

Message on behalf of:

Somerset County Council

All Schools

Please ask for:

Email: SSE@somerset.gov.uk

Direct Dial:

Date: 20 March 2020

Dear Parents

Coronavirus - impact on schools

Across Somerset, Head Teachers and staff will continue working extremely hard to keep schools open or provide alternative educational provision during these unprecedented times.

The government's latest announcement means that schools will be closed to a significant number of pupils. However, vulnerable children (those with EHCPs and/or social workers) will be able to continue attending school, along with children of critical workers, as part of the country's ongoing response to the virus.

[Government Guidance for Parent - Carers link](#)

You will be aware that the government has now moved from the containment phase to the delay phase, with regards to the virus, and has released new advice around self-isolation and vulnerable groups of people.

This new advice for schools means that many staff are affected by the self-isolation policy, and Head Teachers are dealing with higher than usual levels of staff absence at the current time.

We are all being led first and foremost by the Government, and please do follow the advice from the Public Health England website for the latest information.

These changes will have a profound impact on the way we live and go about our lives and it is recognised that schools will play a critical role in supporting our children and families during these testing times.

For many of you schools will soon be closed for your children but they should be providing you with alternative learning material and Head Teachers are working hard to determine which pupils will continue to attend school – i.e. vulnerable pupils and those of critical workers.

For those children attending school we want to reassure you that Head Teachers' key priorities are the safety, welfare and wellbeing of your children and young people. Their first job is to ensure that schools continue to be safe places for your children and young people, this may mean taking actions that include:

- Determining vulnerable pupils and those of 'critical workers' who can continue to be educated at school
- Supporting their staff to be at work as long as they are fit and able to do so.
- Cleaning has been increased and everyone in the school community is encouraged to be careful about handwashing and hygiene.
- Classes may be merged or sizes increased.
- Teaching and/or support staff may be redeployed to cover classes and safeguard vulnerable children.
- Class trips will be cancelled for the remainder of the term.
- Cancellation of after school clubs and non-essential school activities
- The school day may be shortened.
- Increased use of online resources for children to use at home.

Schools will be supporting staff to continue to be at work as long as they are fit and able and will continue to work with other agencies as appropriate to keep children safe and will confirm any safeguarding arrangements with parents.

Self-isolation

If you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to stay at home for 14 days from the day their symptoms started. This is because it can take 14 days for symptoms to appear.

If more than one person at home has symptoms, stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person started having symptoms.

If you get symptoms, stay at home for seven days from when your symptoms start, even if it means you're at home for longer than 14 days.

If you do not get symptoms, you can stop staying at home after 14 days.

Only use the 111 service if you cannot cope with your symptoms at home or your condition gets worse.

Full details are available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

Why self-isolate?

It is very important that individuals with symptoms that may be due to coronavirus and their household members stay at home. Staying at home will help control the spread of the virus to friends, the wider community, and particularly the most vulnerable.

What you can do to help

- Follow the self-isolation advice for yourself and your children and young people.
- Regularly check your school's usual communication channels, such as emails, Parentmail and social media pages.
- Keep up to date with government advice.
- If your child is attending school please arrive and leave the school site promptly, without gathering in close contact with others.

Schools are working closely with the Local Authority and the Headteacher Associations in order to offer a consistent and safe response to the current crisis. The health and safety of your children is everyone's first priority.
[Government information on school closures and an FAQs is available here.](#)

Kind Regards



Julian Wooster
Director of Children's Services