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10 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you regarding arrangements for the end of term. As you are aware, we are due to end term in all our schools on Friday 18 December. In recent weeks, there has been a great deal of debate nationally about the potential benefits of closing schools early (and either having a period of online learning or changing school holidays) to reduce the risk of students or staff contracting the virus near to Christmas or having to self-isolate through track and trace. Concerns have also been raised that some school staff must remain “on call” up to and including Christmas Eve to undertake contact tracing if a member of a school community has a positive test between the end of term and Christmas. This also means it is possible a parent will receive a message as late as Christmas Eve, informing them their child is a contact of a positive case and needs to self-isolate, something we obviously all hope will not happen.

The Department for Education have made it very clear that it is expected that schools remain fully open until the end of term and that there should be no changes to term dates or any early move to remote learning. This Tuesday, all schools were contacted by the Department for Education and told that schools would now have their support if they decided to close on Thursday 17 December, rather than 18 December as planned, and designated 18 December as a training day. The purpose of this would be to allow Heads and their teams to stand down from contact tracing on 23 December, rather than on 24 December. If a school chooses to do this, they must then remove a training day later in the year and open to pupils and students on that day.

I spoke at length with the Heads and senior trust leaders yesterday as it is they and their teams who are currently “on duty” up to Christmas Eve. We have taken the unanimous decision that we will not close for a training day on Friday 18 December and term will finish as planned. The reasons behind this decision are as follows:

- Heads and leaders did not feel the disruption such a late change would cause was worthwhile. While nobody wishes to be on call on Christmas Eve, they are willing to accept that responsibility and for that I am enormously grateful.
- Closing at such short notice would cause considerable childcare issues for many of our parents.
- Closing for a single day on Friday 18 December does little to alleviate concerns about people having to self-isolate on Christmas Day as a result of track and trace.
- Closing on Friday 18 December would disrupt mock exams in some of our schools.
- Adding a training day at little more than a week’s notice and removing one later in the year would significantly disrupt our training plans and would run contrary to our commitment to have an effective, high-quality CPD plan. Staff development is one of our most important priorities in ensuring pupils and students have the best teaching possible.



The Education Alliance is a charitable limited company registered in England and Wales No. 7542211 whose registered office is at the above address.



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I hope this helps to clarify our plans and explains the reasons behind the decisions we have taken.

### **Reporting Positive COVID-19 Cases during the Christmas Holiday**

We have also been asked by the DfE to make you aware of the following information and arrangements for reporting any positive cases during the holiday period:

- Where a student tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school (after 3.30pm on Sunday 20 December), the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should instead follow the contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace and further information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> or by calling 119.
- Until 3.30pm on 24 December, if a student tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school (in other words the symptoms started prior to 3.30pm on Sunday 20 December) the school needs to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. If this is the case, please let the school know by emailing [notifyus@southhunsley.org.uk](mailto:notifyus@southhunsley.org.uk) . We will then email anyone identified as a close contact via email/InTouch.
- After 3.30pm on 24 December parents should only contact NHS Test and Trace and not the school.

Thank you again for your continued support in all our schools throughout this term,

Yours faithfully,

Jonny Uttley  
CEO



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