



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed



Thursday 27th February 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

As you will no doubt have seen there has been much coverage of the spread of the CoVid 19 virus (Coronavirus). We continue to follow advice and guidance from both the Local Education Authority and the Government on how all schools should respond.

As of 4pm 24th February 6,536 people have been tested in the UK; 6,527 were negative and nine positive (this does not include four confirmed cases among tourists repatriated to the UK from the cruise ship in Japan, who went straight into quarantine on their return to the UK).

Therefore, the risk to individuals remains low.

Italy

As you are no doubt aware, there is currently an outbreak in parts of Northern Italy, mostly centred on Lodi province in Lombardy region, south of Milan, but with some cases in other areas.

There are controls on entering and leaving the following towns:

- Casalpusterlengo
- Codogno
- Castiglione d'Adda
- Fombio
- Maleo
- Somaglia
- Bertonico
- Terranova dei Passerini
- Castelgerundo
- San Fiorano
- Vò Euganeo

According to the Foreign Office (FCO):

The regions of Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Piemonte and Emilia Romagna have announced measures that include the suspension of events that include meeting in public or private places, the suspension of schools and higher education and the suspension on the opening of museums and other cultural institutions for seven days. Latest figures report 88 cases in Lombardy, 24 in Veneto, 6 in Piemonte, 9 in Emilia Romagna and 2 in Lazio (as of 23 February).

Any pupils who have visited the towns listed above during half term will need to stay away from school until either they have been tested for COVID-19, or 14 days after leaving the area. However, if they have been visiting other parts of the country they can attend school as normal, providing they feel well.

If you are concerned please call 111 for advice and to arrange testing should this be necessary.

As more information becomes available it may be possible to relax some precautions; conversely, we may be advised to tighten them up but we keep you updated as the information and advice evolves.

Far East

For pupils returning from holiday in the Far East over half-term, the government advice is that they can return to school if they are currently well. However, if you consider your child to be at high risk if they caught an infection, then please contact the school office and Mrs Ferretti will decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether it is appropriate for them to return to school immediately.

Promoting good hygiene practices

The following video gives a helpful explanation as to why face masks are not recommended in the UK, and emphasises the importance of thorough, regular handwashing and sanitisation of hand contact surfaces.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2020/feb/05/do-face-masks-help-prevent-coronavirus-video-explainer>

We would encourage everyone to practice the following common-sense precautions, to reduce the chance of catching coughs, colds and respiratory viruses like coronavirus:

- Have a good supply of disposable tissues and a bottle of hand sanitiser gel (widely available in chemists and supermarkets) with you whilst travelling
- Use tissues to catch your cough or sneeze, then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use sanitiser. If you don't have a tissue with you, 'catch' the cough or sneeze in the crook of your elbow
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use sanitiser
- Wash your hands, or use sanitiser, after using public transport, or being in areas where there are lots of people, e.g. airports or motorway service stations
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

We are currently receiving regular updates and advice from the DFE and Public Health England and will, of course continue to update parents should there be any additional information you need to be aware of.

Kind regards,

Mrs J Ferretti
Acting Headteacher