

18th March 2020, 7.30pm

Dear Parents, Carers, Students & Staff,

Following the government's announcement this evening, I can now confirm **Lincoln Castle Academy will be closed to all students from 3pm on Friday the 20th March 2020**. As you are aware, we have attempted to remain open for as long as possible but took the decision to implement a 'partial closure' owing to staff absence this morning. Thank you for your cooperation in this regard. I appreciate this was short notice.

Whilst our official closure will commence at the end of school on Friday, we support your right to remove your child before Friday as many of you have already done. You will not receive a fine for doing so. Like you, we have been concerned that the government message regarding social distancing is at odds with the directive that schools remain open. As evident in images of the House of Commons, MPs are implementing social distancing in order to keep safe. Our students and staff deserve the same protection. We welcome the government's decision to close schools.

It may come as a surprise to you but Headteachers were given no prior notice of tonight's announcements; we did not know what was coming. Although we have undertaken contingency planning, we now have many questions that need answering. Whilst I cannot provide the answers now, I do want to share the questions and issues that we will be exploring as a matter of urgency in the next few hours and days below:

1. Supervision for vulnerable students

We are required to provide supervision for vulnerable students. Lincoln Castle Academy has a higher proportion of vulnerable students than the average school. We will be undertaking further work in the coming days to ensure these students receive the right level of support during closure whilst attempting to safeguard our staff.

2. Free school meals

Almost 50% of our students are in receipt of 'free school meals.' We will be working hard to establish how to obtain and distribute the vouchers referred to this evening. This is part of our commitment to support these families in purchasing food during these challenging times. This is very important to us.

3. Supervision for the children of key workers

We will also be putting plans in place to provide supervision for the children of key workers. We will need your support to gather the correct information very quickly - this was done informally today. We will need to collect more information from you regarding your personal circumstances. We will need your cooperation to do this quickly.

4. Year 11 and Year 13 qualifications

We will also be attempting to understand the implications for our Year 11 and Year 13 students owing to the cancellation of exams. We will be asking questions on behalf of our students. We will be fierce in our determination to ensure that the Prime Minister's pledge that these students' "progress is not impeded" is fully honoured. We know how hard our students have worked to achieve their qualifications. Tonight they will feel utterly confused, even dejected. It is our job to fight on their behalf to ensure their achievements are fully recognised and they are not disadvantaged in any way. I promise you we will do that.

5. Our virtual school

We will then be reviewing the plan we have put in place for our 'virtual school'. We will be considering the relevance of the revision work we have set for Year 11 and Year 13 students to complete at home in light of the announcements.

And finally...

All of this needs to be done quickly. Our staffing levels reduce as each day passes. Although we do not have a single confirmed case of COVID-19, we currently have 20 staff unable to attend work owing to self-isolation, family illness or because their child's primary school or nursery has closed. We will work hard to obtain answers to these questions but clearly we need your understanding whilst we react to these announcements.

What can parents do to help?

- Send your Year 11 or Year 13 child into school tomorrow (we must see them to provide clarity and reassurance) but not if they have symptoms or are self-isolating
- If you are NOT a key worker and you are able and willing to keep your children at home tomorrow please do so. That will allow us the time and space to respond to the announcements, put a workable plan together with our staff and prioritise Year 11 and Year 13. No child will be turned away should this not be possible.
- Do not send your child to school if they or anyone in your family has either a high temperature or a new continuous cough. Use the 111 online service for guidance.

I apologise in advance of a further bombardment of messages tomorrow but we will need your cooperation to react to these announcements and there will be a lot of information to communicate.

Whilst these are the most difficult of times, I would like to pay tribute to the staff, students and our LCA families who have demonstrated the true meaning of community in recent weeks. We look forward to reopening our academy when it is safe and right to do so.

In the meantime, please take care of each other.

Kindest regards,

Mrs Laming