



Monday March 16th 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wanted to keep you all updated on our position during this unprecedented health situation and to answer some of the many questions we have received in school. We will follow the situation on a daily basis and as a school we have to take guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England.

Please could I ask parents to follow closely school lines of communication via the school website, Twitter and Facebook. I am aware that there is already a lot of speculation, rumour and personal opinions being aired on social media (e.g. WhatsApp groups) and I would ask parents to please show restraint on this as it is already causing anxiety, panic and confusion.

In the end it is my decision as Headteacher, with the support of the Governing Body and being in full accordance with UK law and new directives from the DFE as to future decisions we have to make regarding the school staying open or closing. On-line petitions cannot be used as legal evidence to make a decision on the school staying open or closing, though they do provide an insight into how you as our parent body are feeling.

Following a meeting with our Senior Leadership Team this morning we held our first PYTHON meeting (our version of the government's COBRA) with Mr Jones, Miss Sykes, Mrs Hogan and Mrs McVittie.

Key ACTIONS and NOTICES for PARENTS, CARERS and STAFF: PYTHON MEETING 1

1. West Jesmond Primary School will stay open until we are either told by the DFE to close or staffing reaches crisis levels through illness where we cannot staff and supervise our 21 classes or run the school safely. Our decision is unequivocal and we will update parents on a daily basis via the website and text messages, if a closure is forced upon us for either of those two reasons.
2. If your child is ill and showing ANY signs or symptoms please keep them off school and leave a message on the phone for our registers. It is your decision as a parent, after taking advice to self-isolate. Absences will be marked with a special Code Y in the registers and families will not be penalised for keeping their child at home if they are ill. Children with serious

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medical conditions should be aware of any changes from the UK government and be in discussion with their linked medical professionals. This also applies if you have a member of your family at home who has identified as 'self-isolating' following illness.

3. We have increased our hygiene procedures in school. Please could we ask that children come to school having thoroughly washed their hands and we will endeavour to try and maintain the best possible hygiene throughout the school day. We have supplies of tissues and hand-sanitiser in stock currently.

4. Currently we have stopped planning to hold whole school assemblies and our aim is to keep classes and year groups as separate as is feasibly possible (though in a school of our size this is an extreme challenge).

5. Our planned parent /carer consultations next week (Tuesday 24 and 26th) have been postponed and we will be rearranging these for later in the academic year.

6. **On-line communication:** If we are forced to close our school, all communication and on line learning will be via the school website. For each year group lesson information and activities for projects to do at home will be uploaded by staff. We are ensuring staff have time this week to prepare a list of resources and links to be accessed via the website. We will not be sending packs of work home as this is not compliant with our ECO policy and could increase cases of transmission

7. We are aiming to cover any staff absences with our own staff and not use external supply unless absolutely necessary. In line with the government recommendations this may result in changes to timetables and class arrangements as we will have to monitor and rota staff deployment on a daily basis.

8. Planned training events for teachers and students will go ahead and will be reviewed on a case by case basis, enforcing strict hygiene procedures for any adult entering our school building.

9. Cake stall will go ahead on Friday outdoors! (as long as school is open)

10. School visits for pupils will go ahead unless the educational visit is cancelled by the venue and we will take all steps to maintain hygiene during the day.

11. Notifications for planned 'Friends of West Jesmond' events will follow separately so keep in touch.

12. There will be no Easter school for Y6 pupils.

On behalf of the school, I want to assure you we are doing everything in our power to keep your children safe and to continue their education as smoothly as possible. This is an unprecedented time for staying calm, following professional health guidance and for us as school leaders to provide decisive leadership.

I will keep in touch and update you if we hear anything more that will impact on West Jesmond.

Best Wishes

Gary Wallis-Clarke