



SEDBERGH
SCHOOL

FOUNDED 1525

**Sedbergh Schools' response to the risk presented by Novel Coronavirus
(Covid-19)**

Statement No 5 issued on 9 March 2020 to Senior School Parents

This letter is a response to the growing number of cases of the Coronavirus Covid-19 in the UK and information released following the COBRA Emergency Response meeting held by the Government today.

A small number of cases (2) have been identified in the administrative area of South Lakeland, none involve any member of the School, its staff or people associated with Sedbergh School or Casterton, Sedbergh Prep School. However, as the spread of the virus is increasing the Schools will introduce new measures that assume the virus has entered the local community. We have no formal information that this is the case, **these measures are entirely to provide the best possible protection to our pupils and staff.**

The purpose of this communication is to advise you of these arrangements.

We will continue to communicate with parents by email at least once a week and more often as necessary. All information about our response to the Coronavirus Covid-19 situation will be held on the School website and will continue to be published on Facebook and Twitter.

If you have questions about this situation or these arrangements, please direct them to your son or daughter's Housemaster, Housemistress or Form Tutor in the first instance. If they are unable to answer your question, they will seek guidance and then respond.

We must work together to meet the challenge presented by the Covid-19 virus. I am deeply appreciative of your support for the Schools and for the measures we have in place.

Andrew Fleck
Principal

9 March 2020

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Contingency Measures

A multi-disciplinary team has been working to plan the Schools' response to the threat posed by Covid-19. It includes staff responsible for academic, pastoral, administrative, medical, estate (cleaning and maintenance) and technology functions. This group has the endorsement of the Governing Body to take whatever steps are necessary to best protect our community and maintain the education and pastoral welfare of our pupils. It is well resourced and will meet weekly, or more frequently as situations change to meet the challenges we face. It will continue to work throughout the holidays or any school closure, as necessary.

The focus of our work is to:

1. Prepare for an escalation of viral infection in the UK.
2. Protect our community.
3. Provide ongoing education and pastoral care.

Preparation

1. We are maintaining daily review of the situation and have open channels of communication with Public Health England, Local Authorities and Exam Boards. We are in communication with all outside agencies, contractors, suppliers and Schools to ensure they know our risk mitigation measures and to secure their compliance.
2. We have increased stocks so that we are carrying 3-4 weeks supply of essential cleaning and sanitary products. We are in regular dialogue with our suppliers, all of whom report robust stocks and recognise the priority of our requirements. We are maintaining equally close communications with food and other suppliers. The Medical Centre is well prepared.
3. We have implemented means of rapid communication to ensure all staff throughout the organisation can be informed of action required to ensure consistency and a timely response.
4. We have asked Senior School pupils about their wish to remain at School during the Easter holidays and the need for the School to remain open during this period. We found that almost all pupils have made arrangements to remain in the UK and very few would wish to remain at School. We have stopped making arrangements for Easter opening and have no plans to pursue this option.
5. We are making plans to teach, support and accommodate pupils through the Half Term period between 23-31 May, if necessary. Details will be provided nearer the time.
6. We are planning visits, fixtures and other activities for the Summer Term and the future to ensure that pupils' education is not disrupted by failure to plan ahead.

Protection

1. We are reviewing all external interactions:

- a) Handwashing measures will be put in place at entrances to the School buildings and Houses. Pupils, staff and visitors will be asked to wash their hands each time they pass a washing station.
 - b) We will maintain normal educational opportunities unless they present a clear risk to individuals or the community.
 - c) We will keep all fixtures, School visits, weekly activities off-site, staff training, and business meetings under constant review in light of the prevailing situation. School visits to large gatherings off-site will not take place, nor will we use public transport.
2. All visitors entering buildings, and visiting Schools, will continue to be asked to confirm that they have not entered a high-risk area as designated by the School or been in contact with someone who represents an elevated risk.
 3. We have increased the frequency, intensity and extent of our cleaning regimes and are using enhanced disinfectant products. All pupils, of all ages, have received repeated guidance about personal hygiene and instructions are distributed throughout School. Handwashes are refreshed daily, tissues and anti-bacterial gels are placed in strategic places.
 4. In the event a member of the community shows symptoms of infection they will be moved immediately to an isolation unit in the School Medical Centre where medical staff will support them until further guidance is received. A pupil's parents would be immediately notified and the School would seek guidance from Health Authorities about its next steps.
 5. All risk assessments will include a review of the Covid-19 threat as standard practice and will take account of underlying health conditions which increase their participants' vulnerability to Covid-19.
 6. We hope that our community will support the School's decisions which seek to maintain the maximum educational activity whilst not exposing participants to unreasonable risk. We will respect the wishes of pupils and parents to self-regulate their risk and participation in off-site activities.

Provision of Education and Pastoral care

Today, the Government has decided not to enact the Delay phase of its planning which would lead to the closure of Schools. We have also been advised by a senior Government source within the Department for Education that in the event of School closures, the prevailing view is that Boarding Schools should remain open and continue to teach pupils.

In the event of enforced School closure we have plans to ensure that this is undertaken in an orderly manner so that pupils are provided with the necessary work and that parents are given time to make the necessary arrangements so as to minimise disruption to their commitments. Any pupils who were unable to leave the School would be cared for at Sedbergh.

Nonetheless, we have prepared for the possibility of remote teaching all ages throughout Casterton, Sedbergh Prep School and Sedbergh School in the event that pupils are unable to remain in School. These arrangements have been tested today and will be further stress-

tested throughout this week. Once we are confident they are robust, we will provide you with guidance arrangements and undertake the process of training our pupils so they are familiar with the systems. We anticipate that any process would evolve in sophistication over time if it is implemented.

An extended period of remote teaching and learning will present significant challenges to pupils, parents and staff. We will plan a sustainable teaching programme in the event of School closure, subject to staff illness.

Please would parents consider where their children might stay and work in the event of extended School closure, taking account of the safety of older and more vulnerable family members and the need for good internet connections to maintain teaching and learning. They will need access to a laptop that meets the Schools' specifications.

We are in frequent communication with Exam Boards seeking information about the arrangements they will put in place in the event that Schools are closed during the exam season or if pupils are disadvantaged in any way.

Whilst no detailed arrangements have been announced there is strong evidence to suggest that the Boards are taking urgent steps to ensure exams will take place. It seems likely that a part of these plans involve rescheduling the dates of exams. We will advise parents, staff and pupils as soon as we are informed of any new arrangements but in the meantime encourage parents not to make holiday plans before the end of July for pupils who are taking Public Exams.