

Cllr Nigel Jupp
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

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The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
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[Sent via email]

27 November 2020

Dear Secretary of State

Experiences of schools and the local authority in managing the impact of the pandemic

At a recent meeting of the County Council's Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee I was provided with a welcome opportunity to hear feedback from Headteachers, Governors and members of our Youth Cabinet on their experiences of the impact of the pandemic on Schools and young people's education.

Both the Scrutiny Committee and I recognise the enormous efforts made since March by our County Council officers, senior leadership teams, the teachers, staff, governors, students and parents to keep children learning during this unprecedented and very challenging time.

Through the course of discussion at the meeting it became clear that there were instances where both the Local Authority and schools encountered difficulties in putting into practice the measures advised within government guidance due to the late receipt of information. Some of the guidance also led to confusion as it could easily be interpreted in a number of different ways. Following reflection of the experiences of officers and schools I would be grateful for your response on the following issues:-


1. The need for better timed and coordinated communication and guidance for schools moving forward, some of which has not always been timely. For example, guidance on Aerosol Generated Procedures (AGP) has only just been received and guidance on school transport arrangements was late in arriving for schools to plan their risk assessments and return to school plans during the summer;
2. The need for early clarity over all examination and testing procedures for 2021. Whilst statements have been made about external examinations,

- there is still a lack of clarity on how students will be assessed fairly where gaps in the coverage of certain subjects will vary across the country; and
3. The need for additional funding to be made available to support schools on the additional expenses they continue to incur, and the loss of income opportunities as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

I welcome the clear message from Government that schools should remain open during the current lockdown and would request that further closures be considered only as a last resort, and if required, this be minimised both in number and length of time.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these points.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Cllr Nigel Jupp
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills