Dear Parents / Guardians,

Following the latest announcement from the Government on the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, we regret to inform you that we are obliged to close the school after this Friday, 20th March, until further notice. We have been anticipating this decision in view of action taken by other countries, and we have plans in place to deliver education and care - both remotely and on-site to specific groups of students (see below) - throughout this period of disruption.

Public Examinations
The Prime Minister announced last night that public examinations will not take place as planned this Summer. We understand that this announcement may result in some uncertainty for students, but the Government has indicated that it will ensure children get the qualifications they need. We will seek further information with the relevant bodies and contact you again once we have this.

Provision for children of key workers and the most vulnerable
The Prime Minister has announced that schools will be required to open during core school hours for the children of key workers such as NHS staff, police officers and delivery drivers, as well as the most vulnerable students i.e. those with a social worker or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This arrangement is expected to continue during the Easter holidays. We await publication of the Government’s official list of key workers. As soon as this is available, you will be able to inform us via an online form if you are a key worker and you wish your child to continue attending school from Monday. Schools already have lists of vulnerable students. Children who do not fall into these groups should remain home with appropriate care. This applies to students in all year groups from Monday 23rd March 2020.

Distance Learning
We want to continue to provide a worthwhile education to all children. To that end, we will be providing, as far as possible, an online curriculum – both to those remaining at home and those attending school because they are vulnerable or the children of key workers.

Staff will prepare materials for students which can support their learning at home. They should ensure that they sign into any Google Classroom invites which they receive from teachers. Please be aware that work may not be set by your daughter’s usual subject teacher but will be set by a member of the department. This is to avoid duplicating effort but also to try and give consistency to different classes within the year group. Additional home learning will not be set for these year groups. Whilst we cannot replicate the classroom environment, staff are making every reasonable effort to continue equivalent learning.

Headteacher: Mrs A. Whittall

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Most tasks will be set using Google Classroom, Kerboodle, My Maths/Dr Frost maths, Click View and other online platforms. Some learning tasks may be set via email for students. Parents will not receive copies of any tasks as they will be sent directly to students: please do not ask to join these online systems. These tasks may be set on a weekly or fortnightly basis and departments will be making it clear how students can ask for support during the normal school teaching day with any issues. Staff will endeavour to give some feedback on learning in a variety of ways to your child; I would be grateful for your support in recognising that this may not be as timely or as frequent as usual. Your child will have received information about who they should contact and through which means. Similarly, students can contact their form tutor or Pastoral Leader if they require any additional assistance, but please be aware that some of these staff may be self-isolating.

If your child does not know her password or gets locked out of the school system she should contact it.techs@kingedwardvi.bham.sch.uk who will arrange to reset her password. Please do not use this email for routine queries about work being set.

In terms of supporting your child during the school closure, I would like to request the following:

- Please encourage and support her to complete the learning tasks she has been set. She should try where possible to adapt to some ‘normal’ school hours though of course there will be some flexibility with the learning being set. For example, tasks may be set for a fortnight as we recognise that access to PCs, space to work etc may be difficult if there are multiple members of the family at home.
- As you would do normally, please continue to engage in a dialogue with your child about what she is learning, how she is progressing with her learning and how she is managing her time.
- Please consider encouraging your child to engage in learning away from the screen. Staff will also be encouraging this. It may be appropriate to set times for your child to read a book, exercise in the garden/outside where appropriate and safe to do so, engage in problem solving or creative tasks such as puzzle solving, jigsaws, art, crafts or music practice. You may find our new Reading for Pleasure Policy on the school website a useful guide.
- We have shared guidance in the weekly parental bulletin and half-termly newsletters on checking the safety and control settings on electronic devices, so please do review this with your child. It is important that all students, no matter their age, are safe whilst being reliant on electronic devices. Our Digital Safety and Acceptable Use Policy can be found on our website and this includes guidance as well as links to resources for parents.
- Ensure you use the privacy settings, parental controls and built in internet safety features provided by the major internet service providers. www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parental-controls-offered-your-home-internet-provider has guides for parental controls.
- For parents and carers experiencing any internet safety issues with their children, Parent Zone provides a national helpline service at help@theparentzone.co.uk and the School has a link to this site on the Parents page of our website.
- If you become concerned about your child’s safety or another child, you can contact the school’s Safeguarding lead via email iglendenning@kingedwardvi.bham.sch.uk or if you have any safeguarding concerns about a child out of school hours, please call Birmingham Children’s Advice and Support Services on 0121 303 1888; Solihull Services on 0121 788 4300; Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board on 0121 569 3100 or Walsall Services 01922 653553.
- Other places for support for a wide range of pastoral and safeguarding queries are:
- ChildLine hotline for children and young people 0800 1111. Chat online [www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat)
- Samaritans 24 hour listening support. Call 116123
- UK Safer Internet Centre [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)
- If you are a parent and are concerned about cyber bullying, you can contact Bullying UK through [www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help](http://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help) on 0808 800 2222
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 (24/7 service).
- Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- NSPCC [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- Homelessness emergency [www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless](http://www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless)
- Young minds [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk), Young Minds Crisis Messenger – text YM to 85258
- Birmingham mental health service for children and young people aged 0 to 25 [bwc.nhs.uk/forward-thinking-birmingham](http://bwc.nhs.uk/forward-thinking-birmingham)
- Family action [www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk) Family Line 0808 802 6666, text 07537 404 282
- [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) - bereavement support
- Papyrus Hopeline UK (suicide prevention) 0800 068 4141
- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents) parental advice on keeping children safe online, including reporting to CEOP

The policies on our website are also a good source of information. Our policies contain links to organisations which can support parents, carers and young people during difficult times. These include: the Suicide-Safer School policy; Bereavement Advice policy; Self-harm policy; No Platform for Extremism policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

**Student / staff illness**

If a student is unable to study because of illness, please use your own judgement about how much work can reasonably be completed once they have recovered. If any students are diagnosed with COVID-19, please let us know.

Similarly, some teachers may also become unwell, or need to provide care for their own family members during this period. This means they may be unable to respond to student emails as promptly as they would wish.

**Catering**

We are working with our catering providers with the aim of ensuring that food is available for those students in school during this period. As far as possible, the kitchen will remain open and a reduced menu of hot food will be provided. Where this is not possible, our caterers will provide wraps and sandwiches for example.

We are also planning to offer Free School Meals to students who normally receive them, even if they are not otherwise attending school as a result of being a vulnerable student or the child of a key worker. We will provide further information about this as soon as we have established the arrangements.
Transport
If you are a key worker and can transport your child to school by car, you will be able to continue to do so. We are exploring to what extent the existing Green Bus services can be maintained for the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

We will update you as soon as we have any further information. I recognise that you will have many questions but please understand that I will not be able to reply to all emails individually but I will keep everyone updated of developments. If all of us in school have been reminded of anything in these challenging times, it is that when things are difficult we come together as a caring community to support each other more strongly than ever.
In the meantime, we extend our best wishes to the whole school community and look forward to being back together soon.

Kind regards,

Mrs Whittall
Headmistress