

## QUESTION ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – MR ANDREW CRAWFORD TO COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

### Question

- Does a County Council policy, procedure or briefing note exist on this issue and if so; a) may I see a copy and b) can it be sent to all Head Teachers and c) can it be shared with all relevant parents so that there is clarity and openness over the policy adopted by the Council for all parties?

### Answer

Oxfordshire County Council follows the Department for Education and Public Health England advice regarding the attendance at school of children who have members of their family deemed CEV (clinically extremely vulnerable). Currently, that advice is that children can, and are expected to attend school under these circumstances. The guidance is publicly available on the Department for Education website and has been shared with Head Teachers. Schools in Oxfordshire have worked and continue to work extremely hard to make settings Covid secure and have delivered on this effectively.

Quoting directly from the current Department for Education guidance available on their website, shared with schools and informed by Public Health England;

*“A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because:*

- *they have had symptoms, or a positive test result themselves*
- *they live with someone that has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact*
- *they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)*

*More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Far fewer children should remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group in the future following their routine discussions with their clinician.*

*The advice for pupils who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should return to school from 2 December, at all local restriction tiers, unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting.*

*Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.”*

Oxfordshire County Council’s policy regarding Elective Home Education (which is different to remaining on a school roll and accessing remote learning opportunities) is available on the Oxfordshire County Council webpages. If residents require additional help in locating or accessing it, please email [ehe@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ehe@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

- Do Learner Engagement Services staff ensure that when discussing such issues with individual parents and their children's schools' staff that full disclosure of the County's approach to this situation is made clear?

Oxfordshire County Council's approach, through Learner Engagement Services, adheres to the Department for Education and Public Health England advice and our own policies. We seek to mediate between families and schools to reach a conclusion that is satisfactory to all, with Covid safety and ongoing access to education as key priorities.

- Are Learner Engagement Services staff encouraged to influence Head Teachers to authorise absence from school using the X code in the school registers in these circumstances?

It is the duty of Head Teachers to determine the most appropriate use of attendance codes, including the X code. Learner Engagement Services advise Head Teachers to take a supportive and pragmatic approach under the circumstances described, and not to go behind advice from medical practitioners pertaining to children or members of their household at heightened risk due to CEV.