



To all Headteachers

**Children, Young People and
Education Directorate**

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Dear Colleague

As we move towards the final days of term there have been a couple of significant Government announcements which affect schools.

You will undoubtedly have seen information from the DfE regarding the 18th December. They have suggested that schools consider taking one of their Inset days on the 18th December. This is because PHE have agreed a 6-day window after the final day of face to face teaching in which schools are asked to remain contactable to support with contact tracing. This allows for positive cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in schools to be traced. The DfE's suggestion is intended to be supportive of school staff and enable them to have a well-earned break over Christmas. However, they have been clear that this is not an additional Inset day.

The DfE recommend schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information:

- Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.
- School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching.

The DfE's announcement also states "Staff responsible for contact tracing may designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or email)."

I know this announcement from the DfE has added weight to calls from some quarters that schools should be able to close next week to face to face teaching and move to remote

learning. The DfE has been clear in its announcement that schools should not limit attendance at school before the end of term.

This week we discussed the issue of school closures with KAH. Our position remains clear; whenever it is safe to do so schools should be open all day, every day during term time. Attendance at school is mandatory for pupils who are fit to attend. However, we recognise that the current circumstances are extremely challenging and headteachers are having to assess daily their school's capacity to safely open. School leaders are the decision makers. They should go through a robust decision-making process before reaching a conclusion. This will include reviewing their risk assessments, taking advice from PHE and the LA/RSC as appropriate, discussion with neighbouring schools, contacting governors, and considering all this information in the round. Only where there is a compelling case for closure should this step be taken. All schools are asked to plan for continuing to provide school-based provision for key worker and vulnerable pupils even if they have to close to the majority.

The second relevant Government announcement was made last night. This is that mass testing for secondary aged pupils in some parts of Kent is to be rolled out. We expect staff to be included in the programme. We are in discussion with PHE to determine what this means in practice and will advise schools with secondary aged pupils as soon as we have more detail.

Like you, I have been contacted by professional associations setting out their positions that clinically extremely vulnerable staff should be able to work from home. I understand entirely their positions and know that you will already be supporting these staff through temporary changes in duties or home working where this is possible and appropriate. It is important that you have robust personalised risk assessments in place for your CEV staff and that these are reviewed regularly with them to ensure they remain suitable as circumstances change.

The final item I wanted to cover is that of public examinations. The LA supports the calls for dispensations to be applied this year. It is a fact that the level of disruption to young people's education has not been uniform, and this will continue for many more weeks, affecting pupils differently in different localities. We will, therefore, be making representations to Government on this issue.

Yours sincerely



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