

## On BEHALF OF THE BRAMPTON AREA SCHOOLS CONSORTIUM (BASC)



The ongoing pandemic response continues to challenge all of us and the current pressures on the NHS are significant and worrying. To support the NHS, we have all been asked to stay at home and schools asked to significantly reduce provision. As of this week the guidance states that **children should remain at home if they can**, including those of critical workers. The Director of Health has called on all Cumbrians to **'Stay at Home'** and to recognise that the **primary focus at this point is the preservation of life**.

Guidance on the [role of schools](#) continues to evolve. Schools have been asked to provide education onsite for [some pupils](#), whilst also meeting the aims of the government's statutory expectations on [Remote Learning](#) for those who are not allowed to attend. We must do this until February half-term at the earliest, but may be expected to do so for longer.

It is important to note that some of the governmental guidance is statutory and some non-statutory. Non-statutory guidance is intended to be broad, allowing it to be interpreted and applied to fit individual circumstances.

In Cumbria, and particularly in the Brampton area, there are a wide range of schools, each serving unique communities of staff, pupils and parents. Many rural schools may have fewer than five full-time teaching staff, others thirty or more. In some areas, reliable internet and access to devices is common, in many it is not. Some schools have a significant number of staff and pupils who are vulnerable, clinically or otherwise, whilst others have very few.

Applying the guidance in exactly the same way in all of our schools in this context is clearly impossible. Each setting, through the direction of its own Headteacher and Governing Body must determine what is practical, safe and achievable for them, reflecting the resources they, and their school community, have available. Inevitably, this will differ from school to school and, due to the unpredictable nature of a pandemic, what is possible one week may not be the next.

As heads, we get to know and understand our communities. We know that the lockdown and limited access to school places is frustrating and difficult for our pupils and parents. We are aware that some of you will find the lockdown, and particularly the statutory remote learning expectations, more difficult than others. We understand that learning at home cannot be a satisfactory substitute for being taught on site and that, for many of you, your children returning to school will be your priority. We recognise that anxieties related to the pandemic are manifest in different ways.

We are all looking forward to the time when it is possible for all of our pupils to be welcomed back to our classrooms. That time clearly isn't now, and we must anticipate that it won't be soon either. At this point the overriding message is that all who can Stay at Home should.

This pandemic is not of any of our making, but can be brought under control through people working together, locally and nationally. As local school leaders, we are committed to supporting each other in getting through this, sharing individual challenges, experiences, information and skills, so that we can each help our school communities to get through it too.

Over the coming days and weeks, we will communicate and collaborate with each other whilst working with and for our own school communities to meet the expectations of us all in the broader pandemic response. We will each ensure our schools are safe places for those staff and pupils who must be onsite and we will each use the resources at our disposal to support the best remote provision we are able to for those learning at home.

We accept that this must always be a 'best-fit' approach, unique to our schools, and that it may *not* always be the best fit for individual families. We ask only that, if this is the case, you engage with each of us with openness and patience so we can work with you to find appropriate and practical ways to resolve the problems you face. Together, we'll get through it.

Yours Sincerely,

*D Spencer (Chair), C Reed, L Smith, R Clark, R Stacey, J Dalglish, H Salkeld, K Williamson, C Hutton, C Gosson-Low, L Harrison, A Clarricoats, L Hitchen, L Batey, F Stobbart, & M Ashton.*

**Alston, Bewcastle, Brampton, Castle Carrock, Crosby-on-Eden, Fir Ends, Gilsland, Great Corby, Hallbankgate, Hayton, Irthington, Lanercost, Longtown, Shankhill, Walton & Lees Hill, Warwick Bridge**