



19th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

You will have heard of the decision to close schools for all but a few children from Friday 20th March 2020 until further notice to pause the spread of the corona virus.

Children of key workers though and some other vulnerable students are able to still attend school and we will therefore operate a skeleton service to supervise these children and keep them safe. Whilst supervision is necessarily required by primary aged students it may be that parents of students in older years are happy for students to remain at home and work independently on work provided. Sixth form students are expected to remain at home.

Students on site will be supervised throughout the school day which will run from 8.40 – 3.30. Lessons will obviously be suspended. Subject specialist teachers are likely to not be available. Students will instead have access to computers to enable them to access the work that the school has provided for all other students working at home. There will naturally be no after school activities and the school buildings will shut at 4pm. A skeleton canteen service will likely be provided. Uniform will not be required.

Our first action today must be to identify the number of children concerned so that we can staff this safely. We must also, of course, balance this with ensuring that the national policy of social isolation is maintained and so need to minimise the number of students and staff on site. Parental support then would be appreciated in ensuring that where girls can be kept at home they are kept at home. This will in turn allow us to keep our staff at home, many of whom will have their own dependents to now consider.

Should you require your daughter to attend school for supervision, as you are a key worker, or because your daughter is eligible for free school meals, please complete the quick attached questionnaire. An immediate response would greatly help us.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdILcHFe1ey38FD5TAJIBqPLF1etsGtb8FUWyx-yGtLv6gBVQ/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdILcHFe1ey38FD5TAJIBqPLF1etsGtb8FUWyx-yGtLv6gBVQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Please bear in mind that whilst we have every sympathy that many parents will struggle through these times and that childcare could provide a solution to enable parents to continue to work, that the national policy is to socially distance ourselves. We therefore need to ensure as few children and staff on site as possible and therefore, as per national guidelines, schools will be open only for children of key workers and vulnerable students - those in receipt of free school meals. Again, I ask for parental support in ensuring that where girls can be kept at home they are kept at home.

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Free School Meals

For students who receive free school meals and who are able to remain at home we intend to provide 'food only' vouchers for supermarkets. These will need to be collected from the finance office tomorrow and will cover the immediate period to the Easter break. Arrangements longer term will be confirmed as we know them – but we imagine students will need to collect from the school at a fixed time during the week.

Public Exams

Public exams are cancelled. Details are non-existent at the moment. Whilst it will be almost impossible to steady nerves and reassure the girls it is what we must all try to do. This is particularly true for exam years as they will not know what happens next. Nor do we. We must carry on as normal. Predicted grades may be required. Exams may be sat at a later date. Exams may be sat next year, with all year groups repeating the year - all of these are options on the rumour mill. So work should be set. Past papers, essays, the norm is all we can do! For now we must seek to provide reassurance at least - if not clarity. Girls may well be ecstatic at the thought of no school but there is also fear. Fear because this has never happened, fear because the shelves and streets are empty, fear of the unknown and isolation from friends - so again the next two days are vital to be calm, measured, reassuring, optimistic, kind - as is the FSG way.

For now, for staff, we will need to look at numbers of students likely to attend. We will need volunteers to support as skeleton staffing. Some will have young children and childcare will prove problematic if not insurmountable. Some will have vulnerable partners or relatives and may need to not attend. My thanks to those staff who have already volunteered to help out in any way they can. There is also talk of similar supervision being required over the Easter break to allow key workers to work for the National good. Again we will need staff support.

However, the intention is to keep staffing to an absolute minimum; those who can work from home should work from home.

Students working at home

We will do all we can to operate a normal curriculum for girls at home. Our intention would be that all girls will be expected to work, at home, as per a normal school day. We will use technology such as Hegarty Maths and google classrooms to facilitate this. Girls would for example log on Monday period 1 to their timetabled lessons and their teachers will have set work and be available for email enquiries. Period 2, their period 2 work would be accessed and that teacher available on line for help and guidance. We hope to be able to provide live video lessons for some lessons but will prioritise examination classes in year 11 and year 13 for this. It is though important to manage parental expectation. Whilst it is our intention to work remotely as far as is possible and to try and protect the girls education it should be noted that technology can let us all down at times and the internet nationally may prove incapable of coping with the whole nation working from home! Many staff themselves are parents and will have their own children at home to contend with, and so may need to step away from workstations to deal with an issue at home. It will not be perfect, indeed it will be far from it, but it will be our best efforts under the circumstances because our girls deserve nothing less.

Parents will be expected to ensure that girls are at home during the normal working day and working on the work set. Clearly school closures are designed to halt the spread of the corona virus and this cannot be achieved if the school children of East Kent are all in Bluewater or Nandos!

There is of course an opportunity for the girls to help in their local community; to help keep elderly neighbours perhaps in supplies. In my own village our local shop, staffed mainly by retired volunteers will need help. Perhaps there is something we can do, in this gained family time, to help at this time of crisis.

In these extra-ordinary times - self isolation, social distancing, a new vocabulary - the old words matter most. So a massive **thank you** to our staff for being such an extraordinary bunch and for their ongoing support for the girls, the school and each other and my thanks too to all those parents who have offered their services, time or just words of support.

My thanks too to our wonderful girls - whom we will all miss over these difficult months!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lester', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Mark Lester
Principal