



19th March 2020

**FOR ALL THE LATEST COMMUNICATIONS ON CORONAVIRUS FROM THE HARRIS FEDERATION
PLEASE VISIT WWW.HARRISADVICE.ORG.UK**

Dear Parents/Carers

ALL SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND: TEMPORARY CLOSURE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

The Government has today announced that all schools will temporarily close from Friday 20th March. This is the case across all schools in England. As you are aware the length of time schools are closed has not yet been confirmed.

The Government has taken its decision on the basis of advice from its scientific experts. The evidence from around the world is, thankfully, that children and teenagers are not particularly vulnerable to coronavirus. However, by temporarily closing schools, the Government is aiming to slow down the spread of coronavirus. The decision to close schools now has been timed very carefully by the government, in order to maximise its impact on the spread of the virus.

Because there has been so much speculation that schools could close, we have been able to put a great deal of time and resources towards preparing for this. We have spent time with students - collectively in assemblies and individually too - talking to them about the current situation. In these conversations, students have said how much they love school not just because of the education they receive but because of all the other support they receive here too.

We will maintain provision for the vulnerable children and the children of 'critical workers' at the front line of the current situation. We had made plans to do this anyway, but in its announcement yesterday the Government mandated it for all schools. The Government is due to announce its definition of 'critical workers' but has already said that it includes health workers in the NHS, police, social care workers and supermarket delivery drivers. Once the Government has published its definition of 'vulnerable children' and 'critical workers' we will send out a further alert via text.

Of similar importance, we will ensure that all children on Free School Meals continue to receive these - something we have been planning since it became clear that closures were a possibility. If this applies to you, we will contact you separately with the details. At the top of our minds, throughout recent weeks, have been students and families who may be particularly disadvantaged by this crisis. We will continue to think of imaginative ways we can help and support these families and will update you.

The coronavirus pandemic is both completely unprecedented and constantly evolving. We know that it will cause difficulties and stress for our students and their families. But we also want you to feel reassured that we have made careful and detailed plans to support you and your children through this as best we can.

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t. 0203 370 9238

Harris Aspire

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Harris Professional Skills Sixth Form

e. info@harrisps6f.org.uk
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- We will ensure that students on **Free School Meals** continue to receive their entitlement to food. Parents/Carers will receive via e-mail, a TESCO voucher to the value of £25.00 that will be topped up fortnightly.
- All students will be sent a work/information pack in order for them to work at home. This will be pertinent to their year group and level of study. Additional key information such as ways to access their resources online, safeguarding and contacts will be included.
- All students have already been trained in the **remote working platform, Microsoft Teams**, which will enable them to communicate with and share files with their subject groups, we have already identified what their needs are in terms of **devices, software and internet access at home** and are working with them individually to address this.
- We do know that examinations won't take place in the summer, **please do not assume that learning is no longer required**. We await further clarity from the Government on how students will be rewarded with the qualifications they deserve. We will of course update you as soon as we know and will work with families on an individual basis as needed to ensure fair outcomes for everyone. It is important that students continue with their studies signing on to Microsoft teams at the allotted times of their timetables as we have no detail currently on how students may be assessed.
- **Tutors will be contacting home weekly** checking on their students' progress, how they are feeling and help to encourage them with their learning. Particularly vulnerable students will be phoned daily by our safeguarding team.
- **Any student receiving counselling in the Academy will continue to receive this, by telephone.**
- For safeguarding reasons, teachers are not permitted to give out their telephone numbers, but students will be able to email into the Academy, and the Academy switchboard will continue to be operational. **If during the closure of the Academy you or your child need to reach us, our telephone number is 020 3370 9238. For Harris Aspire students, please use the address info@harrisaspire.org.uk to contact the Academy by email. For Harris Professional Skills Sixth Form please use info@harrisps6f.org.uk**

The most urgent enquiries, including safeguarding issues for any vulnerable students, will be answered first. If your enquiry is not urgent, please bear with us if there is a delay in responding.

Please also check the new Harris website - www.harrisadvice.org.uk - to see if your question is answered there.

However much the temporary closure of schools has been speculated about by the media, we know that it will still cause considerable shock, distress and disadvantage to many of our families. But while we can never fully compensate for this loss of school time to your children, staff across the Harris Federation and all its academies have rallied together to support and plan for this and we know our school communities will get through this whatever happens.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Barr
Principal



Sandra Miles
Executive Principal



Patrick O'Donnell
Chair of Governors