



19th March 2020

COVID-19: A message from the Director#2

To all head teachers and governors in Archdiocese of Southwark Schools
CC. Archbishop's Council and Trustees
By email

Dear colleague

This follows on from yesterday's message and the announcement from the Secretary of State for Education with regard to the partial closure of schools.

I just wanted to reiterate that you have my full support whatever decisions you now need to make, in the ever-changing circumstances in which we find ourselves. There has been much said and reported about caring for and supporting the most vulnerable children in our schools at this time. I don't intend to add to this advice, other than to encourage you to do what you are already doing brilliantly for the disadvantaged, their parents and carers. I am hearing great examples of school-to-school collaboration around sharing staff, resources and planning for the supervision and care of vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Thank you.

Equally important are all the young people, including those who are disadvantaged, whose education is disrupted by the virus. In particular, we need to pay attention to those who would have been sitting public examinations. So, in the interests of being helpful – and in the certain knowledge that you will have thought about these matters anyway – I offer these suggestions:

- In infant/primary schools, ask the Reception (EYFS - GLD), Year 1 and 2 teachers (Phonics check) and Year 6 teachers (SATs) to prepare a data set for each of the classes which builds on the most recent assessments they have undertaken of children's attainment against age-related expectations. Official documentation is already re-asserting the validity and reliability of teacher assessment. It is to be hoped that normal accountability measures will be suspended but it would be wise to prepare for the provision of estimated outcomes, should that not be the case.
- In secondary schools, ask one of the senior leaders to prepare a data set for Year 11 and Year 13 classes which builds on the most recent assessment outcomes the school holds for GCSE and 'A' Level candidates. We have to presume (edu-twitter is alive with this this morning) that schools will be asked to provide estimates of likely performance and these will need to be supported with evidence. It may be worth adding evidence of historic forecasting accuracy in your school, so that the reliability of teacher assessment and prediction can be used to justify any such estimates.
- Ask pupils, in secondary schools, to ensure their folders are well organised so that if samples of class or homework are requested, they are quickly accessible. In the past, when coursework would have been prepared already, there would be a body of work upon which moderated judgements could be made. It may well be that you have to replicate this practice in the so-called 'new normal'.
- Class teachers in primary schools will already have sets of books which will have been collected for moderation. This is an activity that could be carried out anonymously by exchanging scanned samples of pupils' work within schools and between those with whom you normally cluster. Again this will strengthen a school's assertion of its valid and reliable assessment processes.



- Ensure the examination officer or assessment manager in your school is vigilant and notes any formal notifications from the awarding bodies or the Standards and Testing Agency. A daily briefing for senior leaders on this would be a good idea, even if there is a nil response. A diarised report, showing assiduous monitoring of each website/portal/information source, would be hard evidence of having made all reasonable endeavours to manage the situation effectively.

Denominational inspection

For the avoidance of doubt, all denominational inspection activity is suspended until further notice in the Archdiocese of Southwark. I am listening to the discussions between the CES and DFE about any legal implications for the 'window' in which inspection occurs for each school. I predict that the window will be shifted back by a term. We will, of course, publish the most recent outcomes of inspection activity, though there may be some necessary delay in the quality assurance process.

Bereavement

I have today asked Susan Elderfield to prepare some materials for easy distribution relating to bereavement. Regrettably, we must be prepared for such an eventuality. Once we have assembled these materials, they will be available on the website and we will notify you of their availability.

Resources

In addition to the above, whether you have set pupils work, or asked staff to add to a VLE, sharepoint. Google classroom, iTunesU etc, or intend to do some remote teaching using fully interactive and video-assisted technologies, there can never be too many resources for situations like this. It looks as though the BBC is going to be running educational content. All resource providers are likely to extend access to online materials and there may be some freebies.

Dympna Lennon (Headteacher, St John Fisher, Chatham) suggests the following:

'Cambridge University Press is making higher education textbooks in HTML format free to access online during the coronavirus outbreak. Over 700 textbooks, published and currently available, on Cambridge Core are available regardless of whether textbooks were previously purchased. Free access is available until the end of May 2020. These resources could potentially be very useful for KS5 students.'

There will be many others. We will keep an eye on the web and point to anything that seems useful, recognising that you are probably doing this already.

Do please pass on my good wishes to all the young people affected. My thoughts are very much with them.

I will continue to keep you all in my prayers, especially the young people who will have been building up to sit their examinations and must now be feeling a sense of disappointment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hughes'.

Dr Simon Hughes
Director of Education