



Headteacher: **Ms Annemari Ottridge** M.Ed. NPQH NPQEL

17th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you for your emails and calls yesterday evening and this morning about the most recent communication from the government. I share your concerns about the general guidance for social distancing and vulnerable students in schools.

The Government online guidance from 16th March 2020 states:

*We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.*

*This group includes those who are:*

- *aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)*
- *under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):*
  - *chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis*
  - *chronic heart disease, such as heart failure*
  - *chronic kidney disease*
  - *chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis*
  - *chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy*
  - *diabetes*
  - *problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed*
  - *a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy*
  - *being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)*
- *those who are pregnant*

As you can see from this list, chronic neurological conditions include cerebral palsy which is a main presenting need for the majority of our students here at Lonsdale, coupled with additional needs.

We all know that a number of our students need daily medical care/interventions, and therefore are more vulnerable than their mainstream peers in schools across the country. They are otherwise healthy and perfectly safe to attend school in normal circumstances. These circumstances are far from normal - they are very, very different.

Lonsdale School, Brittain Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 8UT

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## Learning for Life!



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I acknowledge and accept that we are living through uncertain times with the Coronavirus. I take my guidance from the Government, Public Health England, Department of Education and Local Authority. Schools are expected to remain open at this moment of time and this is the case with Lonsdale School too. We are open for students to access their learning until further notice.

I am a parent and mother of two girls myself. I wholeheartedly share your concerns about your children's wellbeing and safety. We want to do the 'right thing' as parents and every one of us needs to feel empowered to do so without fear of repercussions for our child or ourselves.

All children have the right to access learning and education, yet remain protected from the increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) due to their chronic neurological conditions (CP), chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases (asthma), and learning disabilities. With this in mind, I want to reassure you as parents, that should you choose to keep your child at home, you can make that decision and be confident that their learning can continue remotely until such time as your child is ready to return to school.

We have developed a comprehensive online learning platform on our website. This area includes daily plans and age-appropriate educational tasks for each key stage. Mrs Thiele will send you more information this afternoon to explain how this works, and what resources and support will be available for your child.

We as a school community are here to support you. For those who wish to send your child to school, daily learning activities and tasks continue as timetabled.

We are very aware of the importance of daily, consistent hygiene standards and expectations. I assure you that we will continue to do all that is necessary to keep our students safe and make Lonsdale a safe place to be for everyone.

What will happen in the next days or weeks none of us can know, but I will continue to keep in close touch with you.

Warmest regards

Annemari Ottridge  
Headteacher

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