Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to you as joint trade union representatives in Central Bedfordshire.

We recognise that school leadership are trying hard to manage the extraordinary situations in your schools and colleges. We also recognise that education staff are stressed and anxious but are still doing their very best for the children in Central Bedfordshire.

We commend everyone for their magnificent efforts and commitment to our communities.

We are only too aware that in dealing with the pandemic without the necessary funding from the government is putting stress on already pressurised funding.

In our meetings with Central Bedfordshire we are representing members and requesting public health data as well as raising the wide range of issues that are coming up within education in Central Beds.

The last thing we want is that schools are forced through staffing shortages and COVID related isolations to close down completely – although this may be inevitable in some cases.

In our recent meetings we decided to try to identify and share good practices from around the district and neighbouring areas. Some positive measures that could help sustain educational provision and protect the mental and physical wellbeing of staff and leaders are listed below:

* Staff meetings being held remotely and staff being able to access them at home.
* Staff being allowed to carry out PPA from home.
* Support staff, including administration staff being allowed flexible working hours within the school building to facilitate distancing.
* Wearing of PPE encouraged for all staff and pupils.
* Watersheds for e-mail contact unless there's an emergency.
* Possibilities of rotational and blended learning in order to reduce bubble sizes
* Staff allocated to provide remote learning
* All staff encouraged to utilise the NHS track and trace app.

Although there is no magic wand at the moment we feel these are ways to help make the current situation less risky and more manageable.

Once again, we'd like to pay tribute to the hard-working staff in schools and hope this finds everyone in good health and spirit and to conclude by saying that we are committed to working with you for the benefit of all .