



To: All Headteachers

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Ask For: Mr Matt Dunkley
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Dear Colleague

Thank you all for the arrangements you have made to support your school communities through the Easter holidays. As mentioned last week, nearly all schools are planning to open or have made arrangements with another local schools to deliver this service collaboratively. As this situation is fast moving, can I please ask that you ensure all your parents are aware of who to contact in school should their needs change over the holiday period. We know that more staff are being moved to front line service in the NHS and partner organisations, and that former workers are being asked to return. Inevitably this, amongst other issues like staff sickness, will mean families' need for childcare will change at short notice, and families who did not need support might now require this.

I would like to clarify what we are saying in terms of schools having to have a presence on site daily. Our advice has been consistent with our winter closure procedures – that is a school never closes until it is certain no pupil will be left stranded. So if a school is in regular communication with its families and knows who will attend and when, and families know who to contact if their needs change suddenly, including for those who were not eligible but now are (such as volunteers returning to the NHS) then we are happy. However, if robust communication channels are not in place, the school should have a presence on site until it is satisfied nobody has turned up needing provision, expecting the school to be open.

In circumstances where no staff remain on site, we ask that you maintain your schools status on the Kent Closures Website as 'partially open' so that parents are aware you are available to provide support should their circumstances change and they require a place.

Local Authorities are being encouraged to plan "hub" provision for critical workers' children and vulnerable pupils. We have been speaking with schools about this over the past week. The general feeling on this issue is that hubs, as headlined in Government documents, should be a provision of last resort. Most colleagues have indicated that they feel pupils are best supported in their own schools. I agree that this is the most preferable solution. Sensibly many schools are working with a small number of colleagues to develop collaborative arrangements in the event that demand is very low or staff absence threatens to close a particular school. These "closed hubs" plan only to meet the needs of the schools involved. I encourage all

schools to be forming closed hubs to ensure we have greater resilience in the system. Officers are working with schools that have indicated they would be an “open hub” to develop the model and guidance. An open hub would work with any school or closed hub in their locality to be the provision of last resort. In this model, the home school would continue to be the link with their families. It is anticipated that the home school would provide a suitable staff member to attend the open hub. I am grateful to those colleagues who have come forward to be open hubs. We will provide more information on this as the model is firmed up and volunteers confirm their commitment.

We are seeing a number of nurseries and pre-schools settings closing. It is unclear whether all of these will reopen in time. The consequence of this is that a small number of primary schools have been approached by their critical worker families requesting their pre-school child be able to attend the school alongside their older sibling. I am supportive of this approach, provided the school feels it has the facilities to safely support the pre-school child.

Yours sincerely



Matt Dunkley
Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Education