

Dear Parent/Carer

I understand that these are very unsettling and unusual times. As part of the Thomas Estley community, you and your families are very much in our thoughts at this time. The type of issues which we are facing together on a daily basis have never been experienced before within this generation, and we are determined to support our young people to the best of our ability during this outbreak and its associated challenges.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT TODAY – PLANS FROM MONDAY MARCH 23

Today's government announcement is that, from this Friday March 20, all schools in England will close to all pupils except pupils of key workers (the government will define tomorrow exactly what roles this will include) or pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. Other children will not be able to attend schools and arrangements will have to be made where necessary to care for them at home, although the government has said that these arrangements should not include carers in vulnerable groups in terms of the coronavirus. Schools will then remain closed until further notice, except to these pupils, and examinations will not take place this May and June. Special arrangements will be made to ensure that, fairly, and at some point, Year 11 students get the qualifications which they need to progress into further academic studies and careers, and more information will shortly be available from the government regarding these arrangements. The government will also share plans regarding supplying lunch to children eligible for free school meals soon.

THIS WEEK SO FAR AT THOMAS ESTLEY AND PLANS FOR FRIDAY MARCH 20

I have been impressed and humbled by the attitude and approach this year of both staff and students this week in the face of challenging circumstances. Everyone has stepped up courageously and calmly to do their best, with quiet determination, to ensure that the business of learning continues as normal. Within the college population, we have dealt with a number of poorly children as well as with a number of staff who have had to remain at home due to particular family and personal circumstances beyond their control. There are already at least 15% of our staff (teaching or support) unable to work at the college, for various reasons, and as a result we have had to work together to ensure that we continue to provide our normal high standard of provision. We have worked hard not to send any children home yet, although we know this has been the case in other local schools already. As well as the obvious detrimental impact on the children's education, we have been aware that this would also have impacted on parents, some of whom have particularly crucial roles at this time. We are monitoring events on a daily basis and balancing all factors carefully, and should we need to send some year groups home on Friday and/or send all students home early on Friday due to an escalation of staff absence tomorrow, we will contact you tomorrow afternoon to confirm details.

REMOTE WORKING FOR STUDENTS

We are aware that there are students who are self-isolating due to household needs and decisions and also students who will not be able to attend school for a period of time beyond the end of this week. With this in mind, we have worked hard this week to ensure

that work can be remotely shared, accessed and marked during the period when students are not in school, and will finalise our plans tomorrow. You will receive information in another parentmail this evening with more details around this remote working, and you will also receive a parent password for our new portal, Show My Homework, by hand from your child if present today or by post if your child was not in school today.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Beaver Buses will be amalgamating services tomorrow due to staff absence and it is possible that your child, if they travel to school by Beaver Bus, will be given a different pick up time and/or be sharing buses with children from other local schools, tomorrow and Friday. Their normal passes can be used.

I spoke with Elliott Sinton's family today. We had planned a memorial for Elliott this Friday at 3:15pm and with current circumstances in mind, we have decided, with the family, to postpone Elliott's school memorial for the moment until circumstances change.

Please ensure that your child picks up their property from college (from lockers, tutor rooms, etc) tomorrow or Friday to take it home.

I understand that this information will cause inconvenience, anxiety and difficulty for many of you at an already anxious and challenging time. We share your concern for your children and we are upset for those who may feel disadvantaged, angry, sad or confused in regard to current events and decisions. However, we will need to follow the government legislation exactly and we will let you know more details as we find and work this out moving forward over the next day or so. Thank you for all of your recent messages of support for the college and for our attempts to support our children and community. As I have previously shared with you, although circumstances are out of our control, our response to them is within our control, and I want to assure you that we will move heaven and earth to do our very best within these constraints for our young people and college community at this difficult time.

With warmest regards

Mandi Collins, Principal