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Education Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you have been having a good week and looking forward to the half-term break.

Employers with 250 or more employees are required to report specific gender pay gap data on the gender pay gap service and their own website every year. This includes schools, colleges and academy trusts. The deadline for reporting each year is 30 March (based on a snapshot date of 31 March the previous year) however employers can report and publish their gender pay gap information at any time before the deadline. Further details can be found at [Gender pay gap reporting](#) and [Search and compare gender pay gap data](#).

On 3 March 2024 Marie Curie is holding the fourth Day of Reflection, a special moment to remember everyone who died during the pandemic. There are many ways for schools and education settings to get involved including taking time to reflect using their [Day of Reflection Schools pack](#) for ideas and resources to help mark the day. To find out more, please visit the [Day of Reflection website](#) or contact Marie Curie at dayofreflection@mariecurie.org.uk.

Today's bulletin includes important health updates on norovirus and measles. Your support in helping to share this information, advice and guidance with your staff, parents and carers would be most appreciated to ensure we can get the message out far and wide and help protect and prevent the spread of these diseases.

And finally a reminder that the Spring Term Headteacher Briefing will be taking place on Thursday 22 February. The briefing will be delivered virtually by MS teams is free to attend and suitable for all headteachers and / or deputy headteachers. Please find further information on page 4 including details how to book your place.

Wishing you all the best.

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Latest education news and updates

Internal Audit Update

From a review of school audits conducted over the past twelve months, we have highlighted below some common themes that we are regularly reporting on. We hope this provides a helpful insight when comparing your own internal processes and systems of internal control.

Governance:

Expectation

- School leaders have an obligation to ensure that they are regularly reporting and informing their governing body of all key decisions affecting their school.
- Effective clerking and minuting of these key resolutions.

Common Issue

- Lack of evidence to support key decisions and annual updates e.g., annual pecuniary interest declarations, approval of expenditure decisions (see below under procurement) and documented approval of key policies.

Advice

- School leaders need to be clear about their statutory reporting requirements and ensure that all actions, discussions, and resolutions are suitably recorded with the minutes.

Reference Material

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trusts/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trusts>

Procurement processes

Expectation

- Procurement processes must be followed in line with your adopted financial procedures.
- Obtaining and retaining quotes and/or tenders for goods and services above a certain value, including cumulative expenditure.
- Expenditure decisions follow delegated limits of authority and evidenced accordingly.

Common Issues

- Breach of expenditure limits with no formality, evidence or exemption to support that suitable procurement processes were followed.
- Failure to seek, and document, prior approval for expenditure decisions that exceed the specified delegated limits of authority.

Advice

- Expenditure decisions above a certain value must be subjected to a formal procurement process with evidence retained.
- Expenditure decisions exceeding delegated limits must be formally approved and documented.

- Regular governor review of the expenditure and delegation limits to ensure they meet needs of the school (e.g. balancing best value verses administrative burden).

Reference Material

<https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/>

<https://buyingforschools.blog.gov.uk/2022/03/22/get-help-buying-for-schools-2/>

IR35 regulations / off payroll working:

Expectation

- School leaders should be aware of and be following IR35 implications/regulations when paying individuals 'off payroll.'

Common Issues

- Schools are not aware of the IR35 rule/requirement.
- Schools are aware, but not complying with IR35.
- Schools are aware and complying but not retaining evidence of IR35 check.

Advice

- Individuals providing a regular service (e.g., tuition, consultancy, etc) should be processed through the school's payroll as casual supply whenever possible.
- School leaders should satisfy themselves that all necessary checks on individuals and the services they supply fall within the remit of IR35 and that this check is documented, retained and can be evidenced.

Reference Material

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-employment-status-for-tax>

Regular review and update of deficit recovery plans:

Expectation

- Maintained schools working with a deficit recovery plan should be regularly reviewing targets and objectives against performance.
- Significant adjustments or changes must be reported to Schools Finance as soon as possible.

Common Issue

- Lack of evidence to support that agreed and approved deficit recovery plan are being regularly monitored and reviewed.

Advice

- Schools with an agreed deficit and associated deficit recovery plan should ensure that this is regularly reviewed and evidenced to ensure that agreed targets are achievable with any issues reported immediately to Worcester Childrens First, Schools Finance.

Verbal Orders:

Expectation

- Official orders for goods and services should be raised through the school's financial management system as they are realised and before the goods or services have been received.

Common Issues

- High level of verbal orders (e.g., orders placed verbally before being committed onto the financial management system).
- Significant delays between the date of invoice being presented and the date of the official order being entered onto the system.

Resulting in:

- Poor commitment accounting. The expenditure is being committed without it officially being recorded onto the financial management system meaning that any management information / budget forecasting is not accurate.
- Poor segregation. It circumvents official divisions of duty with regards to purchasing.

Advice

- Orders for goods and services should be raised via the school's financial management system.
- Verbal orders should be minimised and/or restricted for emergencies only (e.g., an urgent repair, unexpected agency supply etc.), with the commitment raised on the financial management system within 24 hours.

Risk & Fraud, including Cyber Security

Lastly, we would remind school leaders to remain vigilant to the risks of fraud and cyber security.

Common issues

- bogus invoices.
- bogus emails and attachments.
- bogus requests to change payee/bank details for suppliers.

Advice

- staff do not engage with anyone portraying to be from the bank.
- staff do not engage with any cold caller or correspondence, but instead ring the bank (or supplier) on a trusted number.
- Staff remain vigilant at all times and do not be afraid to say, 'No'.

The National Cyber Security Centre provides free training service to enable school leaders to be able to effectively train their staff on the risks of cyber security and to raise awareness. Details can be found at: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>

Contact us:

For maintained school queries, please email us at; AuditTeam@worcestershire.gov.uk

Safety of wall mounted audio-visual devices

There was a recent serious incident in another local authority school where a piece of audio-visual equipment fell onto a pupil, this incident was that serious that the Health and Safety Executive are investigating. As a result of this we have done a health and safety alert to highlight and advise on what mitigation measures to put in place.

The [AV equipment hazard note for schools \(Google Drive\)](#) details what happened and what needs to be done. Some of the information is quite technical, so I'd encourage you to contact your property agent for further guidance.

Please confirm below, by return email to healthandsafety@worcestershire.gov.uk (by end March 2024) that your setting has completed all the actions required in the 'Safety of wall mounted audio-visual devices' actions that are in blue text below.

1. **Your Name :**
2. **Your job role / position :**
3. **School / Name :**
4. **DFES Number :**
5. **Please highlight below what status your school is**
 - **Maintained school :**
 - **Academy :**
6. **The school has completed all the actions in the 'Safety of wall mounted audio-visual devices' safety message :**

Yes
No
7. **Add any comments below:**

Your confirmation will be recorded by the Health and Safety Team and discussed at the next WCC main Health & Safety Committee meeting.

Any questions on this questionnaire should be sent to healthandsafety@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Early Years Transition Surveys

Worcestershire Children First is undergoing a review of the resources, advice and best practice around transition for our nursery age children into schools. We are keen to hear from, and learn from, the experiences of parents/carers and settings around this important transition time. Please find below the link for the survey to gather your views.

After the review we would like to consolidate transition advice, celebrate good practice and seek to improve the transition experience from nursery to schools for all children in Worcestershire.

The survey will close on 16th February 2024. Thank you for your time.

Parent/Carer Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hxj0rDe900WeZUfN5I3IWlzpjaWwlwhNgHy55bULg9xUNINRNTBNSkVHUUc3V0pESEhKVIZPMzkzOC4u>

Early Years Setting Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hxj0rDe900WeZUfN5I3IWlzpjaWwlwhNgHy55bULg9xUN1ZBSEQ1UVMzWURORzJFVIFJR1paM0FQUS4u>

School Setting Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hxj0rDe900WeZUfN5I3IWlzpjaWwlwhNgHy55bULg9xUN0pIOFdJV0JITlcyTVcySEIWWUISUTINSi4u>

Spring Term Headteacher Briefing

The Spring 2024 term Headteacher Briefing will be delivered virtually by MS teams, free to attend and suitable for all Headteachers and / or Deputy Headteachers in Worcestershire.

Agenda for the Headteacher Briefing includes:

- Updates from Sarah Wilkins, Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning
- School Improvement - Ofsted Update
- SEND/Inclusion
- Fair Access
- Teaching School Hubs

22 February 2024, 1pm to 4pm, virtual delivery

Course code: SCH 10191

Book via [WCF:CPD](#) using your school CPD Leader login details and search course code 10191. Confirmations are issued at the point of booking and include all the MS teams details. If you encounter any issues when booking, please contact Charlotte in the Conference Team directly by emailing conferences@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk.

Latest health news and updates

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccinations

Earlier this week we shared with you the following information about pop-up MMR vaccination clinics in Worcestershire. If you haven't already done so, can you please share the following important message with your parents and carers.

An increasing number of measles cases are continuing to be seen across the country. While Worcestershire has one of the best rates for uptake, some children who haven't had their MMR could be at risk of getting this serious illness.

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are given to make sure we have the best protection from measles. The first dose is given at 12 months of age and the second dose is given at three years and four months, before starting school. For anybody who did not receive the full vaccination course, your own GP will be able to provide a catch-up MMR vaccination.

The MMR vaccine is a safe and effective combined vaccine that protects against three serious illnesses: Measles, Mumps and Rubella. Overall, Worcestershire has an excellent uptake of the MMR vaccine; for 5-year-olds, the county shows as having an uptake of 96.4% (1 dose) and 91.3% (2 doses). The 1 dose figure is joint highest in the West Midlands region and the 2-dose uptake is the outright highest in the region. Having the vaccine protects not only the child but also reduces the spread of the disease. This relies on as many people as possible being vaccinated and is why Public Health experts in the county are keen to continue to encourage all children to be vaccinated.

Measles is a very infectious viral illness that is spread by coughs and sneezes. It usually starts with cold-like symptoms which can include a high temperature, a runny or blocked nose, sneezing, a cough, sore red eyes and a rash. It spreads very quickly to non-immune children and adults who are unvaccinated or have not previously been infected.

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire and Public Health are holding pop-up MMR vaccination clinics in these areas. If your child hasn't had the MMR vaccination just turn up. You can ask for an MMR vaccine which does not contain pork ingredients if you prefer.

Not sure if you or your child have, had it? Just check your red NHS book or ask at your local GP.

The clinics are being hosted in libraries on the following dates:

On Saturday 10 February

- Kidderminster Library, 9.30 am until 4 pm
- Wythall Library 9.30 am until 4 pm
- Redditch Library 9.30 am until 4 pm

On Saturday 17 February

- Evesham Library 9.30 am until 4 pm
- Malvern Library 9.30 am until 4 pm
- The Hive, Worcester 9.30 am until 4 pm

The pop-up MMR clinic is free, and no appointment is necessary but if you'd prefer an appointment, you can also book ahead by calling 01527 390030.

If anyone has symptoms of measles, please stay at home and phone your GP or NHS 111 for advice. Do not go to GP surgeries or A & E departments so the illness isn't spread to others.

For more information on measles and the MMR vaccine please visit: [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Norovirus

Following a recent increase in cases of Norovirus the Public Health Team at Worcestershire County Council would like to remind schools about the importance of children and staff not returning to school until they have been completely clear of symptoms for 48 hours. Norovirus causes [diarrhoea](#) and [vomiting](#) and is one of the most common stomach bugs in the UK. It's also called the 'winter vomiting bug' because it's more common in winter, but you can catch it at any time of the year. Norovirus can be very unpleasant but usually clears up by itself in a few days.

Individuals who show symptoms in school should wait in an area away from communal/busy areas where they can be observed until a parent or approved emergency contact can collect them. Ideally they should have a dedicated bathroom to be used only by those who are symptomatic.

Norovirus can spread very easily, especially in close contact settings such as schools and nurseries where outbreaks can occur. While children are encouraged to stay in education or childcare with symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough (if otherwise well and do not have a high temperature), children should stay home from school or nursery if they're displaying the following symptoms:

- a fever and unwell, Children and Staff should stay home from school or nursery until the fever has passed and they are well enough to attend.
- diarrhoea and/or vomiting. Children and Staff should stay off school or nursery for at least 48 hours after their symptoms clear up – this will help stop the spread of Norovirus.

Good hand hygiene is important to stop norovirus spreading. To avoid catching norovirus or passing it on to others, children should wash their hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water.

Hand gels do not kill norovirus.

Norovirus is easily transmitted through contact with people with the infection and any surfaces or objects which have been contaminated with the virus.

A number of tools have been developed to support schools and nurseries with the management of winter infections. These tools, which are available to download from [Google Drive](#) contain the following information:

- Norovirus action card which advises on what actions a school needs to take if they have a D&V outbreak
- A letter and winter illnesses leaflet that you can share with parents/carers and staff

- A check list that will guide you on what actions are required to help control the outbreak.
- 'Should I keep my child off school?' poster.

Further information, resources, and guidance:

- Further information about Norovirus can be found in [here](#).
- The [UKHSA blog](#) also provides information about winter illnesses that are circulating, signs and symptoms to look out for, and guidance on when to keep children off school.
- The [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#) -- A practical guide produced by UKHSA for staff on managing cases of infectious diseases in education and childcare settings also provides useful information including:
 - What infections are, how they are transmitted and those at higher risk of infection
 - Preventing and controlling infections
 - Supporting immunisation programmes
 - Managing outbreaks and incidents
 - Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z
 - Specific educational settings and populations: additional health protection considerations
 - Children and young people settings: tools and resources
- The [Children and young people settings: tools and resources](#) indicates the time period an individual should not attend a setting to reduce the risk of transmission during the infectious stage.
- The [e-bug](#) resources includes information/ games/ lesson plans to teach children about infections.
- Toolkits for the 'Clean Hands Safe Hands' campaign developed by Public Health will continue to be available. The toolkits include ideas, activities, and messages to encourage children to regularly wash their hands as part of their everyday routine.

The key message is washing your hands with soap and water is still the best way to make sure your hands are germ-free as hand sanitisers are not effective against some germs like the winter sickness bug, Norovirus.

The toolkits for schools and nurseries to use can be accessed below:

[Download the Early Years Toolkit here](#)

[Download the Primary School Toolkit here](#)

Cervical Cancer Prevention Week

Monday 22nd January 2024 saw the start of this year's Cervical Cancer Prevention Week.

Following this campaign, the Public Health Team at Worcestershire County Council are asking schools to help promote the importance of cervical screening to staff and parents.

Every day in the UK, two women lose their lives to cervical cancer and nine more receive a life-changing diagnosis. In the future, these statistics could be zero. The World Health Organization (WHO) aims for 70% of women to have cervical screening between the ages of 35 and 45 as part of their global strategy for cervical cancer elimination.

In Worcestershire, we are already beating that figure with 73.4% of women aged 25-49 and 77.6% of women aged 50-64 being screened for cervical cancer (sometimes referred to as a smear test) in 2022. Although this figure is good, that still leaves approximately 50,000 women across the County who have not gone for their cervical screening when invited.

Across Worcestershire partners are working together to help even more people get screened, including offering evening clinics between 5:30pm and 7:30pm, as well as on Saturday mornings and drop-in clinics at weekends. Please check with your GP for the availability of these clinics.

Women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25 and 64 should go for regular cervical screening. . If registered with a GP practice, they will be invited for routine screening every 3 years if aged 25 to 49 and every 5 years if aged 50 to 64. If someone has missed their last screen they do not need to wait for their next invite, they can still book in through their GP.

The Cervical Cancer Prevention Week is run by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust who are the UK's leading cervical cancer charity. They have a dedicated range of resources available to support schools which can be found here: [Information for Teachers | Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust \(jostrust.org.uk\)](https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information-for-teachers).

For more information and advice, please visit: [Cervical Cancer pages of the NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer).

Solihull Approach - Understanding your child's feelings

It's important for anyone involved in a child's life to understand the importance of relationships and these relationships help to shape your child's emotional health and wellbeing. This short course offers parents, grandparents, carer a reflective space to think about your child's feelings and in turn how these relate to behaviour. Providing practical ideas, skills and techniques to better understand and nurture your child's feelings and behaviour.

Parents/ carers can take this short course to help you to connect with your child and provide the best support to nurture confidence, resilience and empathy, setting them up to thrive, the FREE ['Understanding your child's mental health and wellbeing' course](https://www.solihull.gov.uk/parents-carers/understanding-your-childs-mental-health-and-wellbeing) can help.

This short course provides an introduction into understanding your child, their feelings and how to nurture their emotional development. Parents can access this course for FREE by visiting [In Our Place website](https://www.solihull.gov.uk/parents-carers/in-our-place) and using the access code PARENTSROCK

HWW Young People's Health and Emotional Wellbeing Survey

Healthwatch Worcestershire have launched their latest young people's survey and would really appreciate your support in helping them to hear from as many young people (aged 13-25) in Worcestershire as possible.

This year they will be looking at young people's experiences of:

- Accessing the information and support around health and emotional wellbeing available to them, both in person and online.
- Seeking help and support for their emotional health and wellbeing, including their gender identity and/or neurodiversity.

The online survey contains links to age appropriate local and national emotional support services and is designed to be informative as well as giving young people a chance to feedback.

Please see below copy that can be used for circulation to pupils, parents and carers.

A survey poster is also available to download and display from our [Google Drive](#).

Young People's Health and Emotional Wellbeing Survey

Healthwatch Worcestershire finds out what people think about health and social care services. They use this information to tell those who run the services how they can be improved.

They want to hear the views and experiences of young people (age 13 to 25) in Worcestershire. In particular they want to hear about the experiences of accessing help with their emotional wellbeing, as well as accessing support for issues around gender identity and/or neurodiversity.

The survey is anonymous and confidential – responses will be combined and used to create a report which will be publicly available on their website later this year.

The survey can be completed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YP24live> and will be running throughout February 2024.

If you require paper copies of the survey and prepaid reply envelopes, please call 01386 550264 or email info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk. Printed copies of the survey can be returned using Freepost to: Freepost RTEE-GKAT-SRLR, Healthwatch Worcestershire, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1PT.

Better Health: Every Mind Matters

Did you know 50% of mental health problems are established by the age of 14?*

As your pupils settle into the new year, Public Health England want to help teachers address and facilitate open conversations about mental wellbeing in the classroom.

Kick-start these conversations with their [What is wellbeing? Assembly](#) and then help young people explore [Kindness](#) and [Emotions](#) with their free and flexible resources linked to Relationships and Health Education.

Developed with teachers and approved by the NHS, these resources contain engaging pupil-led videos, real-world scenarios and engaging bitesize activities to help your pupils aged 5-11 build healthier habits. Head to the [School Zone](#) today to download for free.

*Source: [Children and young people: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)

Healthier Eating Habits and Choices in Nurseries, Schools and Colleges

What we eat and drink are fundamental to our health and development. Public Health colleagues, as part of the wider mission to improve health for children and young people, are welcoming your input around healthier food choices/habits.

What are your concerns? Lunch box contents? Energy drink consumption? Lack of breakfast? Family diets/food affordability? Cooking skills? Something else?

Please let us know by completing this short survey to feedback your concerns and the support that would be most appropriate/useful for your setting: <https://forms.office.com/e/w5ciyrLuE8>

The survey should take no more than 3 minutes to complete.

Latest news and updates from Teaching Hubs

Tudor Grange Teaching School Hub

Appropriate Body

Thank you to everyone who has submitted formal assessments or progress reviews for the Autumn term. The deadline for these was Friday 24 November 2023. If you have any assessments or progress reviews outstanding, please ensure these are submitted as soon as possible.

NPQs

Spring 24 Cohorts

Applications are now closed for the Spring 2024 NPQs. Participants will be receiving their welcome packs shortly with all the information they will need to get started next half term.

Autumn 24 Cohorts

More information will be released in the summer term about how to sign up for the Autumn 24 cohorts, which will include the new NPQ SENDCo!

Maximising the Impact of CPD

Tudor Grange Teaching School Hub and Tudor Grange Research Hub are collaborating to deliver a workshop for you to support with maximising the impact of your staff professional development.

What is covered?

- How to implement lasting change
- How to utilise NPQ -trained staff to support with trust/school improvement plans
- How CPD can support progression/ talent mapping
- How to plan for and measure impact successfully

Who is it for?

- Trust Leaders
- Head teachers/School Leaders
- Teaching and Learning Leads

How will it run?

- We are offering online and face to face options. There is a nominal cost of £10 per participant for the face to face sessions but the online session is free.

When will it run?

- We will run several sessions throughout the year. Currently, the following dates have been scheduled:
 - **Face to Face Sessions**
Monday 26th February 9am-12 noon
Friday 21st June 9.30am - 12.30pm
 - **Online**
Friday 12th April 10am- 12 noon

[Click here](#) to express your interest and indicate when you would prefer to attend.

Latest training news and conferences

What is the SCERTS approach?

Worcestershire Children First Educational Psychology and Autism / Complex Communication Team are offering schools and settings the opportunity to find out more about the **What is the SCERTS approach** via a free webcast.

SCERTS stands for: Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional and Support

SCERTS is an evidence-based framework for assessing children who need support with their social communication and emotional regulation skills, including autistic children. Transactional support is the support given to children to reach their goals and achieve their potential.

To support the roll out of the SCERTS Approach to all school / settings in Worcestershire we are working on a staggered approach. Therefore Stage 1 (What is the SCERTS Approach) will initially be open until 1 March 2024, and specifically for the EYFS up to end of Reception.

Do not worry though we will offer Stage 1 out again, however if you are keen and think you may have missed the cut off date, please email: workforcesupport@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk.

To find out more and request Stage 1 please visit [WCF:CPD](#) and use your School / Setting CPD Leader login details. Only one request needs to be made per school / setting.

Other local news and events

Could you help prevent a young person from becoming homeless?

Can you please share the following with your staff, parents and carers via your normal communication channels.

St Basils needs people who have a spare room and a caring heart to help us in our mission to reduce youth homelessness. Our Supported Lodgings scheme, Home-2-Home places people aged 16-18 (occasionally older) who have experienced family breakdown within the homes of Hosts/Host families. The impact of living with a Host can be transformational for a young person and it is a rewarding experience for a Host.

To become a Host, you don't need professional experience of working with young people, although having an understanding of young people's needs can help. Hosts receive full training from St Basils and are paid £140pw+ whilst a young person is in placement.

If you have an empty room in your house and a desire to help somebody in need, please get in touch via the button below, or email host@stbasils.org.uk /call us on **0121 772 9593**.

By opening up your home, you could be the person who helps bring hope and makes a difference in a young person's life.

Apply via: <https://stbasils.org.uk/projects/home2home-supported-lodgings/>

West Midlands Army Regional Offer for Schools

The West Midlands Army Regional Engagement Team led by WO2 Richie Pugh (warrant officer) would like to ensure that all schools know about their offer of free engagement activities.

Advance booking is essential as they try to take bookings three months in advance using an email Booking Form which they send out once they have received a request to provide an activity.

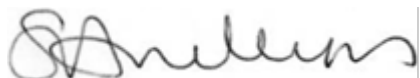
Activities include:

- Practical Problem Solving
- Presentations
- Academic Based Presentations
- Leadership Communication Teamwork Command Tasks

[Download their latest brochure to see a full list of enrichment activities and workshops available](#)

Advance booking is essential as they try to take bookings three months in advance using an email Booking Form which they send out once they have received a request to provide an activity. Book your activity via email to: richard.pugh783@mod.gov.uk or CentreHQ-Engt-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk.

Best wishes,



Sarah Wilkins

Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning

