

Barrs Court Primary School



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Headteacher: **Jess Caunter**
17th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

COVID-19 Update

As you know, we are having to make many decisions with regards to the safety and learning of our pupils during this time. We are working exceptionally hard to weather the difficulties and make the right decisions for the whole school community. This is not easy when the situation changes daily, even hourly, as does the government/public health advice. Yesterday I attended a briefing for South Gloucestershire Headteachers, with information provided by both the education and health sectors of the local authority. Following this meeting, this letter has been written in collaboration with a number of local schools so that a consistent message is being provided across the local area.

One of the most pressing and ongoing concerns for the whole school community, is whether or not the school should be closed. Closure is a very serious matter, both in itself and because of the impact on the many key workers we number in our parent body and others who will be hard to substitute for employers. **If the school is to close, the decision will be made by Public Health England or the Local Authority.** I am only authorised to close the school if I am unable to provide safe levels of staff supervision for the pupils. This may well become the case over the coming days or weeks.

The government/pubic health will continue to provide updates about the situation on a daily basis. I am sure you share my concern and have been thinking about how this will impact your family, friends and children's schools. We will help in any way we can, both whilst the school remains open, and if we are forced to close. The following advice now applies to all pupils and staff:

*To support the delay of the spread of the virus, the Department for Health and Social Care has asked anyone who shows certain symptoms (or if a member of their household is displaying these symptoms) to stay at home for **14 days** (this is a very recent change, up from 7 days), regardless of whether they have travelled to affected areas. This means people should stay at home and avoid all but essential contact with others for 14 days from the point of displaying mild symptoms, to slow the spread of infection. The symptoms are:*

- **A high temperature (37.8 degrees and above)**
- **A new, continuous cough**

You do not need to call NHS 111 to make the decision to stay at home. If your symptoms worsen during your stay at home period or are no better after 14 days, contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

This advice remains in place at present: no education or children's social care setting should close in response to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case unless advised to do so by Public Health England. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the impact of closing schools on both children's education and on the workforce will be substantial, but the benefit to public health may not be. Decisions on future advice to schools will be taken based on the latest and best scientific evidence, which at this stage suggests children are a lower risk group.



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Full details are shown in the following link. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>

This week, we have seen a number of parents and carers exercising their right to keep their child off school, even if neither they, nor anyone in their household is displaying the symptoms noted above. Absences for this specific reason cannot be authorised, but I absolutely appreciate that parents have a right and a duty to make the decision they believe is in the best interests of their children and their family.

School situations vary of course, but I would like to reassure you that this week, we will be working on:

- A requirement for all staff and visitors to wash their hands upon entering the school and then throughout the day.
- All pupils and staff having to wash their hands on arrival at school, after break, before they eat lunch and before they go home. If your child is suffering from dry/red hands, feel free to send them in to school with a named moisturiser.
- To increase our hygiene in school we have stopped the use of water fountains. Please ensure that you send your child in with a water bottle. These will be sent home each evening for washing. Any child who arrives without a water bottle will be provided with a plastic cup to use during the day.
- Increased cleaning of key surfaces around the school.
- No whole school assemblies.
- We are looking into ways to provide ongoing communication if the school is closed and provide opportunities for the children to continue to develop as learners whilst there may be a period of school closure. We will provide information on how to access online or paper based resources and ensure there are learning opportunities/links on the school website. In addition, we are currently exploring different ways that we can continue to set work where possible, depending on the situation.
- **Y6 SATS**
We are aware of the impact this situation is likely to have on tests and exams. Whilst our immediate concern is the health and safety of pupils and their families, clearly the longer-term impact is a concern too. We are aware the teaching unions and local authorities have raised concerns with the government. We will keep you updated with any further information as and when we receive it.

Please be assured that all decisions made are taken in the best interests of all concerned but in line with official guidance and procedures. As always, if you have any questions or queries, please speak to myself or the school office.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for both your patience and understanding in this matter – many of you have already expressed your support and compassion at what is a very challenging time for us all.

Yours sincerely

Ms J. Caunter
Headteacher



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