b j

CES Newsletter: Issue 18

Gordon.ceslondon@gmail.com www.ceslondon.com



[Date]

[Company name]

This newsletter should be of interest to all teachers, Because of the crisis it will be issued on a weekly basis from now on. This will hopefully mean I can pass on whatever useful information I find and, to be honest, because I am time rich, if income poorer. It will of course be shorter than the usual fortnightly edition.

Congratulations to the team from Magdalen College School who won the inaugural Coronaquiz with an outstanding 147. This was 9 points higher than the next team. If you would like form a team for the next quiz email me and I will send you instructions. I plan to send it out in a fortnight. Gordon.ceslondon@gmail.com.

CONTENT

**The schools section contains articles on;**

* Private schools are in crisis mode about fees
* Do not overload pupils with home learning
* Must work to stop attainment gap growing
* We will not feed pupils over the Easter break
* We need an army of volunteers to support vulnerable young people
* Do not be too generous with assigning GCSE grades
* Tackling the digital divide during lockdown
* Minecraft providing free online lessons
* School closures will exacerbate mental health problems
* School IT systems struggling to cope with the surge in demand
* Private tuition industry is booming

**The higher education section contains articles on;**

* Universities are dismissing staff
* I want to return to China because it is safer
* Do not recruit too many students

**The employment section contains articles on;**

* We need staff
* Doing well out of the crisis
* Pubs to reopen as shops
* Premier league clubs live in a moral vacuum over wages for staff

**The miscellaneous section contains articles on;**

* Online content you may be interested in
* Parental fears
* Child poverty is going to escalate

**SNIPPETS**

**SCHOOLS**

**PRIVATE SCHOOLS ARE IN CRISIS MODE ABOUT FEES**

Julie Robinson, head of the ISC, has said that fees for the summer term could be disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. She said, "Independent schools across the world have been wrestling with the issue of what school fees to charge for the summer term. These fees were set over a year ago but sudden changes to operations caused by the pandemic have thrown normality to the wind and we are all in the process of adapting to a new world in the short and medium term." She said schools did not wish to pass on financial burdens to parents but were also "anxious about the future”. She said, “The schools we have spoken to expect to take losses, painful ones. Most schools do not have large reserves to fall back on. Some schools had sent fee invoices before the government restricted movement. Some schools have not yet invoiced parents and are loath to add to the financial strain on fee-paying families, the majority of whom are dual-income couples with their own financial pressures to consider."

Eton and Marlborough College have said they will cut summer term fees by a third. King's College School Wimbledon has said it will reduce fees by 15% and will refund lunches and coach travel. They will also freeze fees for the autumn term. The Girls' Day School Trust is freezing fees for the autumn term for its 25 schools. Ms Robinson said that many schools were arranging virtual governors’ meetings "to explore ways in which they can mitigate the financial risks of this crisis". Andrew Halls, head of King's College School Wimbledon, said that he expected to ‘weather’ the storm but was postponing any non-essential maintenance work at the current time. He said, "King’s has no endowment, all that it has is what it gets from school fees and any donations we are able to attain. We think that our careful management of resources to date will enable us to weather this storm, but we are postponing non-urgent maintenance and refurbishment work, and looking into the possibility of furloughing employees whose work we may not need while the physical campus is mainly empty."

**DO NOT OVERLOAD PUPILS WITH HOME LEARNING**

[Joint advice](https://bit.ly/2wOF89q) has been published by the NAHT, NEU and the ASCL covering safe staffing, supporting pupils at home, and safeguarding. They stress that this is not “business as usual” and teachers should not be expected to deliver a full school timetable to pupils at home. It urges schools to focus on ensuring children feel safe and supported. It also asks schools to drop formal performance monitoring of staff during the [coronavirus crisis](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/search/coronavirus/). Separate [distance learning guidance](https://neu.org.uk/what-you-need-know-distance-teaching) has been published by the NEU says schools should facilitate a maximum of 2-3 hours’ work a day for home schooled pupils. It also says that routine marking, or grading of work should not be carried out at this time. All bodies warn that it is not feasible to home school the nation’s children.

The joint advice states: “Children in school will not be following a normal timetable, with lessons and homework. The main focus, certainly in the short-term, will be on ensuring that children are safe and supported. In the slightly longer-term, teachers or educators may have more capacity to think about the learning opportunities they can provide to children in school, recognising that this is likely to continue to look very different from a whole-day timetable of structured lessons.” It states that it is not possible to replicate “a usual school experience at home”. Many schools will lack the resources and families will have “very different home circumstances”, with some pupils not having internet access and others having very limited access as parents work from home.

Schools are urged to consider alternative/complementary learning activities that do not require technology. It also says that teachers should not be asked to personally contact individual students, except where there is an agreed system in place for contacting vulnerable pupils. Personal emails or telephones should never be used for this. The guidance adds: “It is extremely important that all schools remind their staff and pupils of their policies for safe internet usage and review whether any specific changes to the policy need to be made to take the new circumstances into account. Schools should also consider setting out a clear statement for parents which details the school’s approach to any home learning and protocols for communication between school and home.” The advice reminds schools that they should not take on the role of social services: “For pupils who are not in school, if schools have safeguarding concerns, these should be reported in the usual way to social services. However, we do not believe that it is the role of school staff to be carrying out home visits. Schools may want to produce a short annex to their safeguarding policies detailing any changes they have put in place during this period.”

Elsewhere, the joint advice urges schools to be mindful of staff workload, saying that where possible, teachers should collaborate to produce home learning materials, while teachers who are working in-school should not be expected to support home learning at the same time. It adds: “Schools need to be mindful that their staff will have demands and pressures of their own, such as childcare and so it may not be possible for them to work a ‘usual’ school day. Schools should not be formally monitoring staff ‘performance’ during this period.” In addition, staff holidays should be operated on a rota system to ensure all staff get two weeks off at some point during or after Easter. It also states, “We do not expect schools to open on Good Friday or Easter Monday.”

The NEU urge a focus on “bite-sized chunks of work” which are more likely to be completed and could be part of a bigger project. It says that the live streaming of lessons should not be done from teachers’ homes and that teachers should not be expected to carry out routine marking or grading at this time. For secondary schools it advises; “Set tasks that can be completed to varying degrees of success with more complex and additional tasks for the most able pupils. Tasks that require little or no access to technology are preferable in order to cater for everyone.” For heads it advises; “A maximum of two to three hours of ‘work’ per day is plenty and will keep minds active but enthusiastic. Getting children to help with household activities such as washing, cooking and gardening are educational, as is watching some ‘good’ television or online streams, such as documentaries and drama.”

Dr Mary Bousted, joint head of the NEU, said: “Teachers cannot be working as though they are sat in front of a class, and children cannot be expected to be able to study full time with online resources. Similarly, parents, many of whom will also be working from home, cannot be expected to be supervising heavy school workloads for their children. Teachers working at home must be given workloads which are reasonable and sustainable, and this must be negotiated with the staff. Normal education is currently suspended, and teachers should not be teaching a full timetable, or routinely marking work. Many schools and colleges have already adopted a sensible approach to schoolwork and engagement with students. Some have not, so it is essential that all heads and leadership teams ensure neither school staff, parents or students are overwhelmed and confused by unrealistic expectations and workload.” The DfE said that it will publish shortly further guidance to schools on safeguarding arrangements.

**MUST WORK TO STOP THE ATTAINMENT GAP GROWING**

Susannah Hardyman, CEO of the charity Action Tutoring, who work with schools to deliver tutoring programmes to bridge the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, has said that it is inevitable that coronavirus will widen the attainment gap between rich and poor. She notes that it has led to unprecedented demand from affluent parents for private tutoring, an industry a sector with an annual income of more than £2bn. She then asks what happens to the 28% of pupils eligible for the [Pupil Premium](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/pupil-premium/694340/), noting that many will not have access to high bandwidth broadband to facilitate remote learning, or space to work easily in cramped accommodation.

Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to meet expected standards in reading, writing and maths at primary school, 47%-68% and 75,000 disadvantaged children leave school without basic qualifications in English and maths. Currently only 25% of this group gain a Grade 5 -9 in both English and maths GCSEs, compared to 49.9% of all other pupils. She says that motivation is a key challenge, because “we all know that it is far easier to engage with a pupil in person than it is to motivate them to work online, especially if their parents are not available to support and encourage them or if that child is struggling academically. Attendance of online sessions will, I believe, be very difficult to enforce or even encourage”.

Ms Hardyman then says that 1-1 tutoring can be an effective intervention that can play a big role in raising attainment and calls on the government to provide catch-up funding in addition to the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils once schools re-open. She says that this would enable schools to provide extra support such as additional tuition for disadvantaged pupils and to help prevent them from falling even further behind. She then does a plug for her own organisation saying that 87% of Action Tutoring’s student cohort is eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

**WE WILL NOT FEED CHILDREN OVER THE EASTER BREAK**

The government has [confirmed its plans to issue £15 weekly supermarket vouchers](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coronavirus-dfe-confirms-plans-for-15-a-week-free-school-meal-vouchers/) to families for pupils who would normally qualify for free lunches. However, the DfE said the scheme will not run through the Easter holidays, despite pleas from campaigners about holiday hunger at a time when many more families are likely to be suffering financially. Schools have been told they must remain open during the break if possible to continue to care for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers but said that it is up to schools if they want to provide their own meals service during Easter. No extra funding for such provision will be provided.

Kevin Courtney, joint head of the NEU, said, “This isn’t a normal school holiday and we are asking teachers and support staff to volunteer to work, in support of the NHS. Families on low incomes will need access to school meals during this fortnight, particularly as food banks are seriously overstretched and it is much harder to shop affordably at the moment.” He said official figures show that 4.2m children are trapped in poverty and said this was “likely to rise when the current public health crisis subsides”. He added, “Food vouchers might be the only realistic and manageable intervention for many schools at the moment, but we mustn’t normalise the idea of food provision to poorer families. We must banish food poverty once the health crisis is over, through better wages and secure employment.” Sam Freedman, a former DfE adviser and now chief executive of the Education Partnerships Group, tweeted that expecting schools to be open at Easter but not funding free meals over the holidays was “not ok”.

The Headteachers’ Roundtable think tank has launched a #FSM4Easter campaign calling for the government to fund Easter food. It said that providing £30 vouchers to cover the two weeks of Easter for the 1,247,409 pupils entitled to free school meals would cost around £37.5m and that, “At a time hundreds of billions of pounds have rightly been used to support companies, employees and the self-employed the figure is relatively small; the impact for families would be immense. For disadvantaged families an additional £30 per child arriving immediately cannot be understated. School governors and staff, working in the heart of their communities, know the additional impact of COVID-19 on families who for years have been struggling. We are in this together; we have to be in this together but especially for our most needy families, children and young people.”

**NEED AN ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS TO HELP SUPORT CHILDREN**

The children’s commissioner has called for an army of volunteers to support [children’s social care](https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/children) in an effort to stop the most vulnerable falling through the gaps and disappearing from view. Anne Longfield called for retired social workers and a range of school, nursery and care staff who have been furloughed to join forces to help keep at-risk children safe. Ms Longfield warned that existing resources were overstretched and called for a national plan for workers to sign up to support children’s social care. She said, “The system of support for the most vulnerable children has been under strain for some time. We know the numbers going into care have been going up. We know councils have been saying they need £3bn extra just to stand still. We can’t put that all right. It is where it is. But that just means there’s additional strains on a system that will find it difficult to respond at high speed under this kind of stress. Staffing that is already stretched will be even more stretched.”

The aim is to recruit about 200 volunteers in each local authority, 30,000 in all, who will have DBS checks, and experience. Ms Longfield said there were an estimated 1m vulnerable children; “Those might be children who have or have had a social worker in the past couple of years, in households which are not stable, where there are things like domestic violence, addiction to drugs and alcohol and severe mental health issues. That’s a lot of children, those who are on the edge of services which are going to be under ever greater pressure. School for them is a real protective factor. They get a couple of hot meals a day, they get that structure, that support and that will be lost.”

Ms Longfield said there were schools serving disadvantaged communities who already operated as high-functioning community centres and were in close contact with their vulnerable families. “But that will not be the same for every school. Not all schools have that engagement with the community or even see it as their role.” She said, “I don’t want any child to be harmed because of coronavirus. I don’t want any child to go hungry because of coronavirus. I don’t think we can let children pay the price for this terrible health emergency. We have to step up and make the very bold moves that we’ve seen in terms of some of the employment and fiscal decisions over the last week, and actually put the kind of support in place for these children that makes sure that they’re safe and stable and get the support they need during this time.”

The DfE said powers enabled by the Coronavirus Act would allow social workers who have recently left the profession to return to work, including those who have retired, without any negative repercussions to their pensions. Social Work England has launched a drive to bring up to 8,000 former practitioners back into the profession. [Children](https://www.theguardian.com/society/children) and families minister Vicky Ford said government had also given local authorities £1.6bn to help deal with coronavirus, including to spend on social care.

**DO NOT BE GENEROUS WITH ASSIGNING GCSE GRADES**

The ASCL has warned against giving pupils the benefit of the doubt in awarding more grade 4s than students would normally have achieved. Duncan Baldwin, ASCL deputy policy director, said, "It is understandable that teachers might want to give more students the benefit of the doubt by, for example, awarding more grade 4s than they might otherwise have obtained. This would be wrong for several reasons”. He said that Ofqual and exam boards would take steps to ensure grade distributions resembled previous years' results, and that "where centres produce grades which seem particularly generous, a moderation process will be applied". Mr Baldwin said, "Assuming that things head back to normal for the 2021 cohort, an inflated picture in 2020 would disadvantage those students currently in Year 10 and Year 12. They have enough to contend with having had their own studies disrupted. This is an opportunity for the profession as a whole to show that it can, and will, produce reasonable grades through the process of teacher assessment. For those who believe that the current system of examinations at 16 is inappropriate there is a chance here to show that an alternative universe is possible."

Mr Baldwin said there were "difficult ethical issues" associated with allocating grades, such as historic differences in the performance of girls and boys, and between disadvantaged pupils and their wealthier peers. But he cautioned that "whilst we should as a profession be exercised about the inequalities which are present in the system, this is not the moment or the method to put it right". He said, "Teachers should ask themselves the question 'What grade would this particular student most plausibly have achieved if they were taking the exam?'. This is not to be confused with a target grade, which might have an inflationary effect if used instead."

ASCL advised heads to use DfE data on national performance for their subject and said that schools that tended to perform better than the average from year to year would be moderated accordingly. It also said that teachers could use [www.ascl.smidreport.com](http://www.ascl.smidreport.com/) to check how their school and subject performed against national outcomes. The ASCL added that, "On a practical note, ASCL would advise teachers and leaders that they should not be seeking any further work from students at this point to support teacher-assessed grades. Not all students will be able to respond; some will be ill whilst others will be living under more difficult circumstances at home. We believe the priorities for pupils in Year 11 and 13 are to ensure that they complete the curriculum in the subjects which they wish to pursue in the following year, not to add collateral to the assessment process."

**TACKLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE DURING LOCKDOWN**

Teach First has said that school closures may result in pupils from deprived backgrounds falling further behind and called for them to be given free tablets and laptops as well as unlimited internet data. Bottom of Form

A survey of 6,249 teachers by Teacher Tapp found that only 2% of those working in the most disadvantaged schools believe all their pupils have adequate access to devices for online learning. Pupils from poorer families are already on average 18 months behind the rest of the class in academic achievement by the age of 16. Teach First is calling for internet providers to offer free access to WiFi hotspots, lift data caps and install broadband in the homes of students that do not currently have access, and for tech companies to donate or offer free-leasing of internet-enabled devices.

Russell Hobby, head of Teach First, said: “Home schooling is difficult for any family, but for children with limited access to a laptop or the internet the barriers to studying are much greater.” He added: "All teachers and parents are working hard, but they need wider society’s help to make sure the most vulnerable children don’t get left behind."

Lizzie Pocklington, science teacher at Nottingham Academy said: “Sadly many of my pupils simply don’t have access to the internet or devices to help them study at home. We’ve been working really hard to print out home learning packs and send them to students who can’t get online, but it’s making an already challenging job even harder and I’m worried they’re going to fall behind other children.” She added: “In an ideal world we’d be having daily phone calls with students who can’t access online resources but that just isn’t logistically possible. For now, we just have to try and ensure that they’re learning the best they can with what they have at home.”

However, one of the largest academy trusts in the country has decided to invest £2m in the provision of devices for poorer pupils while schools are closed. The Academies Enterprise Trust is to purchase 9,000 additional chrome-books and devices for pupils with an EHCP and those eligible for free school meals (FSM). The trust has set up Google Classroom for all 32,000 pupils in its schools. The investment will mean it has 16,000 devices, 1,500 of which are for staff. The remaining 14,500 will be prioritised for FSM and EHCP pupils, representing around 25% of the total cohort. These devices will be available to pupils at the start of the summer term. The trust has also provided training for staff on how to use Google tools for digital learning, and created 15 days of live streaming lessons for Years 5 and 6 and Year 10 and 11 in English and maths since the outbreak of Covid-19.

**MINECRAFT PROVIDING FREE ONLINE LESSONS**

Minecraft is making its 12 digital education lessons available to download for free until the end of June. They include tours of the International Space Station and the inside of a human eye, which "can be played on your own, or with parents or friends". Other lessons include puzzle games to teach students how to code and think like programmers,

and a game about generating power from alternative energy sources, such as wind and nuclear

**SCHOOL CLOSURES WILL EXACERBATE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Experts have said that vulnerable young people could be at greater risk of mental health problems amid lengthy school closures. They said that a lack of structure and routine is already taking its toll on young people’s mental health and psychotherapists say it could get worse as lockdown measures continue. Meanwhile, [Childline](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/childline) reported a huge spike in the number of counselling sessions relating to coronavirus.

Alison Roy, from the Association of Child Psychotherapists, said, “For older children, it is a huge loss. So much of their focus and structure has disappeared overnight. For younger children, the opportunity to play face-to-face, to be tactile and to be close has disappeared overnight, and that is a huge loss to them, and suddenly they have been thrown into an online world. “My worry is for all those children who are already withdrawn, and who don’t believe that anyone can really help them, that they will no longer have the structure and routine of school to keep them safe.” She said that the word ‘lockdown has triggered trauma among children in care who have experienced abuse. She added, Bottom of Form

“My worry is that we may not be preparing frontline staff who may also need to do some face-to-face work in order to prevent a mental health crisis as a result of the pandemic.”

Most children who received Childline sessions said they were worried about their mental health due to the removal of support from school and the NHS, isolation and arguments at home. Another issue was family relationships. One girl told Childline: “It scares me to think this will go on for months. [My mum] constantly talks about the coronavirus and my anxiety is getting worse.” Esther Rantzen, founder of Childline, said: “We are hearing from children who have been cut off from vital support networks such as school and friends, and that has increased their feelings of loneliness and vulnerability. They may have pre-existing mental health issues, which are exacerbated by the current crisis.” Natasha Devon, the former DfE mental health tsar, said she was in a school last week and during a break students rushed to look at the death toll from the virus on their devices. She said, “It was the first thing they thought to do. I said to them if they are feeling anxious anyway, then constantly checking is not going to help.” She added that the cancellation of exams had also left students feeling anxious, saying; “Generation Z have been clinging to the things they believe they have the power to control. That is why you see lots of compulsive behaviour about body image and their academic performance. Suddenly one of those things has been taken away, so I can understand why that would unleash a tidal wave of feelings”.

School leaders and mental health services are hoping to increase the number of check-ins with vulnerable children in the upcoming weeks to ensure young people still get support amid closures. Geoff Barton, ASCL head, said: “We are living in an age of anxiety. Schools were giving the kind of reassurance that routines give, and then suddenly that was taken away from everybody and that is bound to lead to much greater uncertainty.”

**SCHOOL IT SYSTEMS STRUGGLING TO COPE WITH SURGE IN DEMAND**

School IT systems are struggling to cope with a surge in demand as learning has moved online during the [coronavirus](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/coronavirus) outbreak, with the ASCL saying that [technology](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/Technology) in many schools is like the “dark ages” compared with other sectors. Geoff Barton, head of the ASCL, said, “Time in lots of schools will have stood still as the technology has developed around us.” Andy Webster, head of Park View School in Tottenham, said they had two significant hardware failures lasting hours after introducing virtual lessons. He said, “It only takes one device to fail and then the whole system dies and the kids don’t have any learning. We don’t have any spare money for network upgrades. We don’t want the provision to stop. We don’t want the students sitting at home kicking their heels. It really feels like we are treading on eggshells. Everything is running at complete stress. It was never designed to work this way.”

Ruth Wilkes, head of Castle Newnham School in Bedford, said: “The difficulty has been that the absolute volume of traffic has caused those systems to be very slow. We are having to deal with a lot of technical enquiries. We have advised pupils to use the time to work on things they have already got in their books.” Mark Cottingham, head of Shirebrook Academy near Mansfield, said: “One of the issues is we employ a company who do our IT and they are pulling their technicians to home working. We will have no technician in school, which will be interesting.”

James Bowen, director of policy for the NAHT, said: “Schools will be in different places and some will have better technology than others. Schools are also acutely aware that not all families will have equal access to technology at home. It’s important to remember that home learning doesn’t all have to be on a computer: tasks can be set, like writing a daily diary, and activities can be interactive based on items most families will have in the home already.”

**PRIVATE TUITION INDUSTRY IS BOOMING**

UK tutoring firms say there had been a surge in online tuition, whilst several agencies said some wealthy families had requested tutors go into isolation with them on remote country estates or super-yachts. Leo Evans, a co-founder of [The Profs](https://www.theprofs.co.uk/), a tuition firm that works with around 2,000 schoolchildren and 3,000 university students internationally, said that the number of daily users of its online classroom platform [BitPaper](https://www.bitpaper.io/) had risen more than sixfold in two weeks, from 5,000 to 32,000 .He said, “There were 11,000 hours of online classes on Monday, almost a fifteenfold rise from 750 hours on 2 March. It’s absolutely exploded since the coronavirus.”

Hannah Titley, founder of [the Golden Circle](https://goldencircletutors.co.uk/), which has about 80 home- schooled and several hundred after-school students, said all lessons were now being taught online, compared with 10% a few weeks ago. She said, “There’s been a huge shift, most home-schooled students in London have transitioned to online learning this week, and those families who can are staying in the countryside. This week 16 new home schoolers have joined. We have another 11 starting after the Easter break.” Will Chambers, founder of [Bramble](https://about.bramble.io/index.html), an online tutoring platform, said the number of daily users has risen by over 2,000%, many are elderly tutors concerned that home schooling could put them at risk of infection. Adam Caller, founder of [Tutors International](https://www.tutors-international.com/), which caters to rich families, said, “We’ve seen a sudden rush, especially from Switzerland. They’re looking for tutors who are willing to come and be locked in. One family has relocated from an area affected by the Covid-19 outbreak in northern Italy to [St Moritz](https://www.tutors-international.net/advert/483) in the Swiss Alps. Another family, from Dubai, want to go and hide on their super-yacht in the Mediterranean. It’s paying £24,000 a month to the tutor.” Mark MacLaine, founder of [Tutorfair](https://www.tutorfair.com/), said one tutor had gone into isolation with a family in upstate New York, and another family who had flown to the Caribbean to escape the outbreak were now receiving online tuition.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITIES ARE DISMISSING STAFF**

Hundreds of university staff on fixed and temporary contracts have been sacked in a drive to cut costs due to the coronavirus pandemic. Staff, including visiting lecturers, researchers and student support workers, at Bristol, Newcastle and Sussex universities have been made redundant or told their employment will or may end prematurely, or not be renewed. Universities face [a black hole of hundreds of millions of pounds in fees](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/06/uk-universities-face-cash-black-hole-coronavirus-crisis), with international students from China and other countries cancelling or postponing enrolments. Universities rely heavily on staff on short-term contracts: over [50% are in insecure employment](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10336/Counting-the-costs-of-casualisation-in-higher-education-Jun-19/pdf/ucu_casualisation_in_HE_survey_report_Jun19.pdf), according to the UCU, who have written to Gavin Williamson asking for all staff, including those on short-term contracts, to be protected by its furlough scheme.

Sussex University VC, Adam Tickell, emailed department heads last week warning that “immediate action” was required to safeguard its finances. Its director of finance, Allan Spencer, was told to terminate the employment of all tutors on fixed-term contracts and agency staff, and to freeze recruitment indefinitely, including for posts where job offers have been made but not yet formally accepted. Newcastle University has [sent out redundancy notices](https://academicirregularities.wordpress.com/2020/03/29/in-which-we-serve-universities-in-lockdown/) to academics on fixed-term contracts. Bristol University has dismissed 84 staff on temporary and short-term contracts. In an email to the affected workers, the temporary staffing service manager said their contracts would end early on 9 April due to the pandemic.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady said: “Universities should suspend any dismissals for at least the period of the crisis and then review staff needs. Staff dismissed at this time will find it almost impossible to secure alternative employment whilst the crisis continues. Furlough arrangements should apply to all staff, including those on insecure contracts, and the government should extend the one-year visa extension for NHS staff to cover people working in our colleges and universities. The government should underwrite funding at current levels and guarantee no institution will go to the wall.”

A Bristol University spokesman said they had decided to end the temporary and casual worker contracts early where they could not work from home, or where the work was ‘not essential’ to teaching or research. He added: “These staff were given two weeks’ notice instead of the usual one week.” A Sussex University spokesman said the cost-cutting measures will end the use of temporary agency staff, adding, “All fixed term contract payments will be honoured till the end of the contract and then reviewed before the end of the term to determine if the contract will be extended.”

**I WANT TO RETURN TO CHINA BECAUSE IT IS SAFER**

Chinese students, who make up [a third](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jan/16/third-of-non-eu-university-students-in-uk-come-from-china) of non-European international students, are making desperate attempts to go back home. They say that the government’s ill-fated initial [‘herd immunity](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/herd-immunity-will-the-uks-coronavirus-strategy-work)’ had caused huge panic and that the lockdown has come too late. 70 Chinese students from universities including Cardiff, Birmingham, Warwick, UCL and Edinburgh used a WeChat group to club together with their parents and charter a China Southern flight to Guangzhou. However, because China has introduced new flight restrictions, the students are unable to fly.

Joe Sucksmith, visa and immigration officer at [Gloucestershire](https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityofgloucestershire) University, said: “It is perfectly understandable to want to be with your family at this time of crisis. But many Chinese students also feel they will be safer there because there has been a much stricter and faster government response in China. For instance, if you have symptoms you will be tested.” Prof Colin Riordan, VC of Cardiff University, said: “I would say the bulk of our Chinese students have decided they want to go home. Clearly the epidemic is still approaching its height here, whereas in China it is on a downward trend. And it is natural to want to be with one’s family at a time of crisis.”

Universities are also taking various measures to support international students. Cardiff is offering to pack up students’ rooms and store possessions for them if they left in a hurry and will not be returning next term. It is also not charging students in its halls any rent if they aren’t here next term. The VC said, “We are pressing our private accommodation providers to follow suit. No one expected this to happen, and we don’t feel it is right to be charging students if they won’t be here.” He has also issued an appeal for staff volunteers to help make phone calls to the roughly 700 students still on campus. He said, “We’ve had a great response, some of it is really just about showing students there are human beings here and we are doing everything we can to support them.”

At UWE a bank of volunteer staff are calling the 1,000 [students still on campus](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/24/thousands-of-students-stranded-at-university-because-of-uk-lockdown). As well as international students they include students who didn’t want to [put their elderly parents at risk](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/16/going-home-puts-my-parents-at-risk-students-hit-by-coronavirus-upheaval), care leavers and young people who are estranged from their families. Prof Steve West, UWE VC, has issued a video message to students, urging them to look out for each other and be kind. He said, “We have to understand that students will go through all sorts of emotional challenges over the next few months. There are months of disruption ahead. [Students](https://www.theguardian.com/education/students) quite rightly want certainty and they want structure. I can give them some of that, but I can’t give them everything.” Dr Dominique Thompson, who was a GP at Bristol [University](https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityofbristol) for 20 years, said: “A student bedroom is a small space, maybe only a single bed and a desk with a chair. Being stuck in there if you can’t go home can be challenging.” Thompson is worried that the virus will cause anxiety symptoms to worsen among young people. That feeling of powerlessness that this is giving us all may be overwhelming, particularly for students who are a long way from home.” She advised those on campus to continue some sort of routine, including exercise and contacting others. She said, “It’s really hard to concentrate at the moment but even half an hour using your brain will make you feel better and think ahead to when this is over. If you’d like to travel, look up websites and create an imaginary itinerary.”

Christopher Tucker, director of residence life at [Edinburgh University](https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityofedinburgh), said his team had a list of everyone still on campus who may need extra mental health support, and would call them twice a week. They are also asking students to notify them if they are worried about their flatmates. He said, “At this stage we have to treat everyone as anxious. Normally we can see the state of someone’s bedroom and there are visual clues about how they are managing. We are having to do that through Skype, which is harder. Often people play down what they are going through, so we have to listen and look for clues.”

Prof West said universities were also wrestling with the opposite challenge: young people who feel invincible and may not understand why it matters to maintain physical distance on campus. “He said, “Our security team is telling students that it isn’t just about them: you may feel well, but you could still be infecting people. I put it bluntly, you may save your friend’s or parent’s life.”

**DO NOT RECRUIT TOO MANY STUDENTS**

Universities are to face limits on how many students they can recruit, in a bid to create more stability and reduce financial threats. There are concerns that the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus could leave some universities with too few applicants to stay financially viable. UUK head Alistair Jarvis was cautious about number controls saying, "There would need to be a clear case of the benefits, any proposal would have to be sector-led not imposed, strictly time-limited and carefully crafted to avoid unintended consequences." But the VC of Sheffield Hallam University, Sir Chris Husbands, said student number controls were necessary during the current crisis "to ensure that institutions have a viable first-year-student population". He said, "radical action is needed on university admissions for the foreseeable future. This means suspending the market in admissions". There has been no information on what would happen if universities have offered more places than they will be allowed to provide.

There is huge uncertainty, with fears that many students might defer entry and take a gap year, and universities unsure whether they will be able to re-open campuses for the autumn. Universities are also expecting a fall in overseas students making funding from home students even more important. There are also concerns that the volatility around this year's applications could leave some universities with such a shortage of students that it would threaten their financial stability. Nick Hillman, director of HEPI, said: "The crisis is fast becoming the catalyst for the return of student number caps. Reintroducing number caps would protect those universities that have grown the most in recent years by locking down the number of home students that they educate and stopping others from growing at their expense. Older, more prestigious universities would be the biggest losers, as they had hoped to be able to replace lost international students with more home students”. He warned that it might bring short-term stability, but at the expense of stopping the expansion of university places and limiting the choices of individual students. OFS has told universities to stop making unconditional offers, after fears that some were recruiting large numbers of students by promising places regardless of their grades. A DfE spokeswoman said the department would "continue working closely with the sector to manage the impact of coronavirus".

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**EMPLOYMENT**

**WE NEED STAFF**

Despite much of the economy closing down some businesses are doing well and need staff.

**Retail**

Sales up 21% over the month and supermarkets are recruiting thousands of extra workers, with applicants sometimes starting work on the same day as applying. Tesco recruited more than 35,000 extra people in 10 days in March.

**Farming**

Farms are urgently looking for fruit and vegetable pickers, as there is a shortage of seasonal labour. The work is typically done by migrants coming in for short-term work, but a combination of Brexit and the coronavirus crisis has meant fewer people are coming in. The roles start between the end of April and early May,  harvesting crops on placements from six weeks to six months. [British Summer Fruits has an interactive map](https://www.britishsummerfruits.co.uk/jobs) of available jobs.

**Transport and logistics**

Applicants for driving or warehouse operations are urgently in demand as lockdown has prompted a surge in home deliveries. Morrisons is recruiting 2,500 pickers and drivers, and a further 1,000 staff in its distribution centres. Other retailers, including Ocado, Lidl and Iceland, are also recruiting warehouse operatives and delivery drivers.

**Food**

Fox Biscuits has [made an urgent appeal for more workers](https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/business/help-us-feed-nation-owner-foxs-biscuits-makes-urgent-appeal-new-workers-2521803?__hstc=85309766.fab7cb3fc5e3bef5b03b9fea0f4902bd.1583327255556.1585571696317.1585680889221.7&__hssc=85309766.1.1585680889221&__hsfp=722952531) in response to soaring demand. 2 Sisters Food Group, which make ready meals and processes a third of all chicken consumed in the UK, is recruiting for factory and logistics jobs.

**Care workers**

Care workers are vital and there was already a shortage even before Covid-19 took hold. Caremark is urgently recruiting 2,000 care workers to support elderly and vulnerable clients in their homes. Home care provider Cera has created 10,000 full-time permanent jobs and says applicants can start earning in as little as 10 days.

**Call workers**

Virgin Media is creating 500 new UK call centre jobs to meet very high customer call volumes. The roles, both permanent and fixed-term basis, are based in Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester and Teeside.

**Pharmacy**

Lloyds Pharmacy has 1,500 sites and is currently looking to recruit 1,500 more. It is contacting third and fourth year students at Schools of Pharmacy, and has already taken on some students on short-term contracts.

**DOING WELL OUT OF THE CRISIS**

Some companies are doing very well out of the crisis. Sectors that are booming include:

**1. Bicycles and exercise gear**

Whether for exercise or for a safer means of travel, bicycle sales are increasing. speeding up. The folding bike company Brompton said that sales across the industry are up around 15%. The London Cycle Workshop is twice as busy as normal, servicing older bikes for customers. Halfords is reporting a rise in sales of exercise bikes.

**2. Outdoor and indoor games**

John Lewis has seen a "significant uplift" in home gym equipment. Games supplier Andy Beresford says his entire stock of outdoor table tennis tables is sold and a delivery due this week is pre-sold. He said, "I've sold 124 tables in the last week, in the same week last year, I sold just 15." His business Home Leisure Direct has also sold an "awful lot" of pool tables. His pool table stock has halved from 500 to 250. However, as much stock is imported from France, Spain and Italy the company is likely to have to close down soon.

**3. Home and garden items**

JustSeed in Wrexham, which sells a wide range of plant seeds, has had to stop taking orders after a rush for staples including carrots, lettuce, beans and tomatoes. Two of the biggest seed companies, Marshalls and Suttons, have stopped answering the phone. Indoors, more people are taking up sewing and knitting. London department store Liberty says sales of sewing accessories are up 380% on last year, while purchases of their craft kits have risen 228%.

**4. Reading matter**

Huge rise in fiction and nonfiction sales. No 2 in Amazon UK’s chart of most sold books of the week is The Eyes of Darkness by Dean Koontz. Although it was written in 1981, it describes a virus called Wuhan-400, in what appears to be an uncanny prediction of the coronavirus. Another bestseller is the Plague by Albert Camus. Its sales in the last week of February were 150% up on last year and it is in reprint. Its sales have also risen sharply in France and Italy.

**5. Electrical goods**

Freezer and fridge sales have boomed. There is a rush for laptops and home office equipment, as well as home entertainment e.g. TVs, gaming consoles, sales up 23%.

**PUBS TO REOPEN AS SHOPS**

Around 2,000 [pubs](https://inews.co.uk/topic/pubs) across the UK have subscribed to a national scheme that will see them become grocers selling essential items such as eggs, bread, and milk. Greene King, Admiral Taverns, and St Austell have agreed to allow [tenants](https://inews.co.uk/news/coronavirus-uk-police-mobilised-shut-down-pubs-restaurants-defy-orders-close-2504499) to run food shops under the new ‘My Pub Shop’ initiative. Bottom of Form

The initiative comes from online trading platform StarStock, which has also partnered with Brakes food service, Coca Cola UK, and industry supporter Use Your Local to build the network.

Brakes, one of the biggest [food](https://inews.co.uk/topic/supermarkets) wholesalers, supplies more than 15,000 pubs across the country and said it would be able to deliver food to additional participants if they also sign up. They are offering a food shop ‘starter kit’, consisting of basic food and drink products. They will charge a 2% transaction fee to cover operational costs but said the venture is being run as a non-profit, with profits donated to the NHS. Kevin Georgel, CEO at St Austell Brewery, said, "We are delighted to support the mypubshop.com initiative. Not only does it provide our tenants with a great technology platform to drive sales during the period our pubs are closed, it also supports them in their ongoing mission to serve their local communities." Admiral Taverns CEO, Chris Jowsey, said: “We are doing everything we can to support our [pub operators](https://inews.co.uk/news/business/pubs-and-restaurants-fight-for-survival-in-lockdown-2522011) through this extremely challenging period and this was a no-brainer." Greene King MD, Wayne Shurvinton, said: “We have been working around the clock to offer support to our partners and teaming up with StarStock gives our publicans the tools to step forward to help their communities.” The scheme will also allow pubs to set up websites with basic details of their new grocery enterprise and customers will be asked to order food online and collect goods in pubs. StarStock founder Sam Ulph said the aim is to keep communities connected, while also providing a revenue stream for premises shut down during the coronavirus pandemic. He said it will also alleviate pressure on existing grocery shops and supermarkets.

**PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS LIVE IN A MORAL VACUUM OVER WAGES**

Julian Knight, chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committee, has condemned the actions of some Premier League clubs who have furloughed non-playing staff, with [Tottenham](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52105337), [Newcastle](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52098392), Bournemouth and [Norwich](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52114292) going for the government's job retention scheme. He said, "It sticks in the throat. This exposes the crazy economics in English football and the moral vacuum at its centre." Bournemouth have said that ["a number of staff" would be furloughed,](https://www.afcb.co.uk/news/club-news/club-statement-covid-19-update/) while the club's chief executive Neill Blake, first-team technical director Richard Hughes, manager Eddie Howe and assistant manager Jason Tindall have taken "significant, voluntary pay cuts". The PFA has written to all of its members urging them not to agree any reduction or deferral in wages until they have spoken to the union. The letter says, "The PFA requested to see each club's financial situation before we offer advice to players on whether to accept the terms offered. Before accepting or signing any paperwork from your club, it is vitally important that squads collectively discuss proposals with the PFA."

Sadiq Khan said to the BBC, "My view is always that those who are the least well-off should get the most help. Highly paid football players are people who can carry the greatest burden and they should be the first ones to, with respect, sacrifice their salary, rather than the person selling the programme or the person who does catering or the person who probably doesn't get anywhere near the salary some of the Premier League footballers get. It should be those with the broadest shoulders who go first because they can carry the greatest burden and have probably got savings, rather than those who work in catering or hospitality who have probably got no savings and live week by week and who probably won’t get the government benefits for five weeks."

[The Job Retention Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#who-can-claim) means the government will pay staff placed on furlough 80% of their wages, to a maximum of £2,500 a month. Mr Knight said about premier league teams, "This isn't what it's designed for. It's not designed to effectively allow them to continue to pay people hundreds of thousands of pounds, while at the same time furloughing staff on hundreds of pounds. I don't know whether or not the Treasury can legally turn down these applications. But I think football needs to have a good, long, hard look at itself and see whether or not morally this is really right and whether or not actually what they need to do is come to an arrangement with some of their stars so they can continue to pay their non-playing staff 100% of their wages rather than furloughing them on 80%."

Players at Leeds United have [volunteered to take a wage deferral](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52048216) while Birmingham City players who earn more than £6,000 a week have been [asked to take a 50% cut](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52022741) for the next four months. In Europe, [Barcelona players have taken a 70% pay cut](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52092809) while Juventus players and manager Maurizio Sarri have agreed to [freeze their pay](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52079747) for four months. Brighton chief executive Paul Barber said, "It's a very difficult time for everybody and I can fully understand why people think that the football industry and particularly the Premier League has got a lot of cash. In many cases that's not the case, it's a bit of a myth, but what we have to do is protect jobs. We’re doing whatever we can to do that and that’s the priority at the moment for just about every industry in the country, including ours."

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**ONLINE CONTENT YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN**

**Children**

* Audible, part of Amazon, has released hundreds of free audiobooks for children kept home from school. Go to [stories.audible.com/start-listen](https://stories.audible.com/start-listen)
* Rosetta Stone is giving free access for children to use its language courses for the next three months, saving parents the usual £50 fee. Go to [rosettastone.co.uk/lp/freeforkids/](https://www.rosettastone.co.uk/lp/freeforkids/).
* The former Countdown star Carol Vorderman has made her learning programme the Maths Factor, an online maths tutoring site for 4-11yr olds, free for everyone for the duration of schools’ closure.
* Khan Academy Kids ([Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.khankids.android)/[Apple](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/khan-academy-kids/id1378467217)/[Amazon](http://go.theguardian.com/?id=114047X1572903&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.co.uk%2FKhan-Academy-Kids-BETA%2Fdp%2FB07FDP9QCB%2F&sref=https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/mar/29/learning-apps-for-stir-crazy-kids-while-schools-are-closed)) is a free collection of education courses for all ages, but it has an app specifically for 2-7yr old children that focuses on maths, reading and social and emotional skills. It has a large and growing archive of learning videos, digital books and exercises.
* YouTube Kids has a dedicated learning space collecting videos about science, nature, space and other topics.
* ScratchJr is an app version designed for 5-7yr olds. It uses coding blocks to create programs for games, animation, music and other creative tasks.
* Google Arts & Culture. Has virtual tours of over 1,200 museums and galleries. Children can look and read as well as curate their own lists of favourite artworks to share.
* Swift Playgrounds teaches people how to use Apple’s own programming language. It’s for adults as well as children, with its lessons presented as coding puzzles that will give people the skills needed to start making their own apps and games. It’s on Apple’s iPad, but not (yet) its iPhone.

**Adults and older children**

* Robin Ince, Al Murray and Josie Long are playing the Stay at Home festival from The Cosmic Shambles Network. All shows are live only and free to watch. See: [cosmicshambles.com/stayathome](http://cosmicshambles.com/stayathome).
* BBC Culture in Quarantine, a ‘virtual festival of the arts’, including new recordings of Mike Bartlett’s play Albion, Emma Rice’s Wise [Children](https://www.theguardian.com/society/children), and six RSC productions including its 2016 Hamlet and 2018 Macbeth.
* You can stream a National Theatre Live production on YouTube for free every Thursday and on catch-up. One Man, Two Guvnors – starring James Corden is available until 9 April.
* Montreux jazz festival has over 50 concerts available to stream for free, including sets by Ray Charles, Wu-Tang Clan, Johnny Cash, Nina Simone, Marvin Gaye, Deep Purple and Carlos Santana. You can access them for free for 30 days. Go to [stingray.com/FREEMJF1M](http://stingray.com/FREEMJF1M) and enter the code FREEMJF1M.
* The NHS has 24 free instructor-led videos covering aerobics exercise, strength and resistance, and pilates and yoga. They range from 10-45m, and are available at [nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/)
* Many galleries have virtual exhibitions and special events e.g. [My Body, My Archive](https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/bmw-tate-live-exhibition-2020/my-body-my-archive), an online-only performance by the Congolese choreographer and dance artist Faustin Linyekula filmed in the Tanks at London’s Tate Modern.
* London’s Royal Academy has its exhibition on Belgian artist Léon Spilliaert via a video tour of the galleries.
* Many libraries have set up easy ways to download e-books, e-audio books and e-magazines. Download the free app provided and have your library card membership number ready when logging in.
* A range of Royal Opera House productions can be accessed for free via its Facebook and YouTube channels. It is also offering a free 30-day trial on [Marquee TV](https://www.marquee.tv/), an arts streaming service.
* Each day the Metropolitan Opera in New York is making a different presentation available for free on its website, although the window to watch it for free will only last for 23 hours. Go to [MetOpera.org](https://www.metopera.org/)
* Kahoot! is an app and a website: a big collection of trivia quizzes created by other users. One person hosts a game and the others compete on their own devices.
* TED talks archive. Search for history, science, nature, anything.

**PARENTAL FEARS**

A survey by Parentikind found that 77% of parents were worried that the outbreak would affect their child's education, with 24% having serious concerns. Only 19% felt very confident to support their child’s learning at home, while 43% were quite confident, almost 22% were neither confident nor unconfident and 15% not at all confident. Interestingly, 7% said they thought school closures could have a positive impact, citing increased family time and reconnecting with their children. Between March 18 and March 23, 691 parents, representing 1,181 pupils, completed the survey, most respondents were based in England.

John Jolly, chief executive of Parentkind, said parents were enduring a "uniquely stressful period". He said, "These are exceptional times, with the necessary measures to slow the spread of a potentially deadly virus raising for many parents fundamental questions about family life and how they can best support their child's learning from home. Parents are fearful of the long-term impact school closures will have on their child's attainment and socialisation, and they are juggling these worries with their own very real issues of meeting work commitments and paying the bills, without the support of grandparents and others to draw on during this uniquely stressful period. Policymakers, teachers and parents are united in wanting the best possible outcomes for children, and Parentkind will work with everyone to ensure parents feel equipped to adapt to their new circumstances, however long they last."

**CHILD POVERTY IS GOING TO ESCALATE**

Latest figures show that the level of child poverty has risen again, as has the proportion of these children who are living in working families and experts say that the coronavirus crisis will make things much worse. The latest household income statistics (for 2018/19) show that 4.2m children (around 30% of all children) live below the [poverty](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/health-wellbeing-and-behaviour/poverty/694804/) line, with 72% in working families. These are children living in families that earn below 60% of the UK median income after housing costs. For 2018/19, the UK’s median household income before housing costs is £514 a week. The child poverty figures are up from 4.1m in 2017/18, of which 70% were in working families. In 2010/11, there were 3.6m children living in poverty, with 58% of these in working families. The rise of in-work poverty has been fuelled by a rise in the number of single parents who are only able to work part-time (41% in 2018/19) and couples where only one parent can work (38%).

The End Child Poverty coalition is calling for more targeted support for poor children during the coronavirus crisis. It warns that these families are more likely to be badly affected by school closures, loss of income, and the uncertainty that has come with the coronavirus outbreak. It wants to see an increase of £10 to child benefit, the suspension of the two-child limit and benefit cap, and immediate local authority co-ordination to support schools or hubs to ensure the safety and wellbeing of [children at risk](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/health-wellbeing-and-behaviour/safeguarding/694398/) of abuse or neglect or with SEN.

[Anna Feuchtwang](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/search-results/feuchtwang/38/1/), chair of the coalition and head of the National Children’s Bureau, said: “We welcome the steps taken by government on statutory sick pay, employee support for PAYE and Universal Credit. But these child poverty figures must focus the government’s mind on those least able to cope with the impact of Covid-19 and those least likely to be heard advocating for what they need. The government must recognise that while we are all affected by the crisis we are not all equally prepared for its consequences. Children trapped in poverty already have their lives restricted. Many of them will be living in poor accommodation, reliant on school meals and without the means for effective home-schooling. We believe there is more the government can do, not only to ensure children are kept safe and have their immediate needs met, but to ensure that more children are not pulled into poverty and those already living in poverty are not further disadvantaged by the crisis.”

The charity Action for Children has warned that already the consequences of the coronavirus lockdown have pushed some families to breaking point and has launched an appeal fund to help those struggling to pay for essentials like food, nappies and utility bills. Their director of policy and campaigns, Imran Hussain, said: “We welcome the financial support but the government needs to go further and faster. We urgently need to put a protective shield around children in low income families. That means improving the child element of Universal Credit and Tax Credits, and ensuring these changes reach those children most at risk of poverty by suspending the benefit cap and the two-child limit for this support.”

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**SNIPPETS**

* Figures show the number of children missing school for term-time holidays is at a record high, with 333,400 fines issued to parents last year.
* Most hospitals have a giving page to pay for food and treats for staff. Mine is Watford General Rainbow Campaign, why not see what you can do in your own area.
* BT is removing all the caps on its broadband packages. For BT landline-only customers it will also cap the charges of calls to all UK landlines and mobiles to £5 a month.
* Red Bull motorsport boss Helmut Marko called on his drivers to become infected with coronavirus while the season is in hiatus. He said he wanted to bring his Formula 1 drivers and juniors together in a camp, which "would be the ideal time for the infection to come". He was overruled after huge opposition from staff.
* The Belarusian Premier League is still playing to full crowds. It is one of the few places around the world, and the only place in Europe, where football is still being played.
* Unions have issued guidance for teachers still in school what they should do to minimise their chance of getting coronavirus. The NEU, NAHT and ASCL have said avoid cleaning cupboards, skip staff meetings and do not to touch class displays to avoid possible infection.
* David Lester, learning services director at virtual school Nisai, has warned against schools using mainstream apps to communicate with their students, after questions were raised over the security of such platforms.
* There has been a huge increase in shopping this month. The busiest spell was 16-19 March, when 88% of households visited a food store, adding up to 42m extra trips across four days. In the last four weeks, year-on-year supermarket sales grew by 20.6%.
* The House of Commons education committee has written to Gavin Williamson urging the Government to treat frontline school staff as a priority group for testing and personal protective equipment.
* School leaders are seeking clarification over whether schools will be refunded for exam fees following the cancellation of this year's GCSEs and A-levels.
* DT teachers from Stamford Endowed Schools are manufacturing 200 face masks a day to help the NHS.

Companies not observing correct social distancing for employees will not be eligible for Welsh Government support. Ken Skates, the economy minister, said withholding financial help was an “important tool to make sure businesses behave properly".