

Public Health · Cumbria House · 110-117 · Botchergate · Carlisle · Cumbria · CA1 1RD

Dear Parents/Carers,

Advice to schools responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This is a worrying time and many of you will have concerns about how to keep your family and loved ones safe.

Last week Government changed the national approach to managing Coronavirus (COVID-19) but as yet has not provided updated guidance to schools about how to respond. While we await new Government guidance, Cumbria County Council is advising all schools in the county to take the following precautionary action.

- 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. Consider alternatives to parents evenings to share progress.
- In school, stop large gatherings unless educationally essential.
- Expect that some pupils and families may develop symptoms and will have to self-isolate. The school should remain open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England. There is not an expectation that schools will inform other parents in this situation.
- If staff absence means that staffing ratios become too low to operate safely, schools should close.
- 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.

We understand that these measures may cause disruption, but it is important to take proportionate steps to slow the potential spread of infection in communities. We would ask parents/carers to support the decisions schools are taking to keep people safe.

This is a fast developing situation and it is likely that the advice to schools may change over coming days and weeks, please be prepared to respond quickly.

Thank you for your understanding.

Dan Barton
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