



To All Headteachers

Children, Young People and Education

County Hall
Sessions House
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Dear Colleague

I would again like to thank you for submitting attendance data yesterday; the total number of children in school increased from 21,500 to 23,000 over the last week. A summary is below:

	Vulnerable	Critical Workers	Total Attending	% Attending	Expectation of Future Additional Attendance
Primary	3982	15886	19868	18%	5121
<i>Ashford</i>	399	1595	1994	18%	407
<i>Canterbury</i>	338	1506	1844	19%	520
<i>Dartford</i>	265	1005	1270	13%	308
<i>Folkestone and Hythe</i>	323	1213	1536	20%	492
<i>Dover</i>	332	1152	1484	19%	413
<i>Gravesham</i>	207	586	793	12%	319
<i>Sevenoaks</i>	331	973	1304	18%	273
<i>Swale</i>	433	1585	2018	16%	580
<i>Thanet</i>	393	1491	1884	19%	614
<i>Maidstone</i>	349	2168	2517	20%	377
<i>Tonbridge and Malling</i>	376	1524	1900	19%	396
<i>Tunbridge Wells</i>	236	1088	1324	18%	422
<i>Secondary</i>	796	1172	1968	2%	697
Special	920	238	1158	30%	305
Alternative Provision / PRU	36	4	40	34%	23
Grand Total	5734	17300	23034	11%	6146

I raised these numbers with Helen Whately MP at the Ministerial Taskforce yesterday evening, highlighting that attendance levels are significantly greater than they were in the first lockdown and relayed the concerns that schools have expressed to me over the past fortnight.

I argued that for attendance levels in schools to reduce significantly the critical worker list needs narrowing, and that there should be some central direction on the ability to prioritise critical worker attendance if numbers are too great for an individual school.

The Regional Schools Commissioner indicated that the DfE is currently reviewing national data, but felt it is unlikely the Department will significantly change the definition of critical workers or apply any cap to the numbers of children in schools at this time. The overall objective remains to reduce pupil numbers across the system, rather than in any individual school.

The clarity introduced on Friday in the national guidance, that parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can, is welcomed and can help in managing parental expectation, albeit I appreciate not every parent has positively reacted to headteachers raising this point with them.

We will continue to raise this issue and will monitor attendance levels on a weekly basis; now that the DfE have reintroduced their data return we will not duplicate requests for this information from schools and therefore encourage all schools to submit their data to the DfE please.

Free School Meals

The Government has updated the guidance on [providing free school meals during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) which we summarise below.

Meals should be available free of charge to pupils attending who are:

- infant pupils
- pupils who meet the benefits-related free school meals eligibility criteria

The Government will continue to provide schools with their expected funding for benefits-related free school meals and universal infant free school meals throughout this period. The level of that funding is ordinarily determined in part by how many children were receiving a meal in the school on the day of the January census. We await information from the DfE with regards to how they intend to adjust the funding mechanism to ensure schools do not receive significantly reduced funding.

Schools are required to continue supporting children eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are at home during term time. Schools are not required to provide support to Infant children at home who are not in receipt of benefits related Free School Meals. Schools can claim for additional funding of £3.50 per week for each eligible pupil receiving food parcel provision at home.

If the school has confirmed with the school catering team or food provider that they cannot provide food parcels for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are at home, you can consider other local arrangements, which might include vouchers. Schools can claim to be reimbursed for vouchers up to £15 per pupil eligible for benefits-related

free school meals per week. These vouchers can be through local arrangements which might include nearby shops, supermarkets or those issued through Wonde. As the Government has confirmed the reimbursement level, we advise schools not to issue vouchers of less than £15 per week per pupil. The Government has also announced they will open a national scheme to provide supermarket vouchers via an online portal as soon as possible.

Further details on how and when additional costs can be reclaimed will also be provided by the DfE shortly.

In the first lockdown the Cabinet Office issued guidance on the continuation of payments to contractors to support market sustainability. Similar guidance is awaited for this lockdown and we are pressing the DfE to provide this. In the meantime we continue to advocate the provision of vouchers to families as these generally offer better value than food parcels, however, we recognise the use of food parcels can be beneficial for keeping in contact with vulnerable families in some circumstances.

School COVID Testing – Insurance

A number of secondary and special school colleagues have raised questions regarding insurance cover and in-school testing. We raised this with KCC's insurance section last week and provided their view for schools which buy in to their policy. We also raised this with the DfE and have received the following advice on their insurance scheme:

The Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) will indemnify members if a claim is brought by a third party (including pupils) or employees. It will cover death, injury, or damage to third-party property, due to the school or colleges undertaking the rapid tests. It is a requirement that risk assessments are undertaken, recorded, and adhered to.

In the event of loss or damage to any equipment that is owned by or the Member's responsibility (e.g., through a lease or hire agreement) used in the provision of the testing, the RPA will provide an indemnity to the Member for the cost of repair or replacement. The cover is subject to the usual RPA Membership Rules (including all limitations, conditions, and exclusions).

RPA cover is subject to the usual RPA Membership Rules and its terms, conditions, and limitations. It will include defence costs and any damages/compensation that the Member is legally liable to pay to the claimant. The RPA will not provide an indemnity to any other party (e.g., the machine manufacturer) if the other party incurs a legal liability.

It would be advisable that these establishments and all other schools and colleges which are not members of the RPA, should contact their individual commercial insurance provider, for definitive clarification on cover.

School COVID Testing – Registering Test Site Team Leaders

If you are a secondary school or college and have not yet registered your test site team leaders, please complete the [online registration form](#) by Wednesday 13 January.

Further information on how to register a test site team leader and registering lateral flow test results can be found in the NHS Test and Trace guidance on the [digital services you will use](#).

If you have any questions, or require support registering your team leaders, please contact the Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline on 0800 046 8687.

Digital Devices

Last week I highlighted the Government's intention to distribute laptops directly to schools, beginning with those schools who have secondary aged pupils. Whilst we understand many devices are being delivered 'automatically' without schools needing to order them I would encourage all schools to regularly check the portal at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

A number of charities are undertaking tremendous work and supporting the distribution of donated devices to schools, two particular links for those wishing to be involved in giving or receiving are:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/5SqHJMTKZx5sYhlltXJvB1Q/give-a-laptop>

<https://www.business2schools.com/donate>

What's Working Well in Remote Education

Ofsted has published some advice to help school and college leaders and teachers develop their remote education offer. It sets out some common myths about remote education and counters them with evidence-based pointers. The guide has been designed to help schools and colleges deal with some of the difficulties and challenges they face under current circumstances. It is available [here](#).

School transport

While adjustments were quickly made to school transport to accommodate the reduction in school attendance, a number of areas required further discussion throughout last week. To ensure all schools are aware of current transport related process, previous guidance will be summarised below:

Free school transport

Free school transport will continue to be provided to eligible pupils who remain in school during the lockdown period. If schools are aware of a vulnerable child or child of a key worker for whom transport is a barrier to them getting to school, please contact homeschooltransport@kent.gov.uk to discuss whether alternative arrangements can be made.

Mainstream Transport to Secondary Schools

The majority of school services are continuing to operate whilst we understand the ongoing need for transport to support key worker and other children still in

attendance. Where it is identified that services are no longer required, services not in use will start to be suspended from Monday 18th January. We would ask that all Secondary schools advise students to check availability of transport on provider websites before travelling to ensure they are aware of any changes.

We have previously requested schools inform us if any of their students are due to take BTEC exams in January and have received a number of responses. If you have yet to reply and have students that are likely to need transport to attend school, please advise homeschooltransport@kent.gov.uk as quickly as possible.

If children needing to attend school find that their usual service is not operating then please email public.transport@kent.gov.uk and we will seek to make necessary arrangements.

Mainstream Transport for Primary Schools

Except where it is identified that children are still in attendance, the majority of transport to Primary Schools has been suspended. If children needing to attend school find that their usual service is not operating then please email public.transport@kent.gov.uk and we will seek to make necessary arrangements.

SEN Transport

If a child has an EHCP and is entitled to transport this will continue. Parents are asked to inform both their child's school and their transport provider if their need for school transport changes. Additional guidance has been sent to providers and Kent Special schools to ensure that transport adjustments can be implemented as quickly as possible.

Any issues of queries in relation to transport for children with EHCPs should be directed to clienttransport@kent.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



David Adams
Interim Director of Education