

Message to CST Members

25 March 2020

The following email was shared with Bishop Fleming from Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive Officer of Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST). For further information and with any queries, please visit: <https://cstuk.org.uk/>

Good morning Colleagues

Late last night the government published [social distancing guidance](#) for education and childcare settings. This is specific guidance to reduce the risk of virus spread for both staff and children in schools:

- Tell children, parents, carers or any visitors, such as suppliers, not to visit the school if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Consider how children arrive at school and reduce any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport
- Ensure class sizes reflect the numbers of teaching staff available and are kept as small as possible
- Stagger lunch times, break times and the movement of pupils around the school to reduce large groups of children gathering
- Discourage parents from gathering at school gates
- Try to follow general [social distancing guidelines](#)

I think the language of social distancing is quite complex. For children and young people, it is better to talk about keeping physical distance and staying away from others. This is of course very difficult for younger children. The guidance is to encourage children to keep a physical distance as much as possible.

The government is strongly advising people, including education staff, with serious underlying health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. The clear guidance is that staff in this position must not attend work. More advice on this can be found in the [guidance on shielding](#).

I am sure you are already doing the sensible things that the guidance asks you to do:

- Make sure anyone who is feeling ill stays at home (for residential special schools and colleges, this means self-isolating at a school or college 'household' if a resident is ill). [See the guidance on isolation for residential educational settings](#)
- Ensure all staff and children wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds frequently, and are encouraged not to touch their face, while using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and using bins for tissue waste. If children or young people have trouble washing their hands, ensure help is available
- Inform parents and communities about the measures that you are taking and get their help to implement them
- Increase cleaning of surfaces in classrooms, including desks and handles, and within toilet blocks and changing rooms, adhering to [guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#)

For children and young people with an EHC plan, work with the local authority as well as with parents to decide how best to continue supporting these children and young people to stay healthy.

The DfE has said it will work with schools to ensure that adequate supplies of personal and domestic cleaning products are available to schools.

They have also committed to providing, rapidly, further detailed guidance for settings regarding the supply of appropriate personal protective equipment to settings that require it.

The Department is aware that schools will face additional costs as a result of COVID-19. They have committed to put in place a new process that allows the Department to reimburse schools for exceptional costs that they face as a result.

Meeting with the Secretary of State

The meeting with the Secretary of State yesterday covered the guidance outlined above in discussion with Public Health England. Other items discussed:

- The importance of a message from the Prime Minister to thank school staff;
- FSM national scheme will be announced imminently;
- I have asked specifically for a process for keeping children safe as an addendum to the statutory guidance, outlining a risk assessment process for all vulnerable children not in school and arrangements for keeping in touch with them;
- I have also asked that the sector is part of medium to long-term system resilience planning.

I am taking up the issue of communications from the teacher unions with the director general.
Hub provision

I am receiving reports from some members that local authorities are asking trusts – and in some cases directly approaching schools in trusts – to be part of a hub structure helps to co-ordinate local provision.

In most cases, the proposals are sensible, but in some cases trust leaders are being told that schools are being ‘taken over’ or ‘requisitioned.’

My advice to you in these circumstances is to work with local authorities, but to make it clear that they are not ‘taking over’ the schools in your trust – they are working with you as a civic partner to co-ordinate local provision.

I’ve suggested to some members that they may want to use three principles in these discussions:

- The principle of ‘continuity of care’ for the most vulnerable is paramount. We cannot have a situation where already frightened children are now being asked to be cared for by adults with whom they have no relationship
- The equally important principle of keeping children and adults safe through physical distancing is equally important. Hubs cannot and must not have the effect of creating greater physical proximity in the form of larger gatherings
- A slightly lesser order principle in these uncertain times is that the trust is the employer, so your staff cannot be directed by the local authority which is in effect a third party

Resilience models of staffing

Most trusts are implementing rotas as a way of building medium-term resilience and ensuring staff to get holiday time as we plan to work through the Easter holidays. Delta has arranged its staff into four teams. Each team is on a four-week rota as follows. Staff are asked to self-select initially which of the teams they wish to join. This means that staff who have to self-isolate can do so without breaking the staffing model as there are three weeks gaps between being in school. I am sharing this with Delta's permission.

This is not the only model of staffing to create resilience, and we will share other models – and other materials – on a dedicated facebook page, if that would be helpful to colleagues.

Possible Staffing Rota

	w/c 23 rd March	w/c 30 th March	w/c 6 th April	w/c 13 th April	w/c 20 th April	w/c 27 th April	w/c 4 th May	w/c 11 th May
Team 1	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home
Team 2	Work from home	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)
Team 3	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work	Holiday
Team 4	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work	Holiday	Work from home (first reserve)	Work from home	In work

CST will stand with you through this national and global crisis. Please continue to send me your thoughts and issues. Remember to take care of yourself and as hard as it is, make some space for downtime to keep yourself strong. It is privilege to work with you.

Warmest wishes
Leora