



To All Headteachers

**Children, Young People and Education**

County Hall  
Sessions House  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XQ

Phone: 03000 414989

Ask for: David Adams

Email: [David.adams@kent.gov.uk](mailto:David.adams@kent.gov.uk)

Date: 6 January 2021

Dear Colleague

I am aware that you will be dealing with multiple challenges at this time, therefore I will keep this letter brief.

**School transport**

Secondary transport remains available to support those learners taking part in BTEC exams, but provision in this area is likely to reduce once these have been completed. Further advice will be provided before any adjustments are made.

Free school transport is provided on a much smaller scale for primary aged pupils and so arrangements will be made to suspend transport for all remaining primary schools. If you are aware of individual cases where this is limiting a child's ability to attend as necessary, please contact [homeschooltransport@kent.gov.uk](mailto:homeschooltransport@kent.gov.uk) with the child's details, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Free school transport remains unchanged for children attending Special schools, unless KCC has been informed that transport is not currently required. Schools should inform [clienttransport@kent.gov.uk](mailto:clienttransport@kent.gov.uk) if they are aware of any unnecessary transport that can be temporarily withdrawn.

**Symptom-free COVID 19 testing for key workers and their families**

Kent County Council has launched a symptom-free testing scheme for key workers and their families across the County from 4 January 2021. The test uses a lateral flow device and can detect in 30 minutes whether an individual has the COVID-19 virus. Any key worker and members of their family can book a test. Further test centres will be coming online as the scheme is rolled out. A letter from Public Health England with further information which can be distributed to staff can be accessed via:

[https://www.kelsi.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/116851/Symptom-free-COVID-19-testing-letter-31-December-2020.pdf](https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/116851/Symptom-free-COVID-19-testing-letter-31-December-2020.pdf)

To book a test, please follow this link: <https://kcc.healthit.org.uk/covbook/home>

### **Alternative provision and special schools**

Government's expectation remains that all pupils return to face-to-face education from the start of term as planned, with individual special schools being offered greater flexibility on face-to-face attendance of pupils in the first week of term in order to enable them to appropriately mobilise their mass testing programme.

We are aware that a number of special schools and provisions have staff who have invoked Section 44 and are stating that they will not attend for face to face teaching. The NEU letter to us made it clear that they supported staff coming into school, to the minimum degree necessary, to work with the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. One of the criteria to identify children who would be considered vulnerable according to DfE guidelines is children with an Education Health and Care Plan. This would cover all children attending special schools. KCC will be engaging with the union to address the current conflict in their letter.

We have been informed that the DfE is currently considering the issue of attendance at special schools and whether, as previously, regulations are to be enacted to reduce the expectation of delivering all aspects of the provision set out in a child's EHCP.

In the meantime, those schools that find themselves with depleted staffing levels for whatever reason should revisit their risk assessments for individual pupils and engage with families and social workers as part of this process in order to inform decisions around attendance and deployment of available staff.

### **Free school meals**

We have had further conversations with Wonde. It seems that 74% of Kent schools and academies already have a contractual relationship with the company which enables them to order supermarket vouchers using their free portal quickly and easily. This solution seems to present the least bureaucratic solution for schools to discharge their responsibility to provide FSM to pupils who are entitled to these because of family income. Their solution will also enable schools to order vouchers for February half term with the LA meeting the costs of these. Further discussions on this latter issue continue. Wonde will provide us with further information tomorrow which we will send out to you.

### **Other Issues**

We have not yet seen any guidance for schools regarding payments to catering contractors, therefore at this stage we advise that payments should only be provided for services that are provided. We are chasing DfE for guidance.

We are also finalising arrangements with contractors around removal of clinical waste from schools related to the commencement of Lateral Flow Testing of staff and students. Once we have a finalised offer, we will advise all schools, as this will be outside the County's standard waste contract.

As always, your Area Education Officer is your first point of contact for information that you cannot find on Kelsi. We will continue to keep you informed as things change or new guidance is received.

Yours sincerely



David Adams  
**Interim Director of Education**