

St Wilfrid's Catholic School

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Headteacher: Michael Ferry BEd (Hons) MA NPQH

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and West Sussex County Council

20 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Despite the events of this week and the uncertainty which has been caused, the atmosphere at school has remained calm and as purposeful as possible given the circumstances.

I held assemblies with all year groups yesterday to explain the situation and answer any questions as far as I could. We are in difficult times and understandably this has been a significant blow for Year 11 and Year 13. The uncertainty and shock have made this a very surreal situation for them. The government have stated that they will be publishing more information concerning the awarding of qualifications later today and I will update the parents of those affected once I am clear about the proposals.

I hope that the following information is helpful:

Expectations

To be very clear, what is being offered/organised in school is childcare; it is not a continuation of your child's education.

The school will be staffed by a skeleton body of volunteers and as such I would ask you to be realistic in your expectations of what we can and cannot do as well as the speed of response to any communications. Many of our staff are facing the same challenges as you in terms of childcare, sickness, computer access and supporting disappointed sons/daughters facing uncertainty over the cancellation of exams, as well as supporting vulnerable family members and those in their local communities.

Opening of school for children of Key Workers/Vulnerable Children

The school will be open on Monday 23rd March for students whose parents have no other alternative than to send their child to school. The guidance is clear that parents should keep their children at home wherever possible so as to limit the change of the virus spreading. The NSPCC suggest that any child aged 12+ is considered to be mature enough to be left alone. Please refer to my previous letter from earlier this morning for more details. All parents of students who have an EHCP have been emailed by Mrs Kerr.

If your child has been self-isolating in the last few days, they should not attend school at all (even if you are a key worker or they are classed as a vulnerable student) until the end of their 7 or 14 day isolation period. If they have been isolating because of an underlying health condition, especially if it is a condition identified in the guidance, again they should not attend for an indefinite period, liable to be for at least 3 months.

The school will be open from 9.00am to 3.20pm. Students will be allowed on site/into the school building from 8.40am with a register being taken at 9.00am. Students will be required to leave the school site at 3.20pm. Students are not required to wear their uniform.

Setting of Work

All teachers are/will be setting work for students to do at home. The work will be posted on Show My Homework and teachers will be able to monitor messages both on this platform and via email should students have any queries. This will be reviewed over time as it is not sustainable to continue to set work in this way over an indefinite period.

Public Examinations

All public exams are cancelled. More information will follow regarding the awarding of qualifications for Year 11 and Year 13 once published.

Trips/Events

All trips/events scheduled are cancelled. Where monies have been paid to tour operators/event organisers, we are in communication with them regarding refunds. As and when we get more information/have monies refunded we will contact the relevant parents/carers but parents should be aware that due to the nature of some government advice on these matters some refunds may not be possible.

With specific reference to events for Year 11 and Year 13, notably the Prom and the Dinner Dance; I am deeply aware of how disappointed our students are at the cancellation of these. At this point in time, with the peak of the virus not expected for another 3 months, we have absolutely no other option, especially as measures to curb the virus are expected to become more stringent in the coming weeks.

We are in unprecedented times which present much challenge and uncertainty. We are grateful to everyone involved in the national effort and in return my phenomenal colleagues are doing whatever they can to provide for and support your child/children.

Although St Wilfrid's will be closed for the vast majority of our students for an indefinite period, all staff are acutely aware of the difficulties being faced by all of our families who we will continue to keep in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ferry', written in a cursive style.

Michael Ferry
Headteacher