



To: All Headteachers

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Ask For: Mr Matt Dunkley
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Dear Headteacher

Following the Prime Minister's announcements on Sunday, Government has issued its White Paper setting out the roadmap for recovery, and Government and the DfE have been busy issuing guidance which impacts on plans for reopening schools to more pupils. Understandably guidance has raised as many questions as it answered, but it does at least start to provide the first concrete information after many weeks of speculation. The guidance and roadmap can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/opening-schools-for-more-children-and-young-people-initial-planning-framework-for-schools-in-england>

I recognise that reopening schools and childcare settings to more pupils from 1 June (at the earliest) is challenging. The choices made for nursery pupils and those in Years R, 1 and 6 to be the first-years groups back into schools has been questioned locally and nationally. It is welcomed that the DfE has listened to concerns that this arrangement is not feasible for Infant schools, and accordingly guidance indicates these should focus on nursery and Year R. The previous suggestions that secondary schools would reopen to pupils in Years 10 and 12 has been modified such that they need to have some face to face contact, from 1 June at the earliest, to supplement their home learning. The emphasis on supporting the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils remains in place.

Our draft guidance has been created with a lot of informal discussion with schools. It is being reviewed to ensure it is consistent with the current National position. This will

be a compendium of information and advice, enabling school leaders to access the relevant information with links to additional resources for colleagues to dip in to as appropriate. It is due to be discussed with a reference group of headteachers this week to ensure it is as helpful to school leaders as possible. We intend to issue this early next week. Inevitably, any guidance we produce will have to evolve as the National position is clarified and alters. We will continue to talk with school leaders as the picture changes. In the meantime, schools should continue their planning in line with the DfE's guidance. Colleagues in the LA, in particular you AEOs and SIAs remain key reference points for you should you have any concerns you want to discuss.

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Support:

We have seen an increase in distress in young people, specifically 10 to 16 who are feeling socially isolated and may be struggling with conflict or relationship difficulties at home. In addition, we know that young people who display behaviours associated with neurodevelopment conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and/or ADHD are likely to find it more difficult to recognise their distress and access support associated with their wellbeing.

Action is being taken across schools, health services and social care to try to identify young people who may be particularly vulnerable to emotional distress at this time. However, we would like to draw your attention to a range of support available to young people and their families. ***Please can you directly message your young people and their families with these resources that they can access themselves.***

If families or children are not sure what support is needed, then they can call the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 0300 123 4496 to talk through what information, advice and support might be appropriate. This is also the number to call if a child needs urgent mental health support.

For people of all ages needing immediate mental health support, just text the word "Kent" or "Medway" to 85258. This is a new 24/7 text service provided by SHOUT and the Crisis Text Line as part of the Kent and Medway Release the Pressure campaign.

Other services that young people can access directly are:

- **Kooth** is a mental health and wellbeing online platform for young people aged 10 to 16 across the whole of Kent. The service is free and can be accessed at www.kooth.com. It's a place to get advice, information and support 24/7. Young people can chat to a friendly qualified counsellor Monday to Friday between 12 noon and 10pm and Saturday and Sunday between 6pm and 10pm.
- Accessing www.moodspark.org.uk or www.kentresiliencehub.org.uk to learn about mental health and find tips and resources to keep emotionally healthy.
- Texting **ChatHealth** for support around physical and mental health on 07520 618850. The number is monitored Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

- Self-referring to the **Children and Young People's Counselling Service** at www.kentcht.nhs.uk/forms/school-health-service-referral-form
- Accessing the **Big White Wall** if aged 16+ for anonymous support through <https://www.bigwhitewall.com>

School is a place where most young people feel safe and secure. Your staff are a trusted source of information and support and that is why your role in supporting their mental health is so important during this pandemic. Please support us in reaching out to the children and young people of Kent. Thank you for everything you do to support our county's children and young people.

Yours sincerely



Matt Dunkley
Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Education