not only in staffing and business continuity planning but also in time frames and having to close doors temporarily to families and children we know ourselves may also be considered vulnerable but not according to a Government list. We will, of course, continue to support you in whichever way we can.

Please note, that this request from the Government will only be carried out if it safe to do so. At this time, we are able to provide this service for the targeted children/families from Monday 23rd March. However, you may have heard that other schools have closed or partially closed today and/or tomorrow. I thought it might be useful to explain some of the reasons behind these closures. They include:

- High numbers of staff self-isolating due to their own mild symptoms or a family member's mild symptoms resulting in not enough staff members in school to safely cater to the needs of the children.
- A confirmed case of Covid-19 within the wider family of a pupil. Public Health England, the Department for Education and Surrey advice has been to undertake a 'deep clean' of the premises. Some cleaning contractors require a certain time-frame for the premises to be empty before the deep clean can commence.

I am also in communication with other Headteachers in Horley so that we can provide some consistency and clarity around who will be prioritised in terms of key workers and vulnerable children. We are eagerly awaiting the Government list but are also considering other 'tiers' of key workers and children who are most vulnerable just in case the Government allow schools to extend their childcare support in the near future.

We have already asked some parents to get in touch if they are considered front line emergency service workers. Once we have more information from the government, we will be in touch again to confirm that you are eligible for the childcare provided by school as of Monday 23rd March. Similarly, we are in discussions around whether this childcare offer will or should extend to the service provided through Sunrise or Sunset. The current guidance is unclear and there will be further implications around what service we are allowed/can offer, particularly with regards to food and timings. As soon as I know more, I will let you know.



The government is giving schools the flexibility to provide meals or vouchers to children eligible for free school meals and we will update you as soon as possible with more information around our school's position, once we have liaised with Twelve15 (our catering supplier) and other food suppliers. As soon as possible, the Government will be putting in place a national voucher system.

I know this might sound strong and this could evoke some strong reactions but my own personal view on this situation is that we, as a country, are now at war. Not with another country or one another, but with an unknown, dangerous and frightening virus. At this stage, we are having to put our trust of the unknown into the hands of professionals and experts but at the same time, we must also do what is right for us within this uncertainty. I know some of you will be keeping your child off already or keeping yourself isolated as a precaution – you must continue to be given the opportunity to protect yourselves if you feel this is right for your own individual circumstance.

I do, however, strongly urge **everyone** to carefully follow the Government's guidelines regarding social distancing. I have heard so many people say "Ahhhh I'm not going to bother" or "It's all a load of hype" or "I just want to carry on as normal, I don't feel poorly". We can't predict what will happen next. But in a few weeks from now, those of you who are considered low risk may end up feeling ill as a result of contracting the virus and you will recover again later. For others, they may not be so lucky. These preventative measures are designed to help ensure medical support can be targeted to those who are most vulnerable.

Before we go, I just want to say an enormous thank you to everyone who has appreciated the efforts of everybody within the wider school team in responding to this situation. Your kind words, offers of help, reading of the information and careful following of advice has made this emotionally and physically draining situation all the more bearable. I have always been a firm believer in "community spirit" and I am forever grateful to those who have been there to do the best for the children, the staff and the families.

Just as a gentle reminder, the following guidance is still in effect regarding Coronavirus symptoms:

Latest Government Guidance regarding symptoms

Please be aware of the latest guidance from the government (issued Monday 16th March):

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

- Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.
- You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home.
- Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.
- If you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- If you live with other people, you should all stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.
- If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

Best wishes,



Jason Walters

Headteacher