

Gad's Hill School - Covid-19 Update - 19/3/20

Dear Parents,

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that all schools in England are to close to most pupils by the end of this week. It is a tribute to our amazing community – staff, pupils, parents alike – that, when this anticipated announcement finally arrived, Gad's Hill School felt in strong shape, with learning continuing and pupils happy and engaged. We have had no confirmed cases of Covid-19, though some pupils are now staying at home for precautionary reasons, or having developed some symptoms which could be related to the coronavirus.

However, in line with the Government advice - which is intended to reduce the spread of infection through the public by increasing social distancing - **the School site will close to most pupils at the end of the day tomorrow, Friday 20th March.** Homework club (until 5pm) and after-school care (until 6pm) will operate, but there will be no other clubs. Our school bus services will run as usual, departing at 4.15pm.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NON-KEY WORKER FAMILIES:

It is critical that pupils take home with them tomorrow all their bags and PE kits etc. and also their exercise books and other resources that they will need to continue with work at home next week. If you subsequently discover that anything has been left behind, please email or call us so we can try to find a way to reunite them with their property.

I am sorry that this will necessitate complicated arrangements for many of you to ensure that your children can be cared for from Monday onwards.

The positive news is that here at Gad's Hill School, we have successfully navigated our way to within one week of our usual Easter holidays, and so I trust that you will already have had arrangements in place from the end of next week, and for the three subsequent weeks. **School will remain closed to pupils until further notice.** If this seems likely to extend beyond the commencement of the Summer Term, on Tuesday 21st April, I will let parents know as soon as I am able. During the Easter holidays, I hope that all of our children will have their usual opportunity to unwind, having worked so hard in school and progress tests since early January, and to spend time with their families.

The second piece of positive news is that you should by now be aware that a significant amount of Distance Learning has been put in place by my colleagues and there should be plenty to keep your child busy for the next week, prior to the holidays. Dr Burke has written to you separately with some helpful advice and strategies to support this learning.

Several parents have kindly been in contact to recommend virtual learning and communication platforms; many thanks for these recommendations. We are looking at various options to ensure the continuation of education if this closure were to continue beyond the Easter break. Online classrooms and video links are certainly a potential solution and in some parts of the school we already make use of Microsoft Teams for this purpose. In the first instance, however, we have made a strategic decision to share work with pupils in ways which we are confident can be accessed by all, without the need to ask parents (and teachers) to master new technologies in a very short space of time.

Individual subject teachers will be available to provide support to pupils and parents regarding work, via email. However, we have also set up a dedicated mailbox for you to direct questions regarding any overarching issues related to coronavirus, distance learning or anything else. That address is help@gadshillschool.org

INSTRUCTIONS FOR KEY WORKERS AND FOR PARENTS OF PUPILS WITH AN EHCP OR AN ASSIGNED SOCIAL WORKER:

The Government have asked schools to remain open next week for the supervision of children of Key Workers, so that they can continue their important work, and for children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan or who are currently assigned a social worker.

The Cabinet Office committed yesterday to sharing an official list of 'key workers' and clarifying further details during the course of today. At the time of writing (7.45pm), this has still not been made public or shared with schools.

Assuming that this will finally have been published by tomorrow morning, I will circulate the eligibility criteria and further instructions to parents then, along with a link to an online form, in which you will be asked to describe your eligibility and indicate whether you intend to use this supervision service next week.

I am sorry that the delay in defining key workers will not leave families a great deal of time to make arrangements for next week, however I ask parents to complete the form as promptly as possible once it is circulated, in order to allow us to consider staffing implications. Thank you for your co-operation.

Also expected tomorrow is more information regarding the cancellation of GCSE examinations and the awarding of grades. It was desperately sad to speak with our Upper Fifth this morning, who had been deprived of the opportunity to show off in assessment all that they have worked so hard for. This evening I am thinking of them.

SAFEGUARDING NOTICE:

During a short period in which normal face-to-face teaching is disrupted, our commitment to Safeguarding remains as strong as ever. The first section of our [school safeguarding policy](#) contains a large number of contact details for various safeguarding services, within the school, in Kent and nationally. An e-mail sent to help@gadshillschool.org will come to the attention of a Designated Safeguarding Lead, but in a situation where there is imminent risk of harm to a child, please do not hesitate to call 999 directly to seek emergency help.

I need, once again, to express my grateful thanks to the whole 'Gad's Family' for their support this week. From conversations in the car park, I know that many of you are experiencing some very challenging times currently, and I am thankful that you have been able to join with us to keep children busily engaged in their normal, daily lives.

Kind regards
Paul Savage



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