

All Headteachers

Please ask for: Your Link Officer

Date: 22 May 2020

Dear Colleagues

Thank you for all that you have been doing over the last two weeks since the Government announcement on schools being asked to extend their provision from the 1 June if the 5 tests are met. I do not underestimate the challenges you are facing in trying to make sense of all the guidance that you have received and consider how to apply it in your schools. I also appreciate how difficult it is for you personally trying to balance the needs of children, parents and staff particularly in the context of national concerns around what is being proposed.

I want to confirm that our position remains as set out in my letter to parents/carers dated the 14 May and reassure you that we will support you in exercising your professional judgement based on your understanding of the context of your school and community. We accept that not all schools will be able to offer full time provision to the identified year groups given the guidance they have to follow around pupil numbers, safe working and staff availability, and the need to provide for critical workers and vulnerable children. This may lead to a range of arrangements being put in place e.g. part-time provision, staggered start and finish times, and short weeks.

It is unfortunate that there has been a gap between the guidance and some of the media announcements, however I would ask that you give consideration to pupils in receipt of free school meals and those receiving SEND support as we know that the education outcomes gap for these groups in Somerset is considerable.

In relation to potential liability, I can confirm that so long as you are making decisions based on DfE Guidance and making reasonable decisions based on risk assessments and safe working guidance etc. there is no risk of personal liability on your part. The Health and Safety Unit has reviewed the joint union checklist against our suggested Pre-Opening Risk Assessment and have advised that the risk assessment together with other checklists, guidance and other risk assessments already in place in schools, addresses all elements of the joint union document. To

be clear you are implementing decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State and with advice from your Director of Children's Services.

I know that you will be working over half term to get your schools ready for June so once again thank you to you and your staff for your commitment to the children of Somerset. If you have any concerns or questions and are not sure who to talk to then please don't hesitate to contact your link LA officer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Wooster', is written over a light blue horizontal line. The signature is cursive and fluid.

Julian Wooster
Director of Children's Services