



### **CGS Foreign Trips- 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your patience and I am sorry that it has taken longer than I hoped to provide this guidance. Below, I have outlined:

1. The government and Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) advice on foreign travel
2. The response we have received from contacting all the tour companies/airlines involved in each of our planned foreign trips
3. Our position as a school
4. Your choices as parents/carers
5. Our next steps and how we will communicate these with you

#### **1. The government and Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) advice on foreign travel**

#### **The "Covid-19: Travel Guidance for the Education Sector (updated 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020) states:**

Overseas trips for children under 18 organised by educational settings-The government advises against any overseas trips for children under 18 organised by educational settings. This is because trip leaders would face significant challenges in making arrangements to ensure children's welfare, should adult supervisors or children be required to self-isolate.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has advised British nationals should avoid all non-essential foreign travel to tackle the spread of coronavirus,

As countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including travel and border restrictions, the FCO advises British nationals against all but essential international travel. Any country or area may restrict travel without notice.

Furthermore, the travel restrictions will be in place for 30 days initially but could be extended, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the House of Commons. "UK travellers abroad now face widespread international border restrictions and lockdowns in various countries. The speed and range of those measures across other countries is unprecedented," Mr Raab said in a statement...the FCO said travellers should bear in mind that flights could be cancelled at short notice as foreign countries grapple with restrictions being imposed by their own authorities. Mr Raab said anyone who is still considering foreign travel should be "realistic about the level of disruption they are willing and able to endure".

## **2. The Tour Company responses to our requests for information**

We have contacted all the tour companies/airlines asking for confirmation of their position. The tour companies have replied that they are prioritising their statements to schools who have trips booked to depart in March, then the Easter period and April. They are currently not providing definitive information about any trips in May or beyond. They have advised us that if we cancel at this stage this will be 'elective' and that we will receive no refund for any money paid.

## **3. Our position as a school**

We will not be making any further payments to any tour companies and are pausing all our planning around foreign trips. We do not require any further payments from parents/carers for any trips.

Unless the FCO extends its advice not to travel abroad beyond the next 30 days we will not receive any refund for any payments paid for any trips if we cancel now.

Currently, we believe that the health and safety risks of any foreign trip outweigh the enrichment benefits and are not willing to take students or staff abroad. We will wait until the FCO advice changes and/or the tour companies provide guidance pertinent to our trips before cancelling the school trip. We hope that as time progresses the extension to the travel ban will include our trips and the tour companies will take the decision to cancel and provide us with full refunds.

## **4. Your choices are parents/carers**

If you would like to withdraw your child from the trip at this stage and accept that the tour companies will not provide any refund please email my PA Debbie Kirk ([Debbie.Kirk@colstonsgirls.org](mailto:Debbie.Kirk@colstonsgirls.org)) by 2pm on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March and we will withdraw your child. Otherwise, I will infer that you support our approach and are comfortable to await updates, making no further payments and following the government and FCO advice as it emerges until the tour companies provide definitive statements about our trips.

## **5. Our next steps and how we will communicate these with you**

We will closely monitor the government and FCO advice (even in the event of a school closure) and we will communicate changes that cause the tour company to alter their position with you. Our trip leaders will maintain in close contact with the tour companies and explore any other options (for example postponement and partial refunds).

It is challenging for us that even with clear government guidance not to take school trips abroad, this does not provide clarity over our planned trips. This is an unprecedented and constantly changing situation and we cannot predict how the situation will evolve over the coming months. However, we will always prioritise safety and not embark on any foreign trip that we cannot be confident will be safe.

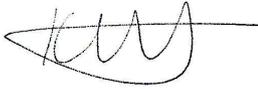
I would encourage you to monitor the following websites for the most up to date information:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance-for-the-education-sector>

I am sorry that the situation remains unclear; I hope that providing the opportunity to withdraw your child allows parents/carers to exercise choice but I also seek to reassure you that if you do not withdraw we will work actively on your behalf to seek to find the best resolution to this situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KM', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mrs Kerry McCullagh  
Acting Principal