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COVID-19 and Hawthorns School closure update

Dear Parent/Carer,

Things have significantly moved on over the weekend as people start to realise the severity of the pandemic and the need to remain at home to stay safe. This is the message from NHS frontline staff up and down the country – do your bit to help stop spreading the virus by staying at home and practising social distancing. Choosing to keep people at home saves lives.

The advice from Government has also been clarified. They have asked for all children to remain at home with the exception of those who are deemed vulnerable (those who have social care involvement or who are designated as Looked After), and those who are critical workers in the fight against COVID-19. England's Education Secretary Gavin Williamson told parents yesterday: "If your work is not critical in the response to coronavirus then please keep your child at home."

The advice for parents who are critical workers has also changed – these parents should only send their children to school if they have no other options available. We have opened Hawthorns to a small number of pupils to support the efforts of these workers in their important roles. Please do not ask for a place if you do not fall into this category – we cannot dilute the very limited number of staff we have or can borrow by having children who can be at home. If you are able to keep your child at home then do so – they are safer there than in a school environment.

Most of our staff are now self-isolating with their own symptoms or supporting family members who have symptoms. I am extremely grateful to the vast majority of parents who have recognised the dangers posed to staff and their families when they have to continue to work in a high-risk environment. Many, many thanks for your support and understanding that our staff are human beings too who are just as worried for their families as you are.

We will continue to keep in touch with our parents and carers through electronic means – we'd like to hear how you are all doing, and we are still available for advice and suggestions to help you during this challenging period of time.

Let us not forget: these are unfamiliar, exceptional and anxious times. We all have had to make difficult decisions because there is nothing normal about the current situation. The priority must be to keep everyone in our school community safe when we are under such threat. Please keep your spirits up, keep in touch with people, and be kind to each other.

Best wishes

Pierre Coiffait