

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School

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17th March 2020

Dear Parents,

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

We find ourselves in unprecedented times. The advice and guidance related to the Coronavirus outbreak is very fluid and constantly changing and I am certain that many of you will be concerned with how to keep yourselves and your wider family safe. As we face this challenge together I can only thank you for your patience and understanding as we try to work together to keep our school community safe and calm.

At St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School, we continue to follow the advice from the Government, Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Education (DfE). Although things are moving rapidly, the Government are continuing to ask that schools do all they can to remain open for the time being. For this reason **our school remains open** in line with the current official guidance that we have been given.

What is the current situation?

Based on the Prime Minister's broadcast yesterday evening, supported by scientific and medical advice, the school should remain open. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the impact of closing schools on both children's education and on the workforce would be substantial, but the benefit to public health may not be. Decisions on future advice to education or children's social care settings will be taken based on the latest and best scientific evidence, which at this stage suggests children are a lower risk group.

All children should attend school unless they feel unwell. If your child has any of the following symptoms they should remain at home for 14 days. The Chief Medical Officer has also added that if one person in any household starts to display these symptoms, everyone living there must stay at home for 14 days in self-isolation:

- a new, continuous cough and/or
- a temperature of 37.8°C or higher an/or
- shortness of breath

If your child is unwell, please report this as you would normally do via calling the School Office or via the Study Bugs App. Please state if you are self-isolating due to the virus so we can record your absence using the correct code. Please do not come to the School Office to report the absence. Absences will of course be authorised. If your child is self-isolating due to illness we will not be sending work home to complete as they need to focus on resting and their recovery.

The Government is no longer routinely testing people who are experiencing symptoms; unless their symptoms deteriorate, they are hospitalised or their symptoms last longer than seven days. Therefore, we will not know if anyone presenting with the above symptoms has contracted Coronavirus or another virus or infection such as a cold or any number of minor illnesses. It is therefore very important that we remain calm and refrain from panicking or speculating on this.

How can we stop the spread of Coronavirus?

The reality is that, in the weeks, and possibly month's ahead, potentially large numbers of our school population will be exposed to Coronavirus. The good news seems to be that the lowest risk group for the disease is among young people and children. We must, however, ensure that we continue to do everything that we can to mitigate its impact; by washing our hands frequently for 20 seconds at a time with soap and water; avoiding touching our faces and sneezing and coughing into a tissue or the crook of the arm. We will continue to reinforce this at school and children will be directed to wash their hands on numerous occasions throughout the day.

What we are doing to protect and support children and staff

If children become unwell on the school site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they will be sent home. We would ask that you swiftly pick up your child from school when you are contacted. The school continues to be cleaned throughout the day and thoroughly at the end/start of each day with all surfaces being wiped with particular attention to door handles, doorframes and push plates. Guidance for handwashing is repeated daily and posters are up around the school and in the toilet areas.

What we need you to do?

If you have recently changed your contact details, please inform the School Office as a matter of urgency via telephone (01277 223606) or email (admin@stthomasinf.essex.sch.uk). Please ensure you are signed up to the Parent Hub app, as this will become a crucial tool to communicate with you over the coming days/weeks. Please check this regularly for updates.

Remember that our children are just as concerned about the current situation as we are as adults. Talk to your children about the Coronavirus. BBC Newsround has regular updates for young children to help them understand what is going on and help them deal with any anxieties.

What happens if the school has to close?

We will only close the school if we are either officially advised to do so, or we do not have enough staff to run the school safely.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Governing Body are regularly updating our contingency plans to reflect guidance from Public Health England (PHE), the Department for Education (DfE) and the Government. We will endeavour to keep life in school as normal as possible for the children, but, of course, these are dependent upon circumstances and the nature of any national or local developments.

These contingency plans include the setting of work that the children will be able to complete at home during any prolonged school closure period. Please note that the expectation is that your child completes the work – any school closure will not be a holiday and it is important that we minimise disruption to your child's education.

In the case of any enforced closure, we will let you know via Parent Hub and the school website (www.stthomasofcanterburyinfantschool.co.uk).

Please keep in mind that we are only sending out this information to help the school community prepare. **There are currently no plans to close.**

If you have any questions?

Please consult the:

- School Office, if you have any questions about our response to this issue
- NHS if you want to know more about the symptoms of the Coronavirus. If you think you or your child/ren may have the symptoms, use [NHS111 online](#) if at all possible before calling 111
- Department for Education's Coronavirus Helpline: 0800 046 8687, if you have any questions about the Government's response to Coronavirus in relation to schools

As I stated at the beginning of this letter, we are in unprecedented times. It is important that we support each other and work together to keep our school community safe.

Please continue to pray for all those in positions of responsibility having to make very difficult decisions in very challenging circumstances. Please pray for all those in the medical profession who continue to treat the sick and the suffering. Please pray for all those who have contracted the virus or who have lost loved ones. Please pray for your own families and loved ones.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.

Yours sincerely,

C B L'Estrange

Caroline L'Estrange
Headteacher