

17th March, 2020



EDINBURGH
STEINER
SCHOOL
CELEBRATING 80 YEARS

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

This statement sets out the School's continuing approach to maintaining an awareness of the COVID-19 virus, including our responsibilities to pupils and staff as an educational setting.

During the 'delay' phase, Edinburgh Steiner School will continue to follow government and public health body advice and respond proportionately and appropriately according to national guidelines. However, we have been asked not to provide detailed medical advice to members of the school community as this is the role of government and public health authorities. This statement will therefore set out the measures the School is taking to minimise risk and maintain, as far as possible, a 'business as usual' approach.

The School's 'infectious diseases' policy, which forms part of the Medication Policy (available on the School's website) continues to apply, but with an amendment (below).

Infectious Diseases

The School has a duty to ensure that pupils' health is not put at unnecessary risk from, for example, infectious diseases. Parents should inform the School immediately if their child is diagnosed with or suspected of having an infectious disease. The School may decide to inform some or all parents of children in the School, usually via email.

The School does not have to accept a child in school at times where it would be detrimental to the health of that child or others to do so.

Amendment: specific protocols are now in place for how the School should respond if there is a case of COVID-19 within the school community, or where a pupil or staff member is self-isolating as a result of a case, or suspected case, in their immediate family. The Scottish Council for Independent Schools, on the advice of government, has advised us that any member of the school community referred to the Health Protection Team **must have their confidentiality respected**. The School will not,

therefore, release any details of any individuals referred to the Health Protection Team in relation to COVID-19.

Measures in place to 'delay'

In addition to the measures implemented at Edinburgh Steiner School earlier this month (regular hand-washing for pupils and staff; sanitising of surfaces) hand sanitiser dispensers have now been installed at the entrance to each of the main buildings and Kindergarten, and pupils are making full use of this facility.

The general advice from government to schools has not changed:

If anyone has been in contact with a suspected case in a childcare or educational setting, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID-19 are awaited. There is no need to close the setting or send other learners or staff home.

Prelims and Exams

There is no change to the timetable for prelims (this week and next) or final exams. The SQA and the Scottish Government have repeatedly stated that there are 'no plans' to alter the final exam timetable or coursework schedule in any way. However, if absence rates are higher than normal for exams in April and May, the *Exceptional Circumstances* procedure will apply for SQA exams. Details of how this works were sent to parents of pupils in Classes 10, 11 and 12 in early February.

On Friday 13th March, the Chair of College was invited to meet with the Student Council to discuss further contingency planning in the case of any disruption to exams or prelims and this meeting was productive.

Contingency plans

The College of Teachers met on Thursday 12th March to discuss contingency planning and implement aspects of the pre-existing Business Continuity Plan. In line with

government advice, all parts of Edinburgh Steiner School will remain open unless specifically advised to close, or staffing levels are such that the School concludes it cannot operate safely. Our contingency planning therefore imagines a scenario where staffing and teacher numbers might be much reduced, or where significant numbers of pupils need to stay at home for extended periods.

In the case of significant staff and teacher shortages:

- Classes might have to be combined. Plans for how this would work, practically, are in the process of being prepared. This approach has been used in the past (for example in 2010)
- Kindergarten Groups may be combined. A special 'rhythm' is being devised should this be necessary
- Timetables may be altered: some normal or planned activities might not take place in order to free up staff to cover lessons and maintain basic provision throughout the school day, or because of the nature of those activities
- Changes may be made to 'Exam Leave' in Classes 10 and 11

In the case of pupils having to stay at home:

- In the Upper School, pupils and exam candidates are working with their teachers to agree the best form of 'remote learning', either very basically via email, or through file sharing or other appropriate means. It is *not* clear at this stage whether a school 'closure' means that, for example, exam candidates cannot choose to come into school to see their teachers, should teachers and pupils agree to this
- Exam teachers have been asked to work with their candidates to find and submit any assessed work from during the year/course. This includes any classroom tests, marked homework, practice papers etc. The SQA has reiterated that while prelim 'evidence' is the most valuable for any candidate who misses a final exam, if this evidence is not available then, in extremis, they will consider *any* candidate work
- Upper School pupils, especially exam candidates, are being urged to keep their text books, notes and exam materials at home and bring in what they need day to day

- In Class 9, preparations for a teacher-led Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) are well advanced
- In the Lower School, teachers will be asked to devise project work, and set that in advance for any pupil who needs to stay at home for an extended period

Trips

Acting on advice from government, College took the decision on Thursday 12th March to formally cancel or indefinitely postpone a number of planned overseas trips, or visits from schools overseas. This decision was taken with a heavy heart because trips are at the core of our pupils' educational experience.

Some parents have questioned, quite legitimately, why the School has appeared to delay taking decisions in relation to trips. Part of the reason is related to insurance. In some cases, the School can only claim insurance for trips which have been booked and paid for once it has become clear that a 'do not travel' warning is in place—and different insurers have different policies. Certain other trips, those scheduled towards the end of the summer term, have not been 'cancelled' officially because there may be no benefit in bringing forward the cancellation. We will keep these trips under active review. The parents of those Classes affected will be kept up to date by Class Teachers and Guardians.