Dear Colleague,

Thank for your letter. I am very mindful of the need to protect staff, pupils and parents and will ensure that government guidance is followed at all times. We also need to balance this against the delivery of quality learning to the pupils in our care – both remotely and for those who need to be in school.

You will be aware that the government has announced that for the first half of the Spring term schools should now remain open only for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. We have to find a way to manage this whilst keeping everyone safe and want to work with you to find a reasonable way forward.

We will continue to work with the local authority, public health colleagues and unions to ensure that the working environment is made as safe as possible. You will be aware of the huge efforts made to date to protect the safety of everyone who comes into school including undertaking risk assessments, provision of PPE etc. These measures will of course be reviewed and revised as necessary in light of the new strain of the virus. We will also be reviewing staffing requirements to ensure safety of pupils whilst minimising the number of staff who may be required to attend school in person.

Where staff have particular concerns (for example where staff are clinically vulnerable) we will ensure that an individual risk assessment takes place and, where appropriate, an occupational health referral is made for specific advice.

All staff in Bucks maintained schools have access to a range of well being support including the Employee Assistance programme (EAP) where they can discuss any concerns confidentially with an adviser at any time.

Finally I want to thank you for the commitment and resilience that you have shown since the start of the pandemic; teaching staff have worked hard to ensure continuity of education of the pupils in their care during a very challenging and quickly changing situation.

I am grateful for your continued support.