

How North Yorkshire County Council be supporting schools, academies and settings

Dear colleagues,

We are currently in unprecedented times and I felt that it was worthwhile to contact you to let you know how we will be supporting schools, academies and settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The local authority has a core team who meet regularly to review the response to the outbreak, looking at it from the perspective of North Yorkshire. This allows us to offer the correct advice to leaders. We are providing support and advice to all schools and settings on a variety of different issues that are caused by this situation. The local authority has expertise in HR, premises, finance, IT, school improvement as well as the social care and health aspects that may impact on you. We are extremely lucky to have strong leadership both across the service and in our schools and settings.

The most important advice is to follow guidance from Public Health England. All the correct information is on our NYCC website and is updated frequently. We have also put guidance documents to help you follow the advice from the chief scientific and medical professionals, even though others may be giving advice. The government is best placed to make any decisions and we will keep you updated of any changes as and when they happen.

There are even more challenging times ahead and the advice to stay open may well change. However, should this happen, schools will do all they can to provide some learning opportunities for pupils during any sustained closure. What this may look like will vary depending on age, context and the technology available. The school improvement service is looking at on-line learning and other solutions to providing learning remotely and any packages that may be useful to your pupils.

We must not be under any illusion, however, that anything like normal service can be maintained if schools and settings are forced to close. We will have staff affected by the virus who are unable to work from home and we cannot plan for every eventuality. More staff may need to self-isolate and the service schools may offer will vary. What we can assure you is that we will do our best to support you and the young people you serve.

A particular focus will be in secondary schools on the Year 11 and Year 13 pupils facing public examinations. We know that the government is working with examination boards and has a range of contingency plans in place. Our advice to all these young people is to stay calm and keep preparing for the examinations.

Specific to North Yorkshire are the number of small schools who may be adversely affected by staff and or pupil numbers. Can we ask that you look at how you can work across schools in your area: sharing staff/pupils. Many school we have spoken to are already having meetings and set up 'What's App' groups with colleagues and think about what may happen if pupil numbers and staffing falls. Can we also ask that where schools partially close that you consider taking in pupils of front line staff for example those who work in health, emergency services and the public sector as this will maintain the system to support everyone.

We know this is a very worrying time for you all and will have a direct impact on family and day to day life. Your Senior Education Adviser (SEA) is the contact point and they will be keeping in touch with you during this unprecedented crisis. They will support you and your dedicated staff who look after children at the schools, academies and settings.

We will ensure that regular communication with you takes place but please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Judith Kirk

Assistant Director – Education and Skills