



The Consortium Multi Academy Trust

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What Consortium Trust is doing in relation to Covid-19

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff

As you would expect, the Trust's Critical Incident Team are monitoring the situation with regards to the Covid-19 virus closely, and receive daily updates from the Department for Education and Public Health England. At this point in time, we felt it important that we inform you of the current position within the Trust, what preventative measures we have put into place, what we anticipate may happen, and what 'business continuity' plans we have implemented in the event that Covid-19 reaches our schools.

Current position

Currently, no confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported although we have a few pupils across the Trust who are self-isolating with cold like symptoms. However, the UK's Chief Medical Officer has raised the risk to the public from low to moderate. This does not mean that they think the risk to individuals in the UK has changed at this stage, but that the government should plan for all eventualities and, therefore, so should we.

Preventative measures

We have instructed all schools and establishments to ensure that an increased awareness of hygiene is paramount, recommending regular handwashing and the use of sanitiser hand gel available to visitors on entry and exit. Display notices should also be visible as visual reminders and prompts.

It seems prudent to restrict the movement of Staff and Pupils across the Trust where possible until the end of this term. Regrettably, I have taken the decision to postpone the first CEO's 'Pupil Commendation Award' Tea Party until the summer term. We are of course ensuring that our cleaners are even more diligent than usual, ensuring that door and drawer handles, cupboards and surfaces are disinfected daily. As a reminder of preventative measures at home, school and work:

- > wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds;
- > always wash your hands when you arrive at school, during the day, before eating, when you leave and at home;
- > 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 straight away and wash your hands afterwards;
- > avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- > try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell;

What may happen

We cannot predict how the Covid-19 virus will progress, although Government and Public Health England suggest that infection of Covid-19 may reach its highest level around May. Only time will tell as to whether this is accurate, but we will monitor the situation closely.

Health & Safety of Pupils, Families & Staff

The health and safety of our pupils, families and staff is paramount in any decision which our critical incident team make. Our understanding from Public Health is that the risk of Covid-19 to children's health is minimal. However, our advice to anyone who feels poorly, and or who may be displaying symptoms of Covid-19, is that they seek the guidance and advice from 111. This is particularly important where children or staff have pre-existing medical conditions. Self-isolation is required if deemed necessary following, medical advice.

We would ask that parents, carers and staff follow the usual protocol of informing their school of any reason for absence, and whether it is due to a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19. In the event that a colleague or pupil is diagnosed with Covid-19, we will be contacted by and receive advice and guidance from the Public Health Agency.

Symptoms of Covid-19

- > a cough
- > a high temperature
- > shortness of breath

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness and are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

Risk to the education of our pupils

Closure of our schools will be avoided at all costs unless directed by the government, in which case we will follow DfE guidance and advice. However, we are aware that our schools may be put under increased operational pressure due to staff sickness or self-isolation and Academy Heads will monitor this closely. We also recognise that many of our staff have dependent children or parents, and therefore in a higher risk category of absence due to providing care for sick relatives. If staffing at a school becomes critically low, our business continuity strategy, to ensure the continued delivery of our educational obligations to our pupils and your children may include:

- > deploying central Trust Staff to support staff absence;
- > merging key stage classes within a school; i.e. Key Stage 1 (Years 1, 2) and Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 & 6);

Impact on SATs

The Trust would be led by the DfE in respect of the usual SATs timetable and the effect which Covid-19 may have on SATs nationally. If staffing became critical, we would look to protect the educational outcomes of our pupils in these priority classes and deploy staff to Years 1 & 2 and Year 6. In this very unlikely situation, we would instruct our Nursery, Year 3, 4 & 5 pupils not to attend school; however, we would maintain the education of these pupils through:

- > remote classroom teaching;
- > teacher's providing daily education plans to by email, with clear guidance of content expectations;
- > online teaching resources and educational programmes which schools and pupils already use;

Free School Meals

As an ethical Trust, we are very aware of the impact which a class or school closure would have on families where children are eligible for free school meals. Again, we are seeking clarification from our catering service providers as to how this could be managed and look to support our families with solutions where ever possible.

Cancellation of Easter ESCape! Holiday School:

We have been very busy planning and preparing for ESCape! Holiday School for the Easter school closure period, which is running for 4 days at 4 locations across the Trust: YoxValley, Waveney valley, Borders and Henley.

Due to the risk of cross infection across schools, staff, pupils and visiting children attending ESCape! we have taken the difficult decision to cancel ESCape! Holiday School this Easter.

This decision has not been taken lightly and I am very sorry for the disruption to families and disappointment to children which this may cause. However, the two week break provides a very good opportunity to stop the risk of continuing infection, to deep clean the schools, to take stock of the infection levels within our schools, and consider further advice and guidance for the remainder of the academic year.

Educational & Residential Visits

Whilst increased awareness of hygiene should be continued, we see no reason for existing educational trips and residential visits to be cancelled or postponed, unless they are to highly populated areas or environments such as museums and cities. Use of public transport should not be included in an educational trip or residential and other means of transport used if necessary.

Year 6 French Trip

We will continue to monitor the government's advice on travel and how this may affect our annual Year 6's trip to St. Omer in France. We will be able to confirm whether the trip will definitely be continuing after the Easter school closure period.

School Services

We use a limited number of service providers to support the day to day operation of our schools including catering, cleaning and school transport. These contractors and the Local Authorities would be responsible for the continued provision of their services, and we are seeking clarification from them with regards to their own business continuation plans in the event of staff sickness effecting services.

Safeguarding our Pupils

As always, the Trust will continue to offer safeguarding support to our pupils, families and schools, even in the event of a class or school closure through the Trust's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and Emergency Point of Contacts (EPOC) below:-

Trust DSLs & EPOC

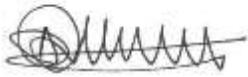
- > Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, CEO & Principal. Email: principal@consortiumacademy.org
- > Nigel Shaddick, HoS for Welfare, Inclusion, Safeguarding & Attendance (WISA),
Email: howsisa@consortiumacademy.org

Supplies

As we have all seen from grocery trips over the last week, consumables are in short supply including tissues, hand gel and even toilet rolls! Our schools are usually well stocked; however, all schools nationally use the same two or three online suppliers and we are aware that their supplies are already low. To mitigate the risk of running out of supplies in schools, we are stock taking consumables across the Trust and implementing a cautious approach to the use of limited items.

I hope that this has provided reassurance and transparency to the Trust's response in managing the outbreak of Covid-19 in our school communities. No one is able to predict the severity of the infection and we will only implement severe measures where absolutely necessary, or following guidance from the DfE and government. I would urge colleagues and our families to continue life as normal, ensuring you are protecting yourselves and further spread by using the preventative measures suggested. We will of course keep you informed of any further developments if necessary going forward.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal

Further information can be found at the following links:

<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>