



**Children, Young People and
Education Directorate**

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to you and your staff for everything you did last week to keep your school open for all pupils. I appreciate it was a challenging and fast moving time, with information flowing regularly but in a piecemeal fashion from a variety of sources.

Across the County all but a handful of very small schools have managed to open their doors to deliver a service to vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers, with a small number discharging this in conjunction with other schools in their locality. I am grateful to you and your staff for this. Early evidence suggests take up from parents has been lower than expected today, but it is only day one and we will see where we are at by the end of the week before drawing conclusions.

I hope you have seen the guidance issued by the DfE yesterday regarding registering attendance in your school during this time. You can find that guidance on KELSI or at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>. You will see that by midday each day you will need to complete and submit the DfE's form online.

Moving forward this week we will continue to communicate with you regularly. However, we are trying to ensure that the demands on your time spent on providing KCC with information is minimised and coordinated. We have spoken to the DfE about how we can access "live" the data you are returning to them, but it is unlikely this will be available to us in the immediate future. Therefore we have created a form that we will ask you to submit to us daily at the same time as you send information to the DfE. This should also be sent

by midday each day. The contents of the form may change as the situation evolves and we need to collect additional information to help the planning of future responses. Please do not be alarmed by this, the data will still be quick to provide. As soon as we are able to access the information you return to the DfE, we will stop any duplicate requests.

We continue to have queries raised regarding whether in two parent households both parents need to be critical workers in order to access a school place at this time. We understand the concerns being raised that the instruction of only one parent needs to be a critical worker can be seen as contradicting other elements of the Government's advice, namely children should stay at home if safe to do so. We have raised this again with the DfE and currently their advice continues to be:

“children with at least one parent or carer who is critical to the COVID-19 response can attend school if required. However, many families with a parent or carer working in critical sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.”

We recognise this puts schools in a difficult position. Our position is that it is fair to discuss with critical workers the Government advice, but if they insist they require a place for their child, this should be accepted. The DfE are very clear this choice rests with parents, not schools. So no key worker parents should be denied a place at school if the need it.

Last week Area Education Officers contacted all schools asking that they update the emergency contact details they hold for all schools. Thank you to all of you who have provided this information. Can those schools that have not yet responded please do so urgently please? It is vitally important that KCC has emergency contact details for all schools at this time.

I would also like to thank schools for returning to us the survey of last week in which we asked about whether you could offer Easter holiday provision and become a hub school if we need this. Colleagues in The Education People have been working on developing resources to support these provisions, and have today been contacting those schools who indicated they could/would provide this offer. From this we will be able to firm up what the offer looks like in localities and identify gaps in provision. Where gaps are identified Area Education officers will engage with schools and groups of schools to identify solutions.

In order to support Easter holiday provision and the creation of hub schools it may be necessary to redeploy staff from schools. We will be collecting information to help the planning of this through the daily returns mentioned above.

Finally, in my letter to schools on Friday 20th March I reiterated the need for all schools to record their status appropriately on the Kent Closures Website. Whilst the response was good, there were still a considerable number of schools who needed to update their status to clarify the arrangements for this week and the days ahead.

To address this, a team of colleagues have been working through the information submitted by schools via the online questionnaire and have been updating the status of each school on the closure website where deemed necessary.

To ensure we have full coverage and all data is robust, I request that you log into the website this evening and check the information for your school and make any amendments you think may need to be made to either the status or the accompanying narrative.

For clarity, if you are open only to vulnerable children and children of critical workers, the status should be set as “partially open”. If your school is closed and alternative arrangements have been put in place to accommodate any pupils requiring a place, the status should be “closed” with a narrative explaining the alternative arrangements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Dunkley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Dunkley CBE
Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Education