

Thu 08/07/2021 11:47

Dear Colleagues,

I am conscious that you are very busy; maybe too busy to read this email so let me say a heartfelt **thank you** up front and early. I know that many of you are going above and beyond that which you might reasonably be expected to do, and I want you to know how much it is appreciated. Without your support and commitment, where would we be? So, for all of you putting your heart and soul into your roles **thank you**.

Taking the Next Step

For those of you still with me after staying up late to watch the football last night, the much-trailed government announcements from Westminster have left as many questions as answers. The celebratory tone has been tempered by concern over rising case numbers. The C-OPT is working its way through all the latest guidance which tends to get updated in a rather piecemeal way. Wales and Scotland have yet to announce any changes. Knowing what we are allowed to do is only part of the issue. We have the wellbeing of staff and visitors to consider, especially those who may be particularly vulnerable. The business as a whole also remains vulnerable to Covid-19. One ping from Test and Trace can send a staff team home and shut a centre within hours. Many businesses are looking at having to balance competing issues of freedom and responsibility and FSC will be doing the same. In the meantime, the one thing we do know is that getting double jabbed will help the situation, so if you haven't done so already, I would really encourage you to [book an appointment](#).

Ofqual -the embarrassing relative?

I'm not the only one this week to have been flagging up the self-defeating implications of the removal of mandatory fieldwork. In a new series of [Rethink Education](#) on Radio 4, the lack of fieldwork skills and opportunities got a good airing in the first episode. FSC's letters to politicians have acknowledged that whilst another U turn is unlikely, we would welcome much more overt support for outdoor learning and the government's own guidance on how it can be done safely. Shortly afterwards the DfE obliged by publishing guidance for [Teaching a broad and balanced curriculum for education recovery](#) for key stages 1,2 and 3 which has educational visits as a guiding principle and a lot of enthusiastic praise for fieldwork in the geography section. Coincidence? Possibly, and we really need similar guidance for the other key stages too. I get the sense that the DfE can't disown Ofqual again, but are now trying to talk loudly over them as you do with a relative who is about to say something inappropriate at a family gathering.

Exam Changes in Scotland and Wales

Scotland's proposals won't be out until August after the stooshie over the OECD report, and Wales have yet to publish theirs. The Welsh exam board (WJEC) has put forward less draconian proposals than England which involve reducing not removing fieldwork for GCSE and AS geography, but it looks as if the A level requirement remains unchanged.

Special Mention

A week spent bogged down in politics was lightened on receiving feedback from a primary school bursary group which reminds us all why we do this job. A visit to Blencathra had

“opened their eyes to a world outside to explore and enjoy. The opportunity to see a way of living without TV and the internet, to let their brains breathe. It was a new experience for most pupils and one they may not be able to do again... the children were delighted to see sheep walking through the fields.” thank you to all who made it happen. “I have never been so far away from home but I enjoyed it and I loved the fresh air”.

keep safe and stay well

Mark