

# Message to CST Members

## 24 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

You will undoubtedly have seen the Prime Minister's briefing last night on new rules for staying at home and away from others. This caused much confusion about the status of schools. Many of you contacted me immediately and I sought clarification from Number Ten via text message.

This **short statement** was published shortly after the briefing. The statement clarifies that "If you work in a critical sector outlined in this **guidance**, or your child has been identified as vulnerable, you can continue to take your children to school."

So the advice is to continue to open for the most vulnerable and the children of keyworkers.

I know that the campaign over the weekend encouraging parents to keep their children at home was successful and that pupil numbers in your schools was on average significantly down from those you expected when you made your assessment on Friday.

A huge thank you to you and all your staff for the work that you did yesterday, and will continue to do today, to enable the NHS and frontline services to continue.

When I speak to the Secretary of State today, I am going to suggest a review of the arrangements at the end of this week in light of the new guidance for staying at home.

As I said in my email yesterday, we now need to be thinking about keeping children safe in the medium and longer term and we must start planning system resilience in the medium and longer terms.

### Physical distancing

Schools should, where possible, reduce physical interaction between and among pupils and adults. The official guidance is **here**. I've proposed the government starts to use the language of keeping physical distance and staying away from others. 'Social distancing' is a complex term for children and young people.

Of course, some children need intimate care and do not have the ability to adopt self-care hygiene strategies. I will be asking the DfE to seek detailed medical advice as to how we keep staff and the pupils safe, including what PPE equipment will be made available.

I'm putting a link here to the guidance on [self-isolation](#) or [household isolation](#), just in case you need to refer parents or staff to it.

I expect further guidance out today.

### **Attendance recording**

I know that the spreadsheet the DfE asked you to complete fell down yesterday due to the numbers attempting to access it. This caused a lot of frustration in an already stressful day. I have raised this with the DfE. I am also going to explore whether this is the most efficient way of sending data and whether there are MIS solutions.

### **Teacher unions**

I am receiving some rather worrying information from some members about communications from teacher union representatives. If you are in receipt of emails or advice which causes you concern, please forward to me and I will raise concerns with the DfE.

### **Fraud awareness**

Unfortunately, there continue to be examples of fraud, including free school meal related fraud. Please be vigilant and only respond to your recognised suppliers and official sources.

I am in no doubt about how difficult this is and the many challenges you are facing. I know you are worried for the safety of your staff and pupils, and your own safety. As with our NHS, it is a very hard thing indeed to ask you to carry on. But while schools remain open for the very limited number of vulnerable children and the children of key workers, you are making a huge difference to keeping children safe and the NHS functioning.

Particularly at this moment of national and global crisis, it is a privilege to represent you. Please do keep emailing, phoning and texting me.

### **Warmest wishes**

**Leora**