



Billingshurst Primary School
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Tuesday 17th March 2020

Important COVID-19 Update

Dear Parents and Carers

As you are no doubt aware, the guidance from the government and Public Health England changed last night. West Sussex release the following statement:

'Schools currently remain open and will aim to do so until advised by the Department for Education and Public Health England.

However following the latest government announcement, there has been a change to the advice on self-isolation and vulnerable groups. If you and your child are well, please continue to come to school.

If you or anyone in your household is displaying symptoms then all members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days.

The symptoms are: a new persistent cough and/or a high temperature.

The following groups are also requested to remain at home.

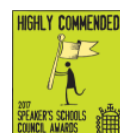
- **Age >70**
- **Adults who are eligible for a free flu vaccination due to a long-term health condition**
- **Those who are immunocompromised**

For further information, please [visit the West Sussex County Council website](#) - which also includes links to the latest government advice.

This is a fast moving situation and we will continue to update when we have more information'

As is made clear, if you or anyone in your household develops these symptoms, you must all self-isolate for 14 days. Please contact the school as you would normally do to record the absence.

As a result of this guidance, I have made the decision to send home staff with underlying health issues, or who are pregnant, that put them at risk if they contract COVID-19. Therefore tomorrow, Wednesday 18th, we will be reduced by 12 staff. We will remain open but in order to ensure that we have safe levels of staffing, there will be some re-allocation of support staff. As a result, learning intervention and SEND intervention groups will stop as staff are relocated to support vulnerable individual pupils. Where teachers are absent, we will ensure good cover teachers are in place and they will be supported by their teams and leaders.



We have a particularly small Reception cohort. As some children are absent we will be closing a classroom. The unit will have two teachers and three teaching assistants. Please collect your child from the unit as normal – Miss Milton and remaining staff will be able to answer any questions if you are unsure which classroom your child is in.

The safety and well-being of your child is paramount – we want to keep everything as normal as possible for as long as possible. If your child's teacher is not in school, please be assured that the rest of us will be stepping up to make sure they are OK and well supported. The staff I am sending home tonight DO NOT want to go but I am forcing them, for their own safety. The teachers who will not be in school are Mrs Hampson, Mrs Mason, Miss Jolley, Mrs Footer, Mrs Clyne, Miss Greenfield and Mrs Wattam. Support staff not in school are Mrs Scurr, Mrs Douglas and Mrs Stacey.

It is likely, at some point that schools will close. We will only close for two reasons – the first that we are instructed to do so and the second being we can no longer safely staff the school. On closing we will send your child home with a pack of work for them to complete at home. They will also have some reading books as reading is vital – please encourage your child to read daily whilst the school is closed. We cannot predict how long the schools will be closed for but have planned a wide range of activities to keep your child mentally active for a significant period of time. Let them get outside too, as long as you do not have to isolate, but keep social interaction to a minimum.

In light of this serious situation, we have had to take the difficult decision to cancel some events. As you know I have cancelled parents' evenings, extended parents consultations and the Book Fair. The BPSCA and I have decided to cancel Film Night and the Spring Fair. Any tickets for the Film Night will be transferred to the next event. The Summer Fun Day is also postponed but we hope to run this important event later in the year. We cannot ask businesses to sponsor us at this difficult time and the event requires a lot of organisation – and social interaction – that just is not feasible at this time. After school clubs will continue for now. Year 4 will go swimming this week but then this will stop too. The Ukulele Concert due to take place next Tuesday is also cancelled

In order to minimise the risk of transmission, we are also asking parent helpers not to come into school for now. We will review this if the situation and guidance allows. We really appreciate your help and do not ask you to not come in lightly – we need to minimise the risk to staff and children. We will welcome you back when this is all over.

We are in unprecedented times and there will be huge changes to all our lives for the next few months. I ask that you follow the guidance, keep as safe as you can, do not stock pile (!) and to try to support each other. We have key workers amongst our parents and they will need support if the schools close. Planning ahead to arrange child care between friends, especially so you are not reliant on grandparents, would be useful planning right now. I know, as a community, we can pull together to support each other through this difficult time. I will keep you updates – please expect near daily communication.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williamson
Headteacher

