



# The Consortium Trust

*Where together excellence and pupils thrive*

## Weekly Staff briefing

12<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Colleagues

I am sure that you feel confused and concerned about what is happening in education and more widely in society, I share this with you. While the announcements from government come thick and fast at the moment, there is very little substance and apparently no longer term strategic plan. You will have heard that the government have now abandoned their plans for all primary age pupils to return to school before the summer break, now advocating September without any specifics on the restrictions or possible solutions. We also now await for a government announcement on summer *holiday* catch up classes. I have serious concerns about this proposal not only the effect on you, as staff, but also on the children. Rather than closing the attainment gap, there is a strong likelihood that the gap will actually widen with the most disadvantaged or disengaged children falling even further behind. Once the government has published its guidance I will discuss with senior colleagues and the Trust Board, updating you in due course of our position and any actions required.

Contrary to some statements in the media the majority of the education profession is not militant, we certainly are not shying away from our obligations as public servants and every single one of us in the Trust are working towards and looking forward to welcoming all our pupils back to school as soon as possible. I have made it clear to parents that we will extend the offer to more pupils but only when the time is right and in line with local risk assessments, government and PHE advice and in consultation with colleagues and the trade unions. It is essential that we carry the confidence of you - that our schools are as safe as they can be. For most of our schools we are at capacity with the number of children that we can admit and while I understand that there is growing demand from parents to return children to school, we simply cannot go beyond what the guidelines permit us to do with the resources that we have.

There is growing pressure on the profession and while I appreciate that we are all working in unfamiliar territory at the moment, with that political, societal and parental pressure we must be absolutely secure in the fact that we as a Trust are doing everything possible to meet and where possible exceed expectations. In the coming weeks there will be details published on 'external' quality assurance monitoring of teaching and learning. In response to this we will be developing our monitoring of provision both in school and our virtual offer – this will be designed to demonstrate that we are collectively working our socks off and providing an exceptional offer to our pupils. This evidence will provide me the ability to meet any challenges from the DfE, OFSTED, parents, media etc.

The vast majority of staff are now back working in our schools and settings, this is a fantastic achievement and shows your commitment to the essential work that we are doing. Most staff will have completed their return to work interviews but I am aware that things will change, nationally as well as personally. I thought it would be useful to share again the latest information available on medical conditions and the recommendations.

For clarity, the government guidance says that only those people who are in the “clinically extremely vulnerable” category and are shielding should not leave their home during this crisis. Everyone else may leave the home to carry out essential tasks, including attending the workplace if it is not possible to work at home. The message of 10<sup>th</sup> May confirmed the move from “stay at home” to “stay alert” and that those who cannot work from home may attend the workplace, this obviously includes school based staff. The impact of that is still being assessed, but we now be moving in to a stage where it is no longer possible to accommodate as many people working as home as we have up until now and may require more people to attend the workplace, as more pupils attend. We will continue to discuss the options with colleagues that are finding the reintegration difficult in a compassionate way.

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The chart below summarises the different categories of staff, based on current guidance:

Category	How will I know if I am in this category?	Can I be expected to attend the workplace?	Do I need take any other action?
Clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)	You will have received a letter from the NHS or your GP telling you to stay “ <a href="#">shielded</a> ” for a set period of time.	No - people who have had a letter to confirm they are in the shielding category should not leave home	If you have not already shared with your manager the NHS or GP letter confirming you are in this category, you need to do that without delay.
Living with someone who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) category	The person you are living with will have received a letter as above	Yes - with appropriate social distancing in place	Discuss with your manager any concerns or circumstances
Clinically Vulnerable	You have one of the conditions identified in the <a href="#">guidance</a> , meaning that you are at higher risk of severe illness.	Yes - <a href="#">11/05/20 guidance</a> says extra care should be taken in observing social distancing and working from home should be supported- where possible. Where it is not possible, arrangements should be made to enable the person to stay 2m away from others on site.	Discuss with your manager any concerns or circumstances
Living with someone who is clinically vulnerable ( including someone who is pregnant)	The person you live with has a condition that comes under the “ clinically vulnerable “ category	Yes – <a href="#">11/05/20 guidance</a> says you can attend the workplace.	Discuss with your manager any concerns or circumstances
Self-isolating	You have, or someone in your household has, symptoms of the virus	No - you must not come in to the workplace if you have symptoms, but you can now get tested	You should obtain a test from one of the routes available, If the test is negative, you can be in the workplace.



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Government guidance referred to in the above is accessed through these links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings#shielded-and-clinically-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

On behalf of the Trust Board I again would like to thank each and every one of you for your support, confidence and work during these challenging times. I came into this role, as I am certain you did, to make things better for children, none of us in education should ever lose sight of that. Take care

Yours sincerely

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne  
CEO & Principal

Cc: Trust Board and Members  
Locality Committee members