



To All Headteachers

Children, Young People and Education

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Dear Colleague

The legislation relating to the national lockdown was presented to Parliament today. This gives the potential for the full restrictions to continue until 31st March and then be replaced by another tier system. It seems likely that we are entering a period where schools will be closed to the majority of pupils for several weeks.

We await detailed guidance relating to many areas of school life, therefore the information below is based on existing guidance and covers a range of issues that schools have raised with us today.

Protective Measures and Operational Arrangements

The current protective measures within the [Guidance for Full Opening for Schools](#) remain in place until amended. Schools should continue to follow these measures as a minimum and take opportunities where possible to further reduce contacts within schools. Children and staff who remain in school should be grouped into consistent bubbles that are ideally smaller than usual class sizes.

Attendance Coding

Attendance coding guidance related to the national lockdown has not yet been published by the DfE and the most recent guidance remains that contained within the [Contingency Framework](#).

Vulnerable Children and Young People

Schools worked hard to reach out to families with vulnerable children in the first lockdown. However, the impact of the first lockdown for many vulnerable children was significant. We know that there will be ongoing local and national attention paid to how vulnerable learners are supported by Government, schools, local authorities, and health services during this period of lockdown.

The safety and well-being of these children will remain our focus during this period. We want vulnerable children and young people to continue to attend full-time where it is appropriate for them to do so. In line with practice in other local authorities, within the next week we will be establishing a process for schools to report the daily attendance status of each vulnerable child with a social worker. Our staff will be following up non-attendance with the families. We want to ensure our most vulnerable children continue to be visible to someone in the children's workforce, and that they and their families are supported in these challenging times.

Digital Connectivity

Ensuring every child can access remote education remains a priority shared by Government, the County Council, and schools. The DfE is working with mobile network operators to help schools support disadvantaged pupils in years 3 to 11 who rely on a mobile internet connection. Disadvantaged families may be able to benefit from free increases to their mobile data. Schools can request these free mobile data increases for families during the spring and summer 2021 terms [here](#).

Remote Learning

Along with the ability to access remote education, the quantity and quality of each school's offer will, no doubt, continue to be a focus of local and national debate during the lockdown. We wish to assist all schools in this area and will continue to support the sharing of best practice amongst schools and their partners. Colleagues in TEP are also working to further develop resources to support schools improve their provision. This will build on the resources shared over the last 9 months.

The County Council is the Corporate Parent for all Children in Care and Care Leavers in Kent. Good corporate parents, just like all good parents need to understand and know what is happening to their children and young people. As part of our duty to ensure the education needs for these children and young people are appropriately assessed and supported, we will be working with their carers to ensure they are participating in education, be that in school or remotely, and that the remote offer made to them meets the minimum requirements set out by Government.

Data Collection by the Local Authority

During the first lockdown we collected attendance data from schools daily. Since September we have been able to access the data you submit to the DfE each day. Assuming we continue to be able to access this data then we will not request duplicate data. However, this does mean we do need you to continue to submit returns to the DfE.

There may be times where we require additional information to support schools and families, or to capture a 'snapshot' on certain issues that may arise. We will seek to minimise the reporting burden for schools as far as we are able to.

Lateral Flow Testing in Schools

At the beginning of this week schools with secondary aged pupils were provided with testing equipment and materials by the Government. Whilst over this term in-school

testing will not be carried out on the same scale as had been anticipated, where schools are able to they should continue to establish their testing systems for the staff and students that are in school.

For staff and students that are not in school and do not have symptoms, we encourage them to access the [symptom-free testing sites](#) which have been established and to consider booking a test once a fortnight.

Free School Meals

Gavin Williamson announced today that the national voucher scheme is to resume, the details relating to this have not yet been released. Schools will need to continue to make their own arrangements to provide FSMs to eligible pupils not in school while we await the implementation of this scheme. Having spoken to other local authorities we are increasingly of the view that Wonde offers schools and ourselves the best option currently. We recommend that you explore this option if you have not already done so. Wonde will provide us with a direct sign up mechanism for schools that do not currently use their services. This will avoid the need for schools to go through their usual front door, which as you might expect is receiving high levels of enquiries. As soon as we have the details, we will pass these on.

I appreciate that the current picture continues to be confused by unexpected Ministerial announcements, and that your staff continue to be concerned about attending site. All in the County Council continue to be grateful to you and your staff for their ongoing commitment.

Yours sincerely



David Adams
Interim Director of Education