

8th December 2020

Letter to all FCAT parents from Sean Bullen (IDOE) regarding the Government decision for an extra INSET day for staff on Friday 18th December 2020

This will result in all FCAT schools being closed on Friday 18th December 2020

Dear Parent /Carer,

On Tuesday at about 2.45p.m the Government made an announcement recommending that Friday 18th December should be a day when all schools are closed to students, with staff able to complete a remote Training day. Schools across the country will now be following this advice, with different schools running the training in different ways.

The decision has been made to allow an extra break with regard to transmission of the virus and to support test and tracing arrangements over the Christmas Holiday.

The result of the Government recommendation at our FCAT schools is that we will be shut for students on this day. Now, you will already be aware that Friday 18th was going to be a half day anyway, so this Government decision will hopefully not affect your childcare arrangements too much. To support you, our final day, which will now be Thursday 17th December will finish at each schools' normal time, rather than the normal practice at the end of Christmas term of a half day.

Schools will be expecting students to complete half a day of remote learning on the Friday, (a full day would not seem fair on our youngsters!). We apologise for the late notice of this decision, but we only got told yesterday afternoon. FCAT schools may also be having a 'Deep Clean' where required on the Friday.

Below are some key sections from some of the guidance that came out last night.

Department for Education update 7 December 2020

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

End of term planning

We know that school and further education leaders, teachers and staff, as well as nurseries and childminders, have worked tirelessly over the last term. This has included their important role in contact tracing, to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the virus. We are aware that this has led to additional work over weekends and holidays and we are incredibly grateful for this.

We recognise the challenges of this responsibility at the end of term. Public Health England has agreed a 6 day window after the final day of teaching in which schools and further education providers are asked to remain contactable so they can assist with contact tracing where necessary. This will allow enough time for positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in the education setting to be traced. We are clear that beyond 6 days after the final day of teaching, school and further education staff are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing. It is also likely that the need to support the tracing process will reduce dramatically over the course of the 6 days as the majority of cases should be identified earlier in the week.

DFE End of term – advice for schools

To ensure that staff get the time off they need and deserve, schools may wish to use an INSET day, making Friday 18 December a non-teaching day and using the day for staff training, which could be delivered online.

In all circumstances, teaching time must be made up at another point in the academic year. You should not limit attendance at school before Friday 18 December. It remains vital for all children to be in school up to the last day of teaching.

We recognise this communication has arrived with schools late in the term but would ask schools to be as helpful to parents as they can by sharing any changes to end of term arrangements as soon as possible, particularly where schools choose to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day. Your support with this is appreciated.

We recommend all schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

- Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.
- School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. Where a school's last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December.

For the first 6 days after the end of term, schools are not asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing may designate

a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or email). The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline and PHE advice service are available to support with any queries you have about positive cases in your school.

Where pupils are required to self-isolate due to contact with a positive case after the first 6 days following the end of term, schools do not need to be informed about their absence until the first day of the new term.

FCAT arrangements over Christmas

To assist with contact tracing over Christmas, we are setting up an e-mail address which is:- Covidtracing@fcat.org.uk.

If you have a confirmed positive case of your child then you e-mail this address and tell us the name of the student, their year group and contact details for yourselves. You also tell FCAT the name of the school. We will then complete the process of tracing contacts they may have had at school.

Given the impact that contact tracing could have on families over the Christmas period and also the potential for asymptomatic students to mix with wider family members over the 5 days of relaxed rules, it is even more crucial that all of our school community follow our 'Covid Safe' procedures meticulously in the last week of term.

This e-mail address will only be accessed by our staff between 10 and 12 each day up to Tuesday 22nd December. Outside of that time normal national procedures will need to be used. These of course should be used for adults at any time. This service is for information about students only. I would like to thank all our staff for their hardwork this year. However, a particular thanks to all our Headteachers, who when they trained to teach many years ago, could never have imagined the types of decisions they have had to make this year.

We hope you are understanding of this unprecedented situation. If we try to finish on a positive, we at FCAT wish you all the best for this unique Christmas. You may not manage to see all of your friends and family, but we will all be together in spirit. Finally, from all our schools and Headteachers, sincere best wishes for a better 2021.

Sean M. Bullen

FCAT Interim Director of Education