

Covid-19 – Update from SAST Thursday 19 March 2020 7.30am

In light of the Government announcement of school closures except for children of key workers and vulnerable children from the end of Friday the Trust and Schools will be holding a series of meetings to finalise arrangements and we will communicate the decisions as soon as possible.

The key points announced from the Department for Education and the Prime minister are below. We are awaiting further details on some aspects and appreciate there are a range of questions.

Department for Education - Schools will close from Monday, except for children of key workers and vulnerable children

- *After schools shut their gates on Friday afternoon, they will remain closed until further notice except for children of key workers and vulnerable children, as part of the country's ongoing response to coronavirus.*
- *Examples of these workers include NHS staff, police and supermarket delivery drivers who need to be able to go to work to support the country's fight to tackle coronavirus. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with Education, Health and Care Plans – a legal document that describes a child's special educational needs and the support they require.*
- *Children who do not fall into these groups should remain at home with appropriate care.*
- *Where schools are unable to look after these children, local authorities will work with the Department for Education's regional teams to ensure an alternative option is available in the same area.*
- *Nurseries, private schools and sixth forms should also follow this guidance. We will provide financial support for these settings as required.*
- *Where possible, we would encourage settings to also look after key workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays.*
- *The scientific advice shows that these settings are safe for this small number of children to continue attending – but asking others to stay away will help us to slow the spread.*
- *We recognise that many special schools and residential settings will need to continue to look after their pupils.*

Tests and Exams

- *To lift the pressure on schools themselves and to allow them to focus on supporting those children who need it most, Ofsted will cease all inspections of schools and colleges with immediate effect.*
- *We will not go ahead with primary school assessments or secondary exams this summer, and we will not be publishing performance tables.*
- *We will work with the sector and Ofqual to ensure children get the qualifications they need.*

Free School Meals

- *To support children eligible for free school meals, schools will be able to purchase meals or vouchers for supermarkets or local shops.*
- *The government has also confirmed that the total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate it pays to schools for free school meals, recognising that families will not be buying food in bulk and may therefore incur higher costs. The final amounts will be confirmed shortly.*
- *Effective immediately, schools will be able to order vouchers directly from supermarkets or shops in their communities to be emailed or printed and posted to families, and they will have their costs covered by the Department for Education. Guidance for schools will be published shortly.*

Next Steps - Planned meetings today

- There will be a meeting of Trust central staff using TEAMS at 9.15 am today
- There will be a meeting of all Headteachers using TEAMS at 11.00am today
- We will look to provide a summary of key points for staff in terms of doing our bit in providing for key workers and the most vulnerable children
- Staff meetings at the end of the school day to provide updates, plans and answer questions

We will be considering

- The expectation that all schools will be open on Monday for the children of key workers and the most vulnerable (in the future this may be rationalised)
- We await a final definition of these groups – they have mentioned NHS, police, delivery drivers; Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with educational health and care plans.
- How many pupils does each school have in these groups?
- What will that school provision look like? How is this organised and staffed?
- Any support for Y11 and Y13 worried about there not being any exams
- The provision for food and FSM