

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Robin M Bevan MA MEd PhD FRSA



17th March 2020

Dear Parents,

You will understand that, alongside our dedication to personal achievements and pupil development, our school is equally committed to the health and well-being of all in our community: pupils, staff and parents.

In the light of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have been closely following the guidance from Public Health England. This advice has changed on a number of occasions. Until last week, schools were explicitly encouraged to continue as normal. On Thursday, the Prime Minister announced an end to overseas school trips. Yesterday, he introduced a further wave of restrictions on social contact.

At each stage, we have followed the advice and not inappropriately anticipated what might follow. Our calm and purposeful approach has modelled precisely the behaviour we would want to see in our students: evidence-informed and considerate behaviour, without misplaced anxiety or over-reaction. It remains the case that school closures, partial or complete, may be announced; but that is far from certain.

First, may I thank all our parents for their support in these difficult weeks. We have had very high levels of pupil attendance and, despite the uncertainties, we have been very grateful for the exceptional trust placed in our decision-making and planning. We have also had some parents expressing differences of opinion about our response, but – again – I would emphasise all our actions have been informed by the latest public health guidance, rather than any speculation.

Pupil Absence

Please follow the published NHS advice regarding absence from school:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>. As it stands, if your son or daughter has symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, they should stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms started.

This advice is being updated and is expected to include the new direction, from the Prime Minister's speech, yesterday, that *anyone in a household with someone displaying symptoms should self-isolate for 14 days*.



During periods of self-isolation or other absence, we are currently unable to sustain the provision of remote 'work-at-home' tasks whilst also expecting our teachers to be providing for lessons in school. Where possible and when otherwise healthy, your son/daughter will still be able to access set homework tasks (*via* Show My Homework) and may be able to obtain details of classwork from a 'buddy' in their class. We are working to make this approach more comprehensive and sustainable.

Personal Health

Please make sure you have explained to your son/daughter the importance of "How to avoid catching or spreading coronavirus". Every parent should already have talked, at home, about this advice:

- ✓ wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- ✓ use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- ✓ cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- ✓ put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- ✓ try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

Please do not provide your son or daughter with a face mask to wear in school or when travelling to/from school. The medical evidence clearly indicates this does not limit infection (other than in particular hospital environments) and can increase the likelihood of infection if droplets – from a cough or sneeze – remain on the gauze.

Overseas Trips

We have worked hard since the announcement of the limitations on overseas trips, not least in conversations with our school insurers. We will be making decisions in the very near future about the trips due to take place before the start of June – Norway, Paris and the Rhineland. Parents of trip participants will be notified shortly of our intentions and, where relevant, details of any refunds will be explained. We are hopeful of recovering all the cost of cancelled trips.

Closure

We have developed a range of possible responses should the school be required to close. We do not intend amplifying all our thoughts until the need arises, as we do not know – nor can we anticipate – the nature or extent of any closure, let alone whether there will be any associated deferral of public examinations.

If a closure is enforced, we will: communicate details to parents by email in a timely fashion and we will explain how our existing software (RMUnify, ShowMyHomework and Microsoft Teams) will be used to provide activities and tuition that will follow our normal published timetable of five lessons a day.

Depending on the duration of any absence, one or more of these software platforms may be developed further to host video and/or live chat content. Naturally, our provision during any closure will depend on the continuing health of our teaching and support staff.

School Activities

The school continues to have a thriving programme of extra-curricular and performance activities. We are reviewing the guidance to establish the extent to which these fall into the new restricted categories: our priority is the safety and well-being of pupils and staff, but we also want our community to remain creative, productive, and physically active. You will understand that some practices, clubs, performances and societies will be cancelled or postponed.

The public performances of 'Rock of Ages' and the Spring Concert have been postponed as has the Parent Forum meeting on 26th March.

Thank you again for your support. We will continue to keep you informed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin M Bevan', with a small flourish at the end.

Robin M Bevan
Headteacher

