



To All Headteachers

**Children, Young People and  
Education**

County Hall  
Sessions House  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XQ

Phone: 03000 418913  
Ask for: Christine McInnes  
Email: [christine.mcinnnes@kent.gov.uk](mailto:christine.mcinnnes@kent.gov.uk)  
uk  
Date: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Dear Colleagues

I am sure that we were all disappointed to hear from the Prime Minister on Monday that the easing of the coronavirus restrictions in England would not be lifted on 21 June but instead would be delayed until 19 July. This decision will have an impact on plans you may have made for the end of term.

This time of year is usually a time of transition into new settings, leavers plays, sports days and other celebrations that are shared with both pupils and their families. However, as in 2020 things will need to be different.

**Transition into Year 7**

The advice to secondary schools regarding transition is that schools should maintain the integrity of bubbles or consistent groups. Given that some secondary schools can have 40+ feeder schools, maintaining the integrity of bubbles would be nigh on impossible and therefore traditional transitional and open days are unlikely to be feasible this academic year.

Many of our secondary schools have made the decision to postpone their transition events planned for term time and will be offering transition events in the summer holidays. We are supportive of this decision.

Should schools still decide to offer transition events or open days, they will be expected to complete thorough risk assessments to ensure that they are run in line with their system of controls and align with the advice contained within the Government guidance and the [roadmap out of lockdown](#).

## **Transition into Year R**

Year R transition days will be impacted much in the same way that the Year 7 transition has been. Early year's settings are advised to minimise mixing within their settings, so it is logical to minimise mixing between settings. This will be challenging given that pupils arrive from a wide variety of settings, childminders or in some case they have been at home. Many schools offer play and stay where parents are allowed into the classroom on the first visit to support pupils settling into their new environment. Again, this would be difficult to manage within current guidelines. Therefore, it is with sadness that we would recommend that Year R transition is postponed.

Should schools still decide to offer EYFS events or open days, they will be expected to complete thorough risk assessments to ensure that they are run in line with their system of controls and align with the advice contained within the Government guidance and the [roadmap out of lockdown](#).

## **School events such as end of year performances and sports days**

Some of you will have seen in Schools Week this week ([link here](#)) that an email was sent to school leaders regarding the impact that the continuation of restrictions would have on school events.

The DfE have stated that sports day events can go ahead but the guidance is that "pupils and students must remain in their bubbles, and early years children should remain in their consistent groups as is usual for your setting."

"Sports equipment should be cleaned regularly throughout the day and should schools invite spectators the must adhere to current social distancing requirements." This will mean that spectators can gather in separate groups of up to 30, with multiple groups being permitted.

When planning indoor or outdoor live performances in front of an audience should follow the latest [performing arts guidance](#).

Although the Government guidance is that sports days and performances can go ahead, we believe that this is challenging to manage for schools and serious consideration should be given to alternative options such as recording or live streaming events as many schools did last year.

Allowing spectators into schools is challenging and schools would need to consider how this can be managed safely. Social distancing would be maintained, details of all attending would need be collated for Track and Trace, access to toilet facilities will need to be managed so that they are regularly cleaned and school that bubbles are not impacted.

Should schools decide to organise such events, thorough risk assessments must be put in place which evidence how Government guidance will be adhered to.

## **School trips and residential visits**

School trips and residential visit can take place as planned as long as they are within current guidelines. Schools are free to organised events such as end of year BBQs, discos and proms if bubbles are maintained.

## **Data Centre issue affecting Cantium services to schools**

Can I thank all those schools who have been impacted by the loss of services for their patience. The team at Cantium have been working tirelessly to resolve the situation. This issue was caused by a cyber-attack, which rendered part of the education network unavailable. To date, there has been no evidence that staff, pupil, parent or guardian data has been compromised, but this continues to be thoroughly investigated.

We are aware that schools have been emailed regarding reporting the data breach to the ICO. The ICO has been informed of this data breach by Cantium so it will be up to individual schools as to whether they feel there is need to report separately to the ICO.

Both KLZ Email and EIS Hosted SIMS are available and have been recovered to a security enhanced cloud platform. Cantium colleagues will continue to contact schools on an individual basis to provide instructions to enable them to successfully access their systems. Please note, the email service will initially be limited to the ability to send / receive.

For SharePoint, VOIP and Remote Apps, Cantium continue to work on restoring these services as a priority.

Where schools are reliant on SharePoint and therefore cannot access essential files that they do not have backups for, please contact the Area Education Office who will share your details with Cantium who will prioritise work on recovering those systems.

The LA is continuing to have senior level discussions with Cantium regarding the length of time it is taking to rectify the issues and the subsequent impact on schools,

## **The Spread of the Delta Variant**

We have all heard in the news that the Delta variant is much more transmittable than previous versions. This seems to be the case in Kent as Public Health colleagues have started to see an increase in cases of Covid in schools and we are aware of a small number of schools that have had to send significant numbers of pupils home to isolate.

As the spread of covid reduced, schools rightly followed advice and increased the size of bubbles, working in year groups rather than class bubbles. There also has been increased movement around school sites as shared class bases, such as IT suits which were previously closed have been reopened.

We appreciate how challenging it would be to change timetables now and to roll back to the very tight bubbles seen earlier in the year but we need to continue to do all that we can to minimise contacts within schools.

Public Health colleagues have asked us to remind you of The Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance (24 May 2021 [linked here](#)) which states the following:

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of COVID-19. This is important in all contexts, and you must consider how to implement this. You must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between pupils and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- pupil's ability to distance
- layout of the building
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine McInnes".

Christine McInnes  
**Director of Education**