

4<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

This morning, following discussion with the Chair of Governors and WMAT Chief Executive Officer (CEO), I have taken the difficult decision to keep the school closed this week. Students will of course receive remote learning at home during this time.

I have done this to allow us more time to set up an effective COVID-19 testing process for both staff and students before we all return to school next Monday (11th January). (Please note the proposed reopening date will be subject to a review next Friday (8<sup>th</sup> January). Special schools only received their final reopening guidance from the government at 7pm on New Year's Eve and we are still waiting to receive the Covid-19 test kits and supplies that are required to test students and staff. Although plans have been drawn up and staff are undergoing the relevant training, until we have everything we need it will not be possible to ensure that the systems we have in place are as robust and effective as we would like them to be before school can reopen to all students.

My absolute priority is to ensure that all students and members of staff are as safe as possible when they come to school. Given the continued increase in infection rates in the south-east and without an effective testing process in place I do not feel I can currently provide this, despite the huge range of control measures we already have in place. I am sure that you are also aware of the significant pressure that is being put on the government by teaching unions this weekend about closing all schools in the country for the next two weeks. Understandably many staff are incredibly anxious about returning to school because of their own vulnerabilities or the vulnerabilities of those that they live with.

#### **The children of Critical Workers and Vulnerable Children**

As was the case in the first period of lockdown, The Park will remain open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Please see the link below for a revised list of critical workers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

This service is only for those who have no alternative and who meet the definitions above. If it is at all possible for children to stay at home, then they should do so. If you believe that you meet this criteria and have no alternative but to send your child into school this week, please contact the school office by email at [enquiries@thepark.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@thepark.surrey.sch.uk) to request this (**as soon as possible**). You may be required to provide evidence that you are a critical worker.

#### **Remote Learning**

Class teachers will be providing remote learning from Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January via Google Classroom. We will offer one face to face session each day as tutor time and then students should follow the remote learning timetable.

Information about the remote learning arrangements for students this week will follow later today from Mrs Stephenson, Mr McCarthy and Mrs Walton. Remote learning will commence from Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January. The school will contact all students transport providers to let them know of our plans for this week.

I am extremely sorry for the late notice of this decision and appreciate it will make things very difficult for many of you. However, I am sure that you can also see the difficult situation that all schools, including The Park, are currently in. Government advice is regularly changing as it responds to key scientific advice, the evolving nature of the pandemic, and most recently the pressure from unions. It has consistently been released very late and with many ambiguities. We remain as committed as ever to ensuring the children's education is disrupted as little as possible, and we will be working closely with our staff and yourselves to provide the best possible learning experiences that we can for this term.

I would like to thank you all again for your ongoing support.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Walsh

Headteacher: Dr Paul Walsh MA EdD NPQH

Onslow Crescent, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7AT

Tel: 01483 772 057

Email: [info@thepark.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:info@thepark.surrey.sch.uk)

Website: [www.thepark.surrey.sch.uk](http://www.thepark.surrey.sch.uk)