



To all Headteachers

**Children, Young People and  
Education Directorate**

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Dear Colleague

There was a hopeful start to the week, with the really positive news of a potential vaccine. This announcement has offered renewed, if cautious, optimism that the end to the coronavirus pandemic may be in sight. Yet sadly COVID-19 cases are currently increasing in Kent, and there are many schools and settings where significant numbers of pupils and staff are having to isolate. That pressure on schools and early childhood settings from infections and the need to isolate is definitely beginning to bite, and will probably get worse, in terms of the closure of bubbles or wider school operations before it gets better. It is such a difficult time for many, so as always, I am incredibly grateful for all you are doing to ensure there is continuity of education for all the children and young people in Kent.

I have a number of new updates for you that I hope you will find helpful.

**Effect of widespread isolation of staff and pupils**

As more COVID-19 cases are identified and more individuals need to isolate either through incidents close to home or through being identified via Test and Trace, a number of schools have sought advice in respect of whether or not a full school closure is required. It has been and remains the Government's line that where schools can remain open or at least partially open, every effort should be made do that.

Where there have been a small handful of cases that have resulted in full closure for a limited period, it has been due to the school leaders feeling that the number of staff needing to isolate resulted in there being a health and safety risk for those pupils who would otherwise be able to attend school. I know a number of schools have considered the option of closure and have found solutions through redeploying the available workforce or changing timetabling etc for a period of time. Before making the decision to implement a full closure please ensure you seek the appropriate advice from Public Health and you should also speak to either your AEO or SIA. We need to do all we can to keep as many young people in school throughout this difficult period.

However, I should stress that as is the case for any other circumstance, the ultimate decision regarding whether or not to close a school sits with the school leaders and not the Local Authority.

## **PPE Update**

We have been informed that KCC has a substantial supply of PPE held in KCS's warehouse in Aylesford. As you may have already considered, it is possible that there may be problems distributing such items, post transition from the EU. If you have the available storage space it may therefore be sensible to increase the quantities on your next order to provide a contingency. KCC/KCS are also setting up a number of additional storage points across the County with large supplies of PPE that can be accessed locally should they be needed. Colleagues in KCC's Resilience and Emergencies Planning Service have confirmed that these stocks, held by KCS, can be purchased by schools through the normal processes.

## **Children and Young People who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable**

The Department for Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government this week issued a letter to parents of children who have previously been identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable. The letter is available here on the GOV.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>The.

The main messages contained in the letter are that:

- very few children are at the highest risk of severe illness due to the virus
- it is likely that **most children and young people previously identified** in the spring and summer as being clinically extremely vulnerable **are no longer thought to be at the highest risk** – and they will only need to follow the general rules that apply to the public on staying safe
- a **very small number of children will still need to remain on the shielded patient list** for the longer-term and are advised to follow the new guidance as set out in the letter and they will need to contact their hospital doctor or whoever usually provides care for their child to check whether they should still be considered clinically extremely vulnerable (if they haven't already been contacted by them)
- **if a child or young person is considered clinically extremely vulnerable by their hospital doctor** or other clinician looking after them, the government advice is that they **should not be attending school or college** and are advised to follow additional precautions set out in the letter.

The letter issued by the Department of Health & Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government **is not sufficient evidence** for a child not to attend school.

Parents will need to provide evidence from their child's hospital doctor or other specialist clinician looking after their child.

## **Challenging Advice Received Concerning an Individual COVID-19 Case**

Unfortunately, we are still hearing of inconsistent advice being provided to schools when contacting either 111 or 119 following an individual being notified of being a close contact through Test and Trace.

If you feel you need to challenge the advice provided colleagues within the DfE have recommended you should contact the NHS via <https://www.nhs.uk/contact-us/nhs-website-contact-us>.

## **World Antimicrobial Awareness Week**

From the 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> November, it is World Antimicrobial Awareness Week. As part of this, our colleagues in the NHS wanted to share some guidance regarding infection prevention and control in schools.

The following links will take you to a letter and resources, setting out some simple actions that you can take to minimise the disruption caused by common winter illnesses and infections within your school.

[https://www.kelsi.org.uk/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0018/115263/Preventing-infectious-diseases-in-schools-template-letter.docx](https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0018/115263/Preventing-infectious-diseases-in-schools-template-letter.docx)

[https://www.kelsi.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/115264/Antibiotic-Guardian-Schools-Ambassador.pdf](https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/115264/Antibiotic-Guardian-Schools-Ambassador.pdf)

## **Latest Announcements**

Recently, the Government agreed to support the provision of Free School meals through school holidays up to Christmas 2021. We are currently working on the arrangements for Christmas 2020 and will update all schools on these shortly.

We are also looking at how the additional bank holiday scheduled for June 2022 will be implemented and will update you all on this as soon as we can.

I hope you all manage to find some time to relax over the weekend.

Yours sincerely



Matt Dunkley CBE  
**Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education**