



Diocese of St. Albans



16 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Covid-19 (Coronavirus)

I know that the threat of this virus is unsettling, especially to those of us who have people in our family who fall in to one of the higher risk categories. However, we do need to make contingency plans for a worsening situation and it is important that I keep you fully informed of what we are doing, and what we may have to do, as a school.

We have already spoken to all the students on several occasions about the importance of washing hands properly, using tissues to cough and sneeze into and disposing of these carefully. Please continue to support this strategy by talking to your children at home. I have cancelled the Year 9 Option Evening to reduce the number of visitors in to school, and will look at other events with a view to doing the same.

As time goes on, I can foresee three possible scenarios:

1. We are fully open as usual. This is very much what we all hope will be the situation on an on-going basis.
2. We fully close. This will only happen under instruction from the local or national Government. We are making plans for posting work for all year groups on the Show My Homework website, as well as using our other usual websites (such as Bedrock) for tasks and activities. To prepare for this eventuality please ensure your children know their log-in details (it will be much harder for you to sort this after closure has been imposed). This work would rely on your child having more access to computers/devices and the internet than usual, and that is something you should plan for (especially if you have more than one school aged child).
3. School has to partially close. I have to plan for a situation where a national school closure has not been declared but I have so many staff absent we cannot fully run the school. To ameliorate this problem, I have already cancelled any school activities (meetings, training, fixtures or visits) that lead to lessons needing to be covered. This is to ensure we have the maximum number of staff in school. We will also use external supply teachers to come in to school to cover lessons. However, if the situation gets to a point that we cannot operate safely, then I will make the decision to close the school to certain year groups, thus freeing up staff for the other years. In this situation I would protect the Examination years (Years 10-13) and the Year 7's (many of whom are under 12). This means that Year 8 and Year 9 would be the first to be asked to stay at home. This option is unlikely, but possible, and I would give you as much notice as I can. However, given that I would only do it as a last resort, the notice period could be less than 24 hours and I would like you to be thinking about how to run your family to look after the children staying at home in the event that this happened.

ASPIRE • CHALLENGE • SUCCEED

Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN7 5FB t: 01992 629124 f: 01992 643354
e: admin@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk w: www.st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk
Head Teacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

'Students feel happy and safe at school' OFSTED 2019
'An exceptionally inclusive and caring community' SIAMS Inspection (2020)

St Mary's CE Academy, Cheshunt, is a limited company registered in England and Wales
Company No. 07999861 Registered Office: As above

All the time we are open, you will need to decide on whether to send your children in to school or not, based on their health (including any underlying health problems that they may have which place them at a higher risk). Use the latest Government advice if they show symptoms that concern you (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>) and consult your GP or child's specialist if they have an underlying health problem. Please do not call or email us for advice; we are not qualified to decide whether someone should or should not come to school. If your child is absent please email our Attendance Officer Mrs Auld on attendance@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk or call her on 01992 642918 even if you discuss your child's absence with another colleague first. I can let you know that any self-isolation is coded (in absence terms) as 'exceptional circumstances' and does not count against attendance figures, so families will not be sanctioned for prolonged absence due to self-isolation.

During any closure, or student absence, we would recommend that students should stay indoors and should not gather with groups of other students; that is the point of absence or closure after all! School closure will mean we will be isolated at home until the Government gives us further updates.

Finally, do not panic. If the Government decides to close schools, this will be a preventative action designed to minimise the impact of this nasty virus and to protect the more vulnerable.

I will regularly communicate the families through the website and email during any closure.

Yours sincerely



Nicholas Simms
Headteacher

ASPIRE • CHALLENGE • SUCCEED

Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN7 5FB t: 01992 629124 f: 01992 643354
e: admin@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk w: www.st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk
Head Teacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

'Students feel happy and safe at school' OFSTED 2019
'An exceptionally inclusive and caring community' SIAMS Inspection (2020)