

Message to CST Members

26 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,

The deep social changes that have happened in the last week to limit the spread of Covid-19 are unprecedented in our lifetime. The civic role of schools and trusts, which I've been talking about for the last few months, has suddenly come to the fore in ways that I could never have expected.

My absolute focus in this time of need is supporting you – so I have limited media opportunities in order to focus on you. But I did take a moment yesterday to write an [article in TES](#) which argues that we can now be in no doubt that school trusts are civic structures. Trusts are taking their place alongside other civic structures to organise a local response. The civic leadership we have seen from schools and trusts in the last week has been extraordinary and widespread.

I think it is important to assert this message strongly at this point – for many reasons but particularly to help us manage the relationship with local authorities which in some cases is not straightforward. Trusts are perhaps the most resilient of school structures. Larger trusts with the capacity to build system resilience are already stepping up to do so. Local authorities should be using the resilience of trusts as part of their local co-ordination.

If you have a minute and feel able to tweet this message using the hashtag #CSTCivicTrusts, I'd be grateful.

Many of you are now raising issues about medium and longer-term system resilience, for example admissions, recruitment of staff, capital projects and the crucial issue of assessment and awarding of qualifications. I have raised this specifically with the Secretary of State. It is essential that we turn our attention to system resilience planning and I will be talking to the Director General about this again today.

Government guidance

Public Health England has published this very helpful [poster](#) which summarises the [social distancing guidance](#) for education and childcare settings – this was published yesterday.

The DfE has updated [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) to include additional information on children with education health and care (EHC) plans and children in alternative provision (AP) settings. Please email me directly if you have any concerns about this guidance.

I expect further guidance, possibly today, on school workforce issues related to the many queries you have raised about contractual pay, Easter holiday working and other workforce issues.

The DfE has also published a [school governance update](#), which really only clarifies that the model articles of association for academy trusts state that trustees can attend meetings remotely subject to certain stipulations set out in article 126. [Guidance](#) from our platinum partner, Browne Jacobson, on resilient governance is in fact much more helpful.

The DfE has updated [information for overseas trips](#) currently taking place for under 18s, students and staff considering travelling overseas, students and staff already overseas, and Erasmus+ students.

Fraud targeting parents of children in FSM

The DfE has warned that fraudsters are targeting parents of children eligible for free school means. Families have received an email requesting their bank details, claiming this will enable their children to continue receiving meals through school closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. DfE issued a notice, urging parents to delete the scam email immediately.

Please could you reinforce this in your communications to parents. It is abhorrent that criminals would seek to target the most economically vulnerable families.

Children with Asthma

Asthma UK published the following [shielding advice](#) yesterday, which I think is helpful clarification.

"If you are, or your child is, taking:

- Any biologic therapy, also called a mAb (Xolair/omalizumab, Nucala/mepolizumab, Cinqaero/reslizumab, Fasenra/benralizumab)
- Steroid tablets or liquid every day
- Antibiotic tablets or liquid for asthma every week (e.g. azithromycin)
- Tiotropium
- A combination inhaler that also contains a long-acting bronchodilator (e.g. Seretide, Fostair, Symbicort) at a high daily steroid dose (see the list . . .in the article)
- An inhaler with a high daily steroid dose (see the list. . .in the article) AND you are taking Montelukast

Or, if:

- You have been admitted to hospital for your asthma in the last 12 months
- You have ever been admitted to an intensive care unit for your asthma

Then you should follow the shielding advice which is set out in very helpful detail, including how to register for extra services from the government."

You may wish to share this with staff and parents of pupils with chronic asthma.

As I say in the concluding paragraphs of my TES article, there will, of course, be a "new normal" at some point – a point at which we can take stock. And of course, there will be an end to the pandemic.

For now, we are seeing new and extraordinary forms of civic leadership emerge in our time of greatest need. I have never been more proud to serve in education than I am at this moment.

Warmest wishes
Leora