

20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Closure of School due to Coronavirus

We have been instructed by the Department for Education to close the school to all students **except those students whose parents are critical (key) workers** or have particular defined needs (see later section). This is part of the national strategy to delay the further spread of Coronavirus. **With effect from Monday 23 March, St Mark's Church of England Academy will be closed until further notice.**

The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear.

**If children can stay safely at home, they should,
to limit the chance of the virus spreading.**

More information for parents can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in the wider society.

Principal Lisa Peterkin

Key Principles that the Government have set out:

Please follow these:

1. **If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.**
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical (key) worker, then educational provision will be available for them. *Currently this will be at our school. But please be aware that this may change if we cannot provide sufficient and appropriate staffing.*
3. Parents should **not** rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

I realise that not attending school causes potential disruption to your child's learning and routine. The school has put in place steps to help students continue to learn whilst at home through

www.showmyhomework.com

This year's summer examinations for Year 11 and 13 will also not go ahead, with the government pledging to work with the exams regulator "to ensure children get the qualifications that they need". We are awaiting further clarification on how qualifications will be awarded and will let you know once we have further information. The school will continue to set work for any Year 11 and 13 students via

www.showmyhomework.com

During the school closure, your child's non-attendance will **not be** marked as an unauthorised absence. This will not affect your child's attendance record.

I will keep you informed of any changes to the school closure via the school website and parent e-mail. If you have any questions on whole school arrangements, please e-mail the school

school@stmarksacademy.org.uk.

If you have any safeguarding concerns please contact dsl@stmarksacademy.org.uk via email.

I would be grateful if you can keep up to date with the Public Health England guidance on Coronavirus so that you can keep yourself and your family safe. Use the website below, which is currently being updated daily:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

The government has asked schools to only remain open to students whose parents are **critical (key) workers or children who have an Education Health and Care Plan or social worker**. If your child falls into one of these categories they are eligible to attend school.

For safeguarding and planning reasons we must know in advance which students are intending to come into school during the school closure.

If you wish for your child to continue to attend school, **please complete the response form using this [link](#) by 2pm on Friday 20 March**. Once we have received your form we will confirm that you have a place.

School will be open for these students only from Monday 23 March. For replies received after 2pm noon on Friday 20 March, students may be given an alternative start date. This to aid us in planning the correct staffing levels.

Students attending school on Monday 23 March should be in suitable clothes every day or full school uniform and report to the main hall at 8:30am. Please note that the normal school behaviour policy applies whilst children are in school.

The school will be open and students will be supervised completing the work set by their normal teachers.

For next week until we know the number of students attending school our break and lunch dinner service will continue as usual. We will not be holding a breakfast club, however all students who attend will be provided with a free break time option. Those who receive FSM will continue to receive a meal at lunch time free of charge.

Parents should assume there is no/limited public transport available and should make their own arrangements for their child to travel to and from school. Please contact Merton Council if you require any further information on school transport.

The school will be open Monday to Friday from 8.30am – 2.45pm. As our usual behaviour policy applies, any student detentions could be held on site until 3pm.

Free School Meals

If your child is not attending school and is eligible for a free school meal, they will receive a packed lunch for the next two weeks until Friday 3rd April. If you are eligible for Free School Meals your child can pick up a packed lunch each day between 11am – 12midday. We will update those eligible for Free School Meals separately with further plans or changes to this.

It is important to underline that schools remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

I appreciate that this is a difficult time for families and children, but I can assure you the school is taking every step possible to follow government guidance.

Our staff are working incredibly hard to play their role in supporting the government in their strategy to contain this virus. I know that you will join with me in thanking them for their dedication and commitment. Please do all you can to support them and help them at this time. Please work with us to protect them too and follow all Public Health Guidance.

As the situation evolves, we will continue to update you on how our plans change.

May I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

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

Lisa Peterkin

For and on behalf of St Marks Academy