



Northumberland County Council

**To All Headteachers of Schools
and Academies**

Your ref:
Our ref: DJ/DA
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Tel direct: (01670) 622767
Date: 30th March 2020

Dear Headteacher

UPDATE FOR HEADTEACHERS MONDAY 30TH MARCH 2020 **Future Updates – the 5 O’Clock Update**

Thank you for all the feedback that you have sent about the Updates and Headteacher Letters that have gone out so far. To try to bring some consistency to the process, we have decided to issue an Update every day at about 5pm, so, unsurprisingly, from now on it will be called the 5 O’Clock Update. The serious point is that you will know, every day, that an Update is on its way that evening. There will not, however, be a 5 O’Clock Update on a Saturday or Sunday but we will try to respond to emails on those days.

Central Government Guidance

You need to be aware that the government is updating the already published guidance to schools on a regular basis. The only way you can tell, however, is to check the date on the guidance on the daily DfE Bulletin. Three key documents – Closing Schools, Safeguarding in Schools and Vulnerable Children and Young People - were updated last Friday but it would have been easy to miss.

Easter Holiday Period

The updated Guidance for Schools about Temporarily Closing:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing> includes the following paragraph:

When will teachers take holiday?

We understand that this is a very difficult time for teachers, and we are asking a lot of them, and all school staff, to help the country fight this virus. We know that school leaders and local authorities will make sensible decisions on staffing and what breaks will be needed, but we are asking schools, wherever possible, to maintain provision for children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response over the Easter holidays.



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So, the question from me now is, 'wherever possible', are you able to stay open over Easter, including the two Bank Holidays? I have the Union guidance and can see where conflict may occur. It is clear that the country needs as many settings as possible to stay open over the whole Easter period but, at the moment, there is no further guidance that provides the logistics other than the 'wherever possible' request. We will be working with you throughout this week so that we have a better understanding of the potential Easter/Bank Holidays situation and the resource that we can provide to help.

Safe to Learn Edition 30

Carol Leckie distributed the latest copy of Safe to Learn on Friday which contains a wealth of useful advice and guidance. Unfortunately, the revised government Safeguarding Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>) arrived after it had been distributed and so is not included. Carol will re-issue Safe to Learn Edition 30 to include Friday's guidance.

Safeguarding

Late on Friday [27th March 2020], the government published updated safeguarding guidance for schools, colleges and other providers. Whilst **Keeping Children Safe in Schools** remains the key statutory document for schools, the DfE have issued interim guidance during the coronavirus outbreak.

As you would expect, there is a lot of information in the DfE's updated Safeguarding Guidance, but it is required reading and contains a number of points that you will need to act upon: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

To ensure that all settings comply with the revised guidance, Carol Leckie has sent all settings an appendix that you can add to your Child Protection Policy and a check list of the things that you need to do to meet the requirements of the updated guidance.

The link below takes you to the excellent Safeguarding In Schools (<https://www.safeguardinginschools.co.uk/>) external website which has been updated this weekend to reflect the new guidance. You should also consider registering for the Safeguarding In Schools newsletter on the site as it has a link to an extremely helpful and informative video update.

The Children Missing Education process during School Closure

Jane Walker has asked me to remind you of the following:

Every day, DSLs should:

- Make sure they know which children on their school roll/AP register has a social worker (contact Vicky Kinneavy for clarification if necessary), an EHCP, is the child of a Key Worker or is, in the school's view, vulnerable
- Know who to expect to turn up at the school/provision each day
- If an expected child doesn't arrive then contact home - parent/carer (we refer to this as reasonable checks for CME)
- If you can't make contact, then contact the social worker and/or education welfare (educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk)
- If there is still a concern about the child from the social worker and from the education welfare service, then the social worker will take further action

An Education Liaison Officer, Vicky Kinneavy, is based at the MASH. Part of her role is to receive and share information about children at risk. The DSLs know Vicky and her role well, so if she receives information about a child who is not at school/AP, or is at school/AP but there is a concern, then Vicky will take the appropriate action with social care.

Vulnerable Pupils

The updated government guidance on Vulnerable Learners states:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home. Schools, colleges, other training providers and local authorities will need to consider the needs of all children and young people with an EHC plan, alongside the views of their parents, and make a risk assessment for each child or young person. Local authorities and schools or colleges should decide together who is best placed to undertake the risk assessment, noting that the duty to ensure provision remains with the local authority.

NCC staff are happy and available to support schools with conducting a risk assessment when required. Please contact Angela.Davies@northumberland.gov.uk for further information.

HR Q&A Document for Schools

The Updated NCC **Schools HR – COVID-19 Update and Considerations for Schools** document has been sent to all schools in the NCC HR SLA. I would, however, like to share the update with *all* our schools, regardless of your HR provider, as I feel that it is extremely helpful. See the link below.



Schools HR -
COVID-19 Pandemic

NCC Coronavirus Updates

The Coronavirus Updates page on the Education Northumberland website has links to all the updated guidance on it, and the HR update. It also has the links to the Padlets, the daily DfE update and a range of other documentation should you need to refer to any of them
<http://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/coronavirus/>

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dean Jackson', written in a cursive style.

Dean Jackson
Service Director, Education and Skills Service