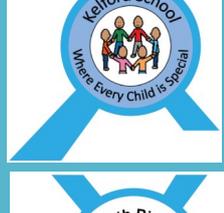
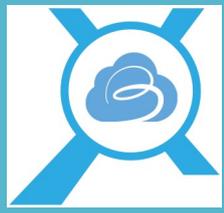


# CEO Briefing

SCHOOL YEAR 2019/20  
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2017 AWARD for Outstanding vision and strategy  
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As I write this briefing, managing the anxieties created by the COVID-19 pandemic is certainly proving to be a challenge, with a relentless wave of media reporting heightening concerns across the planet. Not unlike the swine flu crisis of 2009, there's a lot of worrying information being shared through a range of outlets, and our legal responsibility as state schools is to follow the advice of the Department for Education, which in turn is informed by the very expert advice of the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Science Officer who both advise Government.

As guidance is being updated daily, the Trust has not and will not be issuing local guidance as this could - and likely would - confuse people as and when things change. The current advice is that no schools should close unless advised to by Public Health England, the Health Protection Agency and/or local authorities (who are Category 1 responders in the event of an emergency). In the event of a closure, we would draw on Trust policy for responding to a pandemic and also our business continuity plans.

The latest measures - as advised by Government - of self isolation for a fever or a continuous cough doesn't necessarily mean that absent staff or children have Coronavirus, and the removal of standard testing measures by definition means it is less likely we'll see an increase in confirmed cases in conjunction with the likely increase in the absence of staff and pupils as part of these preventative steps. This is an important distinction to make, as it would be easy to confuse absence for a Coronavirus outbreak locally. As stated above, if we have a confirmed local outbreak in any of our schools we will ensure our approach is consistent with the advice of PHE and the HPA.

Headteachers will continue to monitor the risks closely and ensure we can meet our safeguarding duties whilst we also balance staff absence. If we face major staff shortages, Headteachers will propose modified provision with partial, short term closures for classes or year groups, proportionate to need. We will do everything we can to ensure children are provided with their right to an education, as is our core purpose, and no decisions on closure will be taken without seeking expert advice and guidance.

Thus far, the biggest challenge for the vast majority of us has been to remain rational, logical and evidence-based in our decision making in the face of what can be overwhelming concern. For school leaders in particular, this puts a very different spin on the concept of "courageous leadership", but it is morally and intellectually the right path to follow by referring to Government advice. It is parents prerogative to send their children to school, and I know all our Heads will be understanding of pupil absence where families feel their child has additional vulnerabilities that create a disproportionate risk at this time.

Things have changed rapidly over the past two weeks and will continue to evolve. Thank you all for your trust and support as we continue to respond in the best ways possible to meet community need.



Warren Carratt

**Learning together; to be the best we can be**

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