



Date: 4 June 2020

Dear Headteacher

Following on from my letter to you last week, I wanted to deliver on my promise to send you weekly updates on the local picture and how this impacts on school opening timeframes.

As you will probably be aware, the national bioalert level remains at 4, this indicates that a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation and transmission is high. It is clear from national data that the death rate in Doncaster is slowly falling and I am confident that we have passed the peak of the virus in the borough, contrary to what you may have read in some national tabloids earlier this week.

However, death rates do not give an accurate picture of community transition levels and, as I have said to you previously, this is currently my biggest concern.

With the launch of the NHS Test and Trace system late last week, we have now started to get a more detailed picture of how the virus is circulating locally. In the week to date I've been informed of 109 additional COVID-19 cases in Doncaster by the NHS Test and Trace system, this is double the number of reported cases in the area on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. Of those 109 people with positive tests, almost 70% have already been followed up locally and contacts have been traced.

In terms of what this means for schools, I still believe it is too early to open schools over the next week. My reasoning for this is as follows:

- The national bioalert level remains at 4, this has not changed since I last issued advice
- There have been double the number of cases reported to me via the NHS Test and Trace system than in previously via the national government website
- 30% of the current cases have not yet been contacted so the number of contacts to trace remains unknown

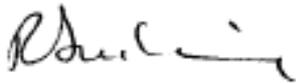
However, I am optimistic that when I write to you next week we could be in a much stronger position. The fact that the national Test and Trace system is up and running locally and that I'm now receiving local data via this service gives me grounds for optimism. I am hopeful that as the new Test and Trace system becomes more embedded, the risk will further reduce over the next week, meaning we may be in a position to have a different conversation around possible opening dates very soon. That said, I am continuing to be cautious and my advice to you remains based upon viable and accurate information that is available to me.

I know this is frustrating for all, and am acutely aware of the health and wellbeing benefits of children being in school. Like you, I am keen for us to be able to open schools to wider cohorts as soon as is safely possible but it is important that we continue to proceed with caution to avoid the risk of any local lockdowns in our area.

I thank you for your continued support and commitment to a Doncaster-specific approach.

Kind Regards,

**Dr Rupert Suckling**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rupert Suckling', written in a cursive style.

Director of Public Health Doncaster