

## **LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM**

**20 October 2020**

**Item No: 10**

**Title of Item: Lancashire County Council Area position on paying staff in schools**

### **Executive Summary**

This report provides information on the Lancashire County Council Area position on paying staff in schools when they cannot work because they are self-isolating or when their children are sent home from school due to being in an affected bubble

### **Recommendation**

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report;
- b) Express any views on the Lancashire County Council Area position on paying staff in schools

## **Background**

Members may have seen that the Education Coronavirus Bulletin from 6 October 2020 included a message from Edwina Grant OBE, Executive Director Education and Children's Services about the Lancashire County Council Area position on paying staff in schools.

The message made reference to the Schools Forum and a copy of the text is provided below:

### **Lancashire County Council Area position on paying staff in schools**

I have had a request from trade unions for a Lancashire Council Area position on the payment of staff when they cannot work because they are self-isolating or when their children are sent home from school due to being in an affected bubble. Normally, apart from issuing model policies, supporting schools in personnel terms and by offering insurance, the council would have little further role as the decision is for you.

After taking some soundings I am considering whether we could recommend to maintained schools and to seek agreement from academies that we support the position that schools would pay the affected member of staff for the period of time that they are required to look after their child and cannot undertake their role from home. There is no additional cost to the school in the first instance in paying the affected member of staff as salaries are already budgeted for. Any supply costs that are required would be additional. I know that the insurance policies between teaching and non-teaching staff have different elements.

A possible way forward may be that the school and member of staff first explore temporary measures to mitigate the impact e.g. partner or other in their support bubble sharing/meeting the parental responsibility (particularly when they are not key workers). I recognise that many more workers are designated key workers now and some parents have no support. The school could explore if there are any other options for covering the staff absence rather than supply cover, taking into account all the previous discussions we have had in the past with unions about who can cover at what level. Where all options have been explored and discounted, then the school should consider meeting the cost of supply cover from their budget.

Schools would normally budget for an annual sum to cover supply staffing costs from their budgets. This may have incurred lower costs than usual during the Spring/Summer as you were not operating at full capacity over those terms. To balance this I am aware that the bubbles have been costly in staff terms so the budget may already be stretched. By the end of the financial year it will be clear what individual schools have spent over and above what they 'normally' budget/spend on supply cover and schools should be encouraged to identify and claim as excess Covid costs from the government. It is a matter for the Schools Forum then, but I would ask members of the Forum to write to Government requesting that these additional costs are reimbursed across the council area. Lancashire County Council councillors could also be asked by the Forum to support the fact that the government be asked to pay any

additional money as Covid costs. County Councillor Philippa Williamson has been discussing this with me, and is happy to use her position as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools and an attendee at Schools Forum to make such a representation to seek costs we cannot absorb as essential costs due to Covid.

I would be glad of your thoughts either to me or via your professional representatives or unions and subject to your responses I will ask Schools Forum to take this approach.

I hope you are all keeping well at this time.

The Chair of the Forum has had contact with Edwina on this issue but any comments are welcome from Forum members.