13 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I write following the Government’s announcement yesterday that we are moving out of the ‘contain’ phase and into ‘delay’ in response to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. As always, the safeguarding and welfare of students is the highest priority at St Nicholas Catholic High School, and I will highlight below details of our continuing response and planning here at school.

**Information for Students**

Following the briefing given to all students on 27th February, we will provide further guidance during morning registration on Monday 16th March. This will focus on the new infographic provided to all schools last night detailing how to stop the virus spreading and what students should do if they feel unwell. A copy of this poster is attached to this letter for your information.

We will continue to ensure that supplies of anti-bacterial soap are available in all toilets, and tissues in all classrooms.

If students feel unwell in school, they should follow usual school procedures and parents and carers will be contacted.

**Self-Isolation**

The government has advised us all that *“if you have symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started. The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:*

* *new continuous cough and/or*
* *high temperature”*

If your child is presenting with such symptoms then you should follow this advice. Full details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Please inform the school office of your child’s absence following usual school absence procedures.

**School Trips and Events**

The government is currently advising against all overseas education trips for children under 18. This is because trip leaders would face significant challenges in making arrangements to ensure children’s welfare, should adult supervisors or children be required to self-isolate. We are currently investigating the impact of this on the scheduled trip to the Battlefields and to Borneo. Staff trip leaders will contact students and families separately once next steps have been confirmed with the Local Authority and Travel Companies.

The Department for Education is not currently advising against domestic trips or events (residential and non-residential) for children under 18 organised by education settings. However, we will be refreshing our risk assessments to take into account the latest health advice and ensure measures are in place and agreed with parents in case children or adult supervisors believe they have been exposed to COVID-19 and exhibit symptoms that require self-isolation. Full details will be offered in individual letters from the trip leader to relevant students and families.

**Transport**

In the unlikely event that bus companies need to cancel one of our school services due to unforeseen circumstances, we will communicate details as early as practically possible via Parentpay once the school has been informed by the bus company.

**GCSE and A-Level Examinations**

There has been no central communication from the government or examination bodies as to the possible impact of Coronovirus upon the 2020 examination series, or details of any contingency plans in place. Should information become available then I will look to communicate this as soon as practically possible. We are monitoring the information from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and Ofqual on a daily basis. As of today Ofqual have offered the following advice to school, parents and students:

*We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer exam series. Our advice at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal.*

*We continue to work closely with exam boards, other regulators and the Department for Education and we have met to plan for a range of scenarios, as the public would expect. Our overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum.*

*It is still many weeks until exams start and we will issue updated advice if necessary, giving schools and colleges as much notice as possible.*

**The School Day**

Here at school, we aim to continue very much ‘as normal’ until we are instructed otherwise by the Department for Education, Public Health England or the Local Authority.

We will carefully monitor and respond to staff and student illness on a daily basis, and will look to safeguard examination class provision as resources and practicalities allow.

**School Closure**

Should it be necessary to initiate a full or partial closure of the school, then we will look to provide e-resources via our online ‘Ruler’ VLE – contingency planning for this possibility is already underway.

As a school, we remain absolutely committed to all Department for Education guidance and will continue to follow all government advice in relation to any reported ‘suspected’ or ‘confirmed’ cases as outlined at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance-for-the-education-sector>.

Should you have any questions or concerns then please do contact school via the usual channels of communication.

Thank you as always for the continued support you offer to the St Nicholas community.

Yours sincerely


**Richard Woods
Headteacher**