

12th March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardians

RE: Coronavirus Contingency Plans

I am aware that there is understandable concern and indeed some confusion regarding the Coronavirus and the advice being given to schools on dealing with a potential or confirmed outbreak.

This letter is to assure you that we are following all advice being issued by the Department of Education in conjunction with the Public Health Agency. This advice is being updated as and when necessary in light of any new information that the Department of Health becomes aware of and can be viewed at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>.

In line with current guidance we are adopting a 'business as usual' approach, alongside a number of general precautions to help prevent the spread of infection. However, as this is a rapidly evolving situation, we have been doing some contingency planning so that we will be ready to deal with a number of different scenarios, including a school closure.

In the event of a closure, the most important thing will be to ensure that teaching and learning can continue, particularly for those who have public exams this summer. Subject departments are currently working on plans as how to best to do this and will, in due course, advise students of the mechanisms they will be using (such as Google Classroom) to provide resources. With this in mind, we would ask that students ensure that they have uploaded their work and files to Google classroom and can log on from home. Links to study skills, examination specifications and timetables are available on our school website.

In the interests of effective communication, can I please advise that you check that you are able to access the school website, www.belfastgms.org. If the school were to close this will be our primary method of communication. I also would recommend that you have access to at least one of the following communication tools:

- Twitter account www.twitter.com/girlsmodel
- Facebook account www.facebook.com/girlsmodelbelfast

PLEASE NOTE: The clear advice for someone who presents with the common symptoms of this virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) is to stay at home and to telephone their GP for advice.

The most up-to-date advice from the Public Health Authority states that in relation to students who have been in contact with a confirmed case 'that contacts are not considered cases, and if they are well, they are unlikely to have spread the infection to others. They should self-isolate for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case'.

We would be grateful if you could keep the school informed if this applies to your daughter by calling the school office or email info@girlsmodel.belfast.ni.sch.uk.

In the meantime, in school, we are taking all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of any viruses or bugs and would ask parents to remind students of the importance of following good hand and respiratory hygiene. We have augmented the number of hand sanitisers throughout the school and our cleaning staff are disinfecting door handles, etc. daily in addition to their normal cleaning routines.

As always, I appreciate your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

P Stuart
Principal