



Department for Education

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To: All Academy Trusts

I wanted to write to all academy trusts today with important information about the Government's response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). On Tuesday, the Government published a [Coronavirus action plan: A guide to what you can expect across the UK.](#)

As the plan makes clear, the emergence of this virus poses a significant global challenge. To-date, advice from Public Health England has concentrated on containing spread of the virus within the UK. The UK and the NHS are well prepared to respond to the challenge posed by COVID-19.

The action plan recognises that we do not have entirely complete data on this disease. As such, the action plan will be revised in light of emerging trends and patterns, including consideration of measures you will have read about such as reducing large scale gatherings and closing schools.

I want to advise that all academy trusts should expect to be working in close collaboration with your relevant local authorities who hold the appropriate local civil contingency responsibilities. For some trusts that will involve liaison and coordination with a number of different local authorities if you have academies in different local authority areas; you should talk to each local authority about the relevant academy in their area.

The importance of localised coordination of intelligence and action cannot be overstated, and Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) will of course also be liaising with local authorities and supporting their coordination and information gathering functions. This way of reviewing the impact on all schools, regardless of status or type in local areas, is necessary to ensure consistent advice and support to citizens and businesses.

In addition, the Department for Education has launched a new helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and young people can contact the helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687
Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

No school should close in response to a suspected (or confirmed) COVID-19 case unless advised to do so by Public Health England.

Finally, the best way to tackle the challenge posed by Coronavirus is by following public health authorities' advice, for example on hand washing, and reducing the impact and spread of misinformation by relying on information from trusted sources, such as that on www.nhs.uk/ and www.gov.uk/

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Herrington".

Dominic Herrington
National Schools Commissioner