

13th March 2020

Dear Parents, Students and Staff

We continue to monitor and follow the medical and government advice to ensure that everyone connected with the College is protected and supported in the best way we can, whilst trying to ensure that students remain focused in the run up to their exams.

I know that our students will be concerned about any disruption particularly in the run up to exams and assessments in their final year before progressing to university, apprenticeships or employment. Consequently, we intend to carry on operating as normal for as long as possible although one change we will implement from next week is that we will cease non-essential trips and visits.

Latest Government Advice and College Update

It is conceivable that a time will arrive when we will either be asked to close, or significant numbers of staff and students may be isolated or unable to get to College. The latest government advice is that if you have a new continuous cough or a high temperature you should self-isolate and seek medical advice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>). We will do our best to set work for students to complete during any absence.

I am grateful to those parents who have informed me of possible issues affecting their son or daughter relating to COVID-19. As you know I believe it is important to keep everyone fully informed so that they can make the best decisions particularly where these relate to underlying medical conditions. Please do continue to let me know of any such situations. At the time of writing we have had no confirmed cases of COVID-19 and I have been informed of no additional concerns in relation to our staff or students. There are no confirmed cases of the virus in Worcestershire.

Examinations and Assessments

We have contacted exam boards and Ofqual, but as yet have had no information from them or the government as to what will happen in the event of disruption to students' examinations and assessments, other than a statement to the effect that the usual special consideration rules would apply and that they will make arrangements as and when appropriate. The Sixth Form College's Association continue to lobby the government to make appropriate arrangements and publish them in good time to minimise any anxiety.

Whilst I understand how difficult it is for our students to be faced with this uncertainty I believe that universities and employers will still be recruiting for next year and so it is vital that they continue to apply themselves and to assume that assessments and examinations will go ahead as planned.

College response to any disruption

Our approach will depend on the course of events. If the College continues to operate with reduced staffing we will aim to function in a similar way to when we affected by snow or floods etc. The teaching staff will keep as many classes operating as possible by going from one to another so that as many students as possible get some subject input.

As staff who are teaching classes will remain very busy one way that students can help themselves is to 'buddy up' and ask a class mate to send them any work that the teacher sets the class in lessons.

If there is a complete College closure we plan to:

- Email or text work to students for their subjects daily so we can ensure the necessary work is covered (Monday – Friday);
- Respond to email queries on a daily basis to support students in their learning (Monday – Friday);
- Communicate with students through other means where appropriate, e.g. Moodle, TurnItIn, YouTube, Teams, One Drive etc

IT Update

You will be aware that over the last three weeks we have had significant disruption to our IT systems. We have had professional advice which has identified the probable cause as physical damage to some of our hardware. We have taken the decision to replace this hardware but have experienced some delays as a consequence of difficulties suppliers are experiencing in their supply chains. In the meantime we have put in place temporary measures and our IT team is working very hard to maintain the service to students and staff.

Let me reassure you we will continue to follow advice given by Public Health England, and we will communicate this information to everyone.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Senior'.

Ed Senior
Principal