

Date: 16th April 2020

Dear Colleague,

Re: COVID-19 (coronavirus) Update

I hope you are keeping well in these unprecedented times and that you managed to have an Easter break. I wanted to write specifically to Chairs of Governors as I am aware that since the Government announced the decision to close schools for the majority of pupils as part of its response plan to slow the spread of the infection, I have since written daily to all headteachers, but not directly to you in your role as a Chair of a Governing Board.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge that the response by schools to the COVID-19 emergency has been phenomenal and I would like to thank you for the support you have given to this. We have on average over 2000 children across the county still attending a school place, of whom the majority are children of critical workers. This has been a significant challenge for your headteacher to organise and both your combined efforts need to be highly praised.

Given the immense professional and personal impact of COVID-19 on all of our lives, I would also like to take this opportunity to ask you to ensure that your Headteacher's wellbeing is as good as it can be through these difficult times. I am aware that many heads are working above and beyond for their children and staff, however, in these exceptionally trying times, the wellbeing of all headteachers also needs to be prioritised. I am sure that you have got this in hand, but I would ask that you pay particular attention to this element of your role as Chair, as the schools will remain closed to the majority of pupils for some time to come.

We are rightly asking schools to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all pupils first and to support their continued education as far as possible second. Many more families are likely to experience some kind of difficulty over the next few weeks and months, whether that is an increase in anxiety levels, the impact of their child(ren) being at home and the stress that places on the family dynamic, the health of family members, financial or a combination of all of these factors and other reasons too. Heads will bear the brunt of any change in pupil or family wellbeing, and this will place a significant additional stress onto headteachers and their staff. As well of course being concerned about their own families during this time. We also need to acknowledge the difficulty at present of being able to switch off from these stresses.

Please do ensure that your Headteacher is given both as much support as possible over the coming weeks and months. That is not only support within the school day but also support with taking time off and valuable downtime that is vital for both mental and physical wellbeing.

You will find additional guidance for governors from the DfE here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update/school-governance-update-march-2020>

and from the National Governors Association here:

<https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Executive-leaders-and-the-governing-boards/The-Coronavirus-Information-for-governing-boards-M.aspx>

In addition, the DfE published guidance on Admission Appeals for School Places on the 14th April – please do familiarise yourself with this guidance:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/admission-appeals-for-school-places?utm_source=5a5d4fe1-345c-4409-bba7-08ed490fd407&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

I also attach to this letter some guidance that we have put together re recruitment and working from home.

Of course, please do also look after your own wellbeing too during this difficult and challenging time.

Thank you for all that you are doing and for the support you are giving to your Headteacher, the school staff, pupils and families within your school community.

Yours sincerely,



Clare Kershaw
Director of Education