



To: All Headteachers

**Children, Young People and
Education Directorate**

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Dear Colleague,

As has been the case, almost on a daily basis, there are a number of further updates from KCC, Government and Kent Resilience Forum I need to inform you of. As acknowledged in last week's letter, we understand the frustrations caused by so much information being provided at such a pace but hope our efforts to provide information from one main source does help in some way.

Yesterday, the DfE provided an update on how critical workers, displaying COVID-19 symptoms can access testing. Schools can now request tests directly via GOV.UK using the following link <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>. There were concerns that the nearest testing area was in Gatwick. However, this week the new testing centre in Ebbsfleet International Station came into operation.

The DfE guidance, which can be accessed here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>, explains exactly who can access the tests and how.

Last week we used the online questionnaire for schools to collate information about the provision of free school meals during the period since Social Distancing restrictions were introduced. The response to this was excellent and provided a good indication of the situation across Kent.

From all of the return received, 479 schools confirmed that their eligible families have continued to receive access to FSM since lockdown. 24 indicate their families have not. Drilling in to this group a little further a number indicate they were providing support, but the national voucher scheme has negatively impacted interrupting family access. Their responses suggest they have continued to help, so we can assume from this that families may not have gone without, and certainly not for long.

Only 11 schools indicated that their families cannot access anything currently, but again in their explanation indicates that efforts are still being made to support families by providing food parcels or hampers for example. The

remaining few are still trying to resolve issues with the national Edenred system.

382 schools stated that families are now accessing the national voucher scheme. 121 said their families are not. In a significant number of these cases, schools have continued with alternative voucher schemes (Wonde and direct purchasing). The remaining schools continue to struggle to resolve problems with Edenred. However, 101 of the 121 have stated their families have been supported since lockdown, suggesting they continue to make alternative arrangements.

Based on the data returned, it suggests schools have done a sterling job in supporting their families access their FSM entitlement. I can only thank you for your incredible efforts.

In response to requests for us to ensure we forewarn schools of any further changes to the daily questionnaire, I am giving you advance notice of a minor change to the Early Years questions, that will be introduced from Thursday 30th April.

As you are aware, KCC is required to collect data on early years and childcare provision and to report this to the DfE. Analysis of the daily submissions highlights that a number of schools, both with and without maintained nursery provisions, are supporting families by providing care for pre-school children. The amended questions will enable any school to clearly record the number of Key Worker pre-school children and vulnerable pre-school children in attendance.

Finally, if you listened to or read Gavin Williamson's speech last week, you'll have noticed the offer of IT support for particular groups of students. The information about this was shared with the LA on Friday and we are currently working through the logistics.

The guidance indicates that LAs will apply for machines for pupils in the social care category. In respect of disadvantaged Year 10s, LAs will apply for maintained schools, however academy trusts will need to apply for their own schools. The priority will be initially for social care pupils. Now that we have more detail from the Government, we are establishing the appropriate mechanisms to implement this scheme. Further information will be shared as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



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