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14<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Perhaps some or many of you share my experiences about how challenging it is to make decisions for your family and work in the circumstances when the guidance and information may seemingly be confusing or even contradictory, changing quickly and not always timely shared with us. At school we make our operational decisions for the students and the staff based on guidance from HCC and the DfE and at the same time we are committed to support your family as far as we can at this exceptional time.

Today I want to share some latest guidance from HCC and DfE and its impact on our schools as well as some more federation/school based information:

**Conducting a SEND risk assessment** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>

- Schools continue to provide care for a limited number of children and young people (YP)
- Some requirements under Children and Families Act 2014 have been temporarily disabled or modified such as EHC assessment, delivery of provision and EHCP timescale and section 42
- For some children it is safer to stay at home than attend school and visa versa – this needs to be assessed on an individual basis to determine which one is more beneficial for a child
- Please respond to my letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> May expressing your views on your child's needs for the rest of this academic year as a matter of urgency

**Opening educational settings from 1<sup>st</sup> June**

Actions for schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020> and

Guidance for families <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

- Special schools will work towards a phased reopening without focus on specific year groups
- Eligible children are encouraged to attend schools
- The latest science indicates that COVID-19 is less severe with children; younger children are less likely to become unwell; limiting the number of children going back to school is necessary initially; a number of students attending school at a later phase is advised to be increased gradually; protective measures need to be implemented such as smaller group sizes
- Children and YP who are medically vulnerable need to continue stringent social distancing and not to attend school e.g. those who have received a shielding letter /text
- Note: HCC will provide its schools with more specific guidance by the end of next week

**Implementing protective measures** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

- Hierarchy of measures includes: effective infection protection and control, PPE (personal protective equipment), shielding clinically vulnerable children, YP and adults and minimising group/class sizes and adjusting daily activities and transport arrangements
- Essential measures are to avoid contact with anyone with symptoms: frequent hand cleaning and hygiene practices, regular and increased cleaning of settings, minimising contact and mixing and to adhere to the 2 meter social distancing guidance whenever possible
- Testing and tracing for symptomatic children and YP, will be possible as well as for their household and staff
- When COVID-19 is confirmed: it is advised that where the child, YP or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14

days: **NOTE** that within the Sunflower federation due to the nature of the environment and provision this means the school concerned will be closed for 14 days.

- **Herts Public Health** (PH) has provided schools with updated PPE guidance and **HCC** has provided special schools with fluid resistant face masks commencing Monday this week. We are very grateful to HCC that special schools have been provided with facemasks – they are expensive and difficult to source. The given supply is likely to be sufficient for 3-4 weeks; after this schools are expected to purchase these themselves.
- At the beginning of the week we have amended our safety precautions and guidance; trained staff to use face masks, refreshed their skills in using existing PPE and organised practicalities. It is advised that face masks are used when high risk activities for example feeding, personal care and restrictive interventions are carried out. The Herts PH guidance advises that if there is no supply of PPE (face masks) the normal activity can be continued without masks. It is not easy to adapt to our practice to use medical resources/PPE during school days. We are not able to provide static donning and doffing stations to put PPE on and take off; situations with the students can change quickly and we need to consider how to manage any possible anxieties and behaviours as well as school activities and interventions when the staff is using PPE. We try our best to find practical solutions to adhere the given PPE guidance. The vast majority of our students have adapted well to staff's use of PPE.

Thank you to those parents who have already responded to my letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> by writing to us or calling the office sharing their views about their child's return to school. I haven't been able to respond to you individually but I want to reassure you, that your comments and feedback have been noted and much appreciated. Thank you for taking time to write and inform us. I would kindly remind those parents/carers who are still considering their response to contact us tomorrow by the end of the day. Your feedback is part of our risk assessment for your child and essentially important for our planning the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of summer term. Please note that your view is taken as an indicative opinion at the time – you may change your view later.

I will get back to you by the end of next week about our plans for the rest of the academic year.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that we have successfully applied to become a Watford Foodbank agency. This means that we are able to support those families who are under exceptional financial pressure, for example due to delayed wages, benefit changes etc... and who may need **additional support for food shopping**. We are also able to support our vulnerable families via 'Oneisonproject' by organising regular food and meal deliveries. Please DO NOT hesitate to contact either Darren or myself to discuss this in confidence.

If you have any **other concerns** about your child's welfare please contact either Darren or myself.

Lastly I would like to remind you about our Facebook page and YouTube channel '**The Sunflower Federation Schools**'. I'm fairly confident that our videos make you and your child smile. It has been amazing to receive feedback from the teachers about their discussions with you and to see photos of home activities that you have shared via Edmodo. This feedback makes us very happy at school. Thank you. Recently we have started to share your photos on our social media sites, #iSchoolation, - obviously only if you have given permission for that. Please share information about our page and channel with your families and friends.

On behalf of my school community I would like to express our sincere thanks for your continued support, positive words and communication with us. It is both yours and our interest to support your child to be safe and happy during this stressful time. We can do it by continuing to work collaboratively with each other.

Keep safe with very best wishes,  
Merja