

Dear Colleagues,

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) and REACH2 temporary changes to policy**

As coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) continues to spread, we recognise that the Trust needs to adapt its ways of working to protect the welfare and wellbeing of our staff and pupils.

Therefore, I have outlined some changes which will be effective immediately and which will be in place until further notice. This letter explains the temporary changes and how they affect you, including the circumstances where you may need to take time to look after a dependant. I sincerely hope these help you to recover fully or to look after loved ones who are affected by this dreadful virus.

Please make sure that your school have up to date contact details for you and that your line manager has a telephone number and email address where they can reach you if you are in self-isolation.

#### **Sickness absence - what happened before Coronavirus**

- Under our normal short-term sickness absence policy, if you fall ill and cannot attend work, you would be required to:
  - notify your line manager before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible if that is not practical; and
  - provide medical evidence (typically, a fit note from your doctor) for sickness of more than seven calendar days' absence.
- We would normally begin a formal review of your absence when you reach certain trigger points.

#### **Sickness absence – temporary changes as a result of Coronavirus**

- Following the guidance issued on 16<sup>th</sup> March, please self-isolate and do not attend work for the revised period of fourteen days if you:
  - have contracted coronavirus, or
  - have been to an affected area (identified by the government), or
  - live with someone who has contracted coronavirus, or
  - develop a fever, a particularly high temperature (37.8 degrees or over); and / or a continuous cough, or
  - live with someone who has a particularly a high temperature (37.8 degrees or over); and / or a continuous cough.
- Notify your line manager of your absence before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible.
- If you are in a vulnerable group such as pregnant employees or those with immune or respiratory conditions, and believe you are 'at risk' in the work environment, can we please request the following:
  - Pregnant employees please seek advise from your midwife on the matter.
  - Employees with immune or respiratory conditions to contact NHS 111 or your GP in the first instance.

Following on from the advice you have the option to self-isolate.

You do not have to get medical advice from NHS 111 to self-isolate. However, if your symptoms worsen during self-isolation or are no better after seven days, you should contact NHS online at [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or call NHS 111.

- Avoid going to your doctor or a hospital to prevent infection from spreading.
- You will still be expected to:

- divulge to your line manager what your symptoms are and (any) medical advice you have received; and
- keep in frequent, at least weekly contact with your line manager.
- You will not be required to produce a Fit Note for this period of absence.
- We will not take this absence into account when determining any formal action under our absence management procedure.
- You will need to produce a Fit Note after seven days if the cause of your absence is not related to the coronavirus.

#### **Sick pay – what happened before Coronavirus**

- Teachers and Support staff are entitled to a sliding scale of contractual sick pay based on length of service and their terms and conditions.

#### **Sick pay – temporary changes as a result of Coronavirus**

- You will receive your normal pay for a period of seven days even if you are not normally entitled to contractual sick pay, or if you have exhausted your current entitlement if:
  - we have asked you to stay away from the workplace and self-isolate;
  - you are self-isolating because you have symptoms; or
  - you are self-isolating in response to medical advice from NHS 111, your doctor, or a local health protection team, or
  - you are self-isolating to look after a dependant who resides in your home who has contracted coronavirus, or has developed the symptoms
- You will receive your normal pay for a period of seven days even if you are in your probationary period.
- If you choose not to come to work without a valid reason to self-isolate (see above), you will not be paid.

#### **Flexible working – what happened before Coronavirus**

- If you wish to change your working pattern you are required to make a formal request for flexible working and follow a set procedure.

#### **Flexible working – temporary changes as a result of Coronavirus**

Subject to your line manager's agreement and the needs of the school, you will be able to:

- adapt your working patterns, for example to allow you to travel on public transport at less crowded times; or
- work from home, or change your start and finish time, if your role allows for this.
- This will be for a period of (up to) six weeks without having to follow the formal procedure. You can agree informally with your line manager to these changes and they will be summarised in an email for you.

Please speak to your line manager if you wish to take advantage of this option, the decision remains with your line manager.

- If circumstances change, your line manager will discuss any changes that need to be made, or the withdrawal of the flexible working arrangement. If there is any disagreement, the final decision will be made by the Headteacher or Head of Service.

#### **Requirement to work remotely – what happened before Coronavirus**

- Currently, unless your home is your contractual place of work, you may work from home occasionally with the permission of your line manager.

**Requirement to work remotely – temporary changes as a result of Coronavirus**

- Given the rapidly changing situation, you may be asked to work remotely. This could be the case if a school has to close as a precaution or public health measure, or if an area-wide lockdown, is introduced.
- If it is not possible for you to work from home, please discuss your options with your line manager, further guidance on this will be issued shortly.
- You should familiarise yourself with accessing your usual systems from home and observe the REAch2 Data Protection Policy including GDPR compliance and requirements to keep REAch2 data safe at all times.

**Annual leave – what happened before Coronavirus (Central Team and where applicable in schools)**

Once you have booked annual leave, we may normally allow you to cancel or change annual leave only in certain circumstances.

Normally, if you are Central Staff you are required to take your holiday entitlement before the end of 31 March.

**Annual leave – temporary changes as a result of Coronavirus (Central Team and where applicable in schools)**

During the coronavirus situation, you may find that your holiday is cancelled, or postponed, or that you are unable to travel to your planned destination.

We will do our best to accommodate changes, please speak to your line manager. In some circumstances, e.g. if we have already arranged cover for you, we may require you to take the leave as booked.

If you are unable to take your remaining annual leave before the end of March, due to an increased workload because of the coronavirus situation, you may carry any remaining days over to the next holiday year (which is to be used before 31 August 2020).

I hope that these changes enable us all to deal with the coronavirus outbreak and to minimise any impact across REAch2. Please make sure that your school have up to date contact details for you and that your line manager has a telephone number and email address where they can reach you if you are in self-isolation. Stay healthy, look after yourself, your colleagues and family.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Lancashire'.

**Sir Steve Lancashire**  
**Chief Executive Officer**