

March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

### Coronavirus Update

Our communication to date has focussed on the sharing of practical advice that we have been given e.g. what to do if you feel unwell, what action you should take if you have visited certain countries and how good hygiene and regular effective hand washing can help minimise the spread of germs. Our students have been very mature in their approach to all of this and in their discussions with our staff, and each other, about the possible short term and long term implications of Coronavirus.

As you are aware the Coronavirus is spreading and the Government are preparing to move from the 'containment' to the 'delay phase' of their planning. **It is possible that this could lead to school closures at some stage.** At the time of writing it is not possible to say when this might be, or how long it could last for. I know that this would be of considerable concern to our students in Year 11 and 13 who are preparing to take important public exams in the summer. Whilst we cannot predict the future, we can make preparations for how we would share important work with all of our students, should the need arise.

Over the next three days all of our staff will receive training on 'Google Classroom'. This is an online facility that is part of G Suite and links to your child's Budmouth Gmail account. If schools were to be shut for a period of time, this will be the primary way that our staff would communicate with their classes and share important work and resources. Amongst other things it enables teaching staff to present lesson material, assignments, videos, files, images and important links. We have only recently begun training one member of each department to be a 'champion' for this and for them to share their new knowledge with team members. Some colleagues have already begun sharing work in this way with their classes. However, the current situation means we are fast-tracking this process so that all staff and students understand how to use it.

In addition to staff training we will also be showing students how to access and use Google Classroom in a series of **special assemblies over the next two days.** As well as enabling them to receive work, it also enables them to communicate with their teachers and ask questions. As staff and students become more confident with it, then the possibilities for how it can be used are extended. We will be asking staff to start using this over the coming days so that they and the students can become more familiar with it, in case its use becomes even more important in the event of closure. We will also share a simple 'How to' guide for students/parents in terms of using Google Classroom. This will be sent via 'In Touch' later in the week.

With this in mind I would stress two very important points:

1. **Students must make sure they can access their Budmouth Gmail account.** If they have forgotten how to do this, or lost their password, they should visit our IT support team as a matter of urgency. If a student is not in school and needs IT support then they can email [itassistance@budmouth-aspirations.org](mailto:itassistance@budmouth-aspirations.org)

2. The use of this at home does rely on having a working computer, tablet or phone with an internet connection. **Any students who do not have access to one of these should let their form tutor know.** Tutors will share this information with Mr Lydford (Assistant Principal) so we can consider how we might support this.

I am currently receiving an email every day from the DFE with the latest guidance for schools, including exams, and currently the advice is that all exams will be going ahead as normal. However, OFQUAL, the organisation in charge of exams, is planning for different scenarios depending on how the virus spreads. They will keep all schools informed about any changes and I will let you know as soon as I get the information.

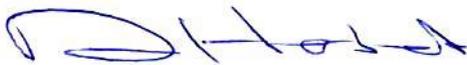
I thought it would also be useful to provide you with a list of some websites and online programmes that might help with revision and these are attached. For students preparing for final exams it is also worth making sure that all books are at home and not left in school, just in case we are instructed to close suddenly. Individual subjects will be giving more specific information to their classes over the next week about the work they would be instructed to do should we find ourselves unable to come into school.

I know that preparing for final public examinations can be a stressful and difficult time for students in normal circumstances and I really do feel for all students across the country this year with these additional unknowns. I can only promise that we will do our best to support our students in any way that we are able to, should the situation arise where we are not in school.

I will of course update you with any information as soon as we have it but in the meantime we remain fully open and will do so until we are specifically advised otherwise by the relevant authorities. There has already been considerable speculation (and false rumours) about possible school closures in the area, and I can only repeat that I will share any news with you as soon as it is received.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding at this uncertain time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Herbert', written in a cursive style.

Mr D Herbert

Principal