

“Since we came back in August tension in school has been palpable with pressure on young people and staff. The anxiety or fear of a positive case and the consequences is there all the time. As HT, at weekends and holidays this translates into a wait for the Trace and Protect call and all that entails, with hours of work and calls to anxious staff who need support. No chance to really relax until late pm on the Sunday when it’s too late for a call. It wears you down and impacts on family life. You start the next week worn out from the previous one.”

The school day begins with 30 minutes of door duty to remind pupils to wash hands and continues with corridor duty at period changeovers and break. Staggered lunch means 1hr 20 mins on the go supervising and encouraging compliance. Then the afternoon has another period changeover and seeing pupils off the site. Regular walks around classes to support staff are a feature of the day. Ultimately, over 2.5 hrs a day are spent on duty and cut into my ability to do the other aspects of the job.”

“In brief I think it can be summed up in one sentence: *None of the old work has gone away, a massive amount of new work has arrived.*

HTs and DHTs are still; line-managing departments, dealing with indiscipline, liaising with third sector, conversing with parents, teaching children, tracking and monitoring pupil performance, supervising intervals and lunches, enforcing uniform, supporting vulnerable children, liaising with local authority, etc. etc.

We are now also; enforcing mask-wearing; monitoring corridor and stairwell traffic direction, determining teaching area capacity, collating seating plans, advising on medical-based health and safety, deciding who does or does not constitute a ‘close contact’, reading lengthy documentation and then generating paperwork to explain covid protocols – and then updating it regularly, reading regular updates from SQA and generating documentation to explain to staff, pupils and parents of new protocols regarding certification for the session – and then updating it, inventing methods to listen to and liaise with parents remotely, enhanced online access for parents to contact direct has led to increased workload often out-of-hours. There now seems an expectation from the authority, parents and pupils of access at any time, including weekends and holidays; reassuring anxious pupils, reassuring anxious parents, reassuring anxious colleagues and trying not to feel too anxious ourselves.

As stated in the remote meeting of the Network, in general we find that a single reported positive pupil case takes two and a half hours to process. Identifying named pupil’s attendance, identifying classes attended, checking seating plan, identifying close contacts, generating information letters for close contacts, isolating those pupils and explaining what’s happening, sending them home and updating the system.

GCC has advised that we check for 48 hours before first symptom – I know other colleagues are being asked to do more.

There is no-one outside the Senior Leadership Team to do this work and, while my Headteacher is reasonable and sensible there is little traditional work which can be abandoned or postponed to alleviate the workload issues.

On a personal note; as the timetabler I gave over approx. three and a half weeks of the summer break to timetabling issues – only to be told halfway through that process that an arbitrary time had been determined and I would have to begin again.

The only traditional work which has been cancelled and thus freed time up is parents' nights. The 6 x 5 hours in the WTA which we have benefited from is wiped out quickly by the significant hours of covid-SQA work and covid-pupil isolation and supervision work."