



Nottingham

City Council

People Directorate
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MAT CEOs, Headteachers, Principals

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26 March 2020

Dear MAT CEOs, Headteachers, Principals

I would like to thank you all for everything you have been doing in this last unprecedented week. Your strong and clear leadership and the professionalism and hard work of yourselves, senior staff and your workforce has been exemplary. Nottingham is lucky to have you all.

As we have all worked rapidly over the few days to respond to the national crisis I feel it is important to now set out a clear position of the views of the Local Authority in relation to the guidance that has been issued to schools and academies by the Secretary of State in relation to vulnerable pupils including those with an EHCP, and the availability of school places for children of critical workers.

- School/education places must be available for all vulnerable children i.e. include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home.
- We know that schools and other education providers may also want to support other children who are vulnerable where they are able to do so.
- Children with a parent or carer who is listed on the government's critical worker list should be considered for a school place, so long as their job cannot be done from home.



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Vulnerable Pupils

We know that some families need more support than others and that attending education settings is an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker. We want to prioritise supporting those most in need at this difficult time.

On Monday 23 March, we had approximately 1,000 pupils in school (including the children of critical workers). This reduced significantly following the press conference in the evening of 23 March, and has continued to reduce throughout the week. Your schools know the children and their families best and we know you will be undertaking initial risk assessments and established a process for ongoing safe and well checks for any vulnerable child who has not taken up a school place or who, following the press conference, has stopped attending school.

Clearly the government is looking to schools to enable pupils to be in a safe place and your risk assessments need to reflect this as they are completed. However, the DfE have already identified significantly lower numbers of these children in school than they expected in Nottingham, and therefore the need to ensure robust risk assessment processes are in place for vulnerable CYP or those with an EHCP is vital. The Local Authority will be required to ensure risk assessments are completed and will need to hold copies of all risk assessments.

The Local Authority will work alongside you to ensure that our shared responsibility to safeguard these children and young people is secured. All schools in the city will have a nominated senior officer contact in the education directorate, who will make daily contact with the school in order to discuss all vulnerable pupils on their list, and enable communication regarding attendance, changes in the health situation of the pupil or family, or escalation of concerns to social care arising from safe and well checks. Clearly this arrangement will require clear lines of communication to reflect the potential for the impact of Covid-19 on staffing in both schools and the LA to require flexibility and cover arrangements are in place. Additionally the LA's specialist SEND teams will support with advice and guidance on EHCP pupils and the Education Welfare service will be available to support in relation to attendance and safe and well checking.

The process for submitting risk assessments for all vulnerable children will be circulated to you soon.

Children's social care teams are reviewing the circumstances of all vulnerable children and young people in the city, and will share this with schools in order to establish a shared expectation in terms of attendance in school or levels of expected safe and well checking in the home environment if attendance is inappropriate.

Additionally all LA's received a letter from Vicky Ford MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, concerning vulnerable children, which we have been asked to send out to parents (a copy is attached)

The letter will be sent to more than 3,000 parents and carers of young people with SEND this week. The letter raises issues we will all have considered following the Prime Minister's request for most of the population to Stay Home. Whilst families have heeded the key advice to keep their children at home safely, we know many of our families with these youngsters will find this difficult. Some live in small accommodation, some have

SEND needs themselves; there are EAL issues and those who do not have recourse to public funds.

We will continue to look at our own services to see how they can best support you in ensuring the safety and well being of this vulnerable group and fulfil the obligations outlined. We will be contacting parents within the resource we have and include a helpline number in this letter.

Children of Critical Workers

In relation to support for children of critical workers, again I would like to thank you for your tremendous effort in enabling schools to offer vital support to the national effort. We recognise that the broad definition of critical worker has resulted in some challenges for schools in interpretation. However, as we are seeing the number of Covid-19 cases rising this support for frontline workers in health and social care, emergency services, community protection and the vital infrastructure supporting them and civil society is becoming more and more crucial on a daily basis.

We are asking for as many schools as possible to remain open in order to provide places for children of these workers. The more schools able to operate will enable access but also a safer environment for both pupils and staff to operate with in safe distancing guidelines. We are also expecting all schools to support arrangements to maintain opening over the Easter holiday period. I am pleased to understand that this message has been responded to very positively across the city.

The City Council will be issuing letters of authority signed by the Chief Executive to its critical workers who require a place alongside guidance to the to utilise spaces only if they have no alternative. We are asking other key employers to respond accordingly.

Key contact telephone numbers and email addresses for the LA are noted below. We are committed to supporting you in delivering the expectations above; and thank you for your ongoing work in supporting both children and young people, but also the city's and country's response in the fight against Covid-19.

NCC City contacts

Covid Email covidarrangements@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Covid Phone number 0115 876 4700

All current DfE guidance re COVID-19 and schools available here: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



Catherine Underwood
Corporate Director for People