



To: All Headteachers

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Ask For: Mr Matt Dunkley
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Dear Colleagues

As the current situation continues to evolve, the DfE has today released updated guidance for Free School Meals and exceptional school costs associated with COVID-19; I also wish to highlight additional local guidance to support you.

Free School Meals

The Government has today updated guidance relating to Free School Meals; previously schools were able to continue supporting eligible families with vouchers during Easter but were not required to do so and the cost would not be recoverable from the Government. This has now changed and whilst schools remain able to decide locally how they will arrange support, the cost of supporting eligible children out of school during Easter will now be met by the Government, up to the value of £15 per pupil per week.

The cost of providing free school meals to eligible pupils who are attending school over Easter will however need to be met by the school. The National Voucher Scheme is being updated to operate over the Easter period and schools remain able to procure their own vouchers instead should they wish. The Government has stated that this arrangement will operate over Easter as an exception and not any other future holidays.

The updated guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

Reclaiming Finances

The DFE has today announced details on the process for Schools to reclaim exceptional costs associated with coronavirus including typical costs which could be incurred and funding limits. Further guidance on how you will submit your claim to the DFE will be provided by the DFE in June but in the meantime it is important you maintain a separate record of all expenditure relating to coronavirus to enable you to make this claim. We will be providing a breakdown of this guidance alongside further guidance on the payment of suppliers later this week.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020#additional-costs-covered-by-the-fund>

Pupil Premium Plus and Supporting Foster Parents

Virtual School Kent has committed to ensuring that funding levels to schools via the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) grant are maintained during this unprecedented time. The £400 per Kent Child In Care payment will continue as normal for the summer term and be paid in the June advance. VSK are attempting to support foster carers as much as possible but are evidencing a lack of physical resources for home learning at the current time, such as paper, printer ink and arts & craft resources etc. I would appreciate your consideration regarding supporting foster carers with such physical resources utilising the PP+ grant allocation for the summer term, this can be explored through a discussion between school and carers.

KCC Schools Facilities Management Services

All schools have now entered a period of reduced occupancy; it is however still vital that statutory building maintenance and inspections continue to ensure they remain safe. Updated guidance for schools where KCC is the responsible body has been published on KELSI, setting out what needs to take place under different scenarios.

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/106393/Schools-Facilities-Management-guidance.pdf

Additionally, we understand that your normal staff numbers may be impacted, including site staff, please contact your regional TFM helpdesk who will consult with KCC on the assistance which can be provided to assist with essential tasks.

Safeguarding Newsletter

The Education Safeguarding Service remains available to support schools in the current crisis and will continue to update policy templates to reflect any national updates and changes as they arise. The most recent Safeguarding Newsletter contains a significant amount of COV-19 related material but there is plenty that remains relevant for all safeguarding issues in settings that you need to be aware of. It can be found here:

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/106692/Child-Protection-Newsletter-April-2020.pdf

Kent and Medway CCG Mental Health Needs Bulletin

It's important to look after our mental health during this time especially as the measures in place to keep us safe may limit our usual actions to respond to stress. This bulletin contains a list of resources to support parents, carers, schools, colleges and children and young people during the pandemic. There are also resources to support learning at home as well as to help parents and carers to look after their own wellbeing.

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/106687/Covid-19-CCG-Bulletin-Children-and-Young-People-April-2020.pdf

Fraud and Scams

In my letter of 1st April, I highlighted that several schools had been targeted by fraudsters taking advantage of the current crisis to conduct 'Spear Phishing' fraud; further incidences have arisen this week, it is vital that all school are staff aware if this and know what to do as set out in the following guidance:

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/106477/Covid-19-Fraud-Alert-Spear-Phishing.pdf

Kent Trading Standards are also aware of a wide number of corona themed scams operating. This can include fraudsters offering to do shopping or collect medication for vulnerable individuals and asking for money upfront and then disappearing. Trading Standards have produced a letter linked below to highlight these, I would ask that you please disseminate this information to parents and carers.

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/106733/Coronavirus-scams-awareness-letter.pdf

Finally, whilst schools are closed to most pupils they must continue to undertake non-teaching functions; it is important that everybody who needs to be able to contact a school can continue to be able to. We have received several enquiries from parents as well as other organisations struggling to get hold of schools to carry out necessary engagement relating to things such as admissions, attendance and concerns regarding pupil welfare. It is vital that lines of communication remain open; could you please ensure that where telephones are not rerouted there are answerphone messages directing callers to alternatives and that the appropriate monitored email address is prominently displayed on your website.

Yours sincerely



Matt Dunkley
Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Education