



**Children, Young People and  
Education Directorate**

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Date: 26 March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank you once again for everything you are doing to provide for children of critical workers and the most vulnerable children in the community.

Through the data that you have returned to us via the electronic questionnaire we can see that the number of children and young people attending today has continued to be lower than the levels anticipated before the weekend. We have listened to your feedback about the questionnaire and from today have greatly reduced the number of questions, only collecting the information that is critical to ensuring we are able to support schools and as soon as we are able to view the data collected by the DfE we will stop asking for it separately.

The Government has now published social distancing guidance for educational settings and created a single website for all guidance and advice for staff, parents and carers, pupils and students.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

We are informed that detailed information about the rollout and operation of a national voucher scheme for Free School Meals will be published this week. In the meantime, we have become aware that some families have received text messages or emails from fictitious companies claiming to be associated with Free School Meal voucher schemes and that these communications have been requesting bank account details. It is truly appalling that criminals would take advantage of families in such a time of crisis and I ask that schools remind parents to be vigilant about such scams and have provided a model letter below to assist.

I am delighted and proud to be able to say that the vast majority of Kent's schools have already committed to maintaining provision over Easter for children of critical workers and vulnerable children, in line with Government's request for schools to do so wherever possible. To support you we will upload onto Kelsi over the next 24 hours some advice along with key questions and answers for Easter holiday provision.

We appreciate that most schools that are not planning to open during the holiday period will have consulted with their critical worker parents and parents of vulnerable pupils about their childcare needs over Easter and determined that, because there is no demand the school does not need to open, or they have worked with other local schools or childcare providers to ensure any demand can be met. If your school has not determined the level of parental demand, please do so urgently and determine how best this can be met in your locality. If you are unable to meet the parental demand please contact your Senior Improvement Advisor urgently who will then sign post you to neighbouring schools and childcare settings to ensure provision can be made and parents appropriately informed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Dunkley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

Matt Dunkley CBE  
Corporate Director  
Children, Young People and Education

*Model Letter to parents re FSM*

Dear parents,

We have been made aware that some parents in the County have been approached via text and/or e-mail in relation to Free School Meal arrangements in light of Covid-19 (Coronavirus).

We understand parents have been asked to provide their bank details and personal information about children who are eligible, including names and dates of birth, with a promise that money will be sent to them directly.

**This information is not accurate.**

Further information will be available from government later in the week which will confirm it is the school who will be managing the voucher system in consultation with a government's identified provider. Therefore, please do not respond to any messages you receive unless they come directly from the school.

Can we also take this time to remind you to be aware of anyone who contacts you either directly or via social media offering services for your family in these difficult times. Unless you can trust them, you should not be sharing personal information related to you or your family as it may not be used in the manner you would have hoped.

Yours etc