

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the latest advice and guidance from Cumbria County Council in relation to Coronavirus (COVID-109).

Yours

Dan Barton
Assistant Director, Education and Skills

UPDATE 16 MARCH

Letter for Parents and Carers

Please find below a link to a letter for parents and carers setting out the advice being given to all schools today by Cumbria County Council. Please can you ensure all parent/carers receive a copy of this letter today.

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/536/6181/4390612267.pdf>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Advice to schools

We understand that the current situation is causing concern amongst schools trying to determine how best to respond in the absence of a clear direction from Government. This is leading to schools taking varying approaches, often in the same communities. This is understandable but also risks creating confusion amongst families.

While we await further Government direction please can all schools follow the advice set out below which has been agreed with Cumbria's Director of Public Health Colin Cox.

- Schools should remain open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England.
- Take steps to reduce contact with people outside of the school. For example, only essential visitors, stop non-essential out of hours meeting/gatherings, postpone school trips.
- In school, stop large gatherings unless educationally essential. Note that in small schools this is less relevant because the whole school population is likely to be in regular close contact throughout the school day.
- It should be expected that some pupils and families will have to self-isolate. The school should remain open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England. (It is not necessarily the case that people will be tested for COVID-19, meaning it may not be known for certain that the infection is present.
- If staff absence means that staffing ratios become too low to operate safely, schools should close.
- For Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) where staffing ratios are lower than in mainstream schools, and where pupils are particularly vulnerable, early intelligence about the changing situation should be communicated urgently via the e-mail address below.
- Where pupils have specific vulnerabilities that put them at higher risk, particularly in Special Schools, individual risk assessments should be carried out. It may be appropriate for parents/carers to remove their child from school and self-isolate. Some parents/carers may already have done so and should be supported, Special School Head Teachers should make this recommendation to parents where risk assessments indicate this is

necessary. Email education.tcg@cumbria.gov.uk for specific tailored advice on individual cases.

Supply Teaching

- It is acknowledged that the evolving situation will place a significant additional pressure on the supply teacher market in Cumbria. I have spoken to the main supply agencies in the county today, to discuss the situation. Whilst all schools will have difficulty in managing absence at this time, our Pupil Referral Units will feel this pressure more than most due to the uniquely complex nature of the cohort, with particular regard to the safeguarding implications of potential closures in these schools. With this in mind, I have asked supply agencies to work with the Cumbrian system in a co-ordinated way to prioritise the allocation of supply resource in PRUs wherever possible.

This is a fast developing situation and this advice may be rapidly superseded.

Note that we have created this webpage (www.cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/education.asp) where all updates will be uploaded. This page is also clearly accessible via the Schools Portal homepage. Please check the page regularly.

Any questions can be sent to education.tcg@cumbria.gov.uk