



INTERACTIVE
SCHOOLS

COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS

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www.interactiveschools.com



PURPOSE

COVID-19 is likely to have a significant impact on the education sector and many schools are already expecting financial difficulties ahead of the next academic year.

Because of the dynamic nature of government advice, schools have the challenging task of trying to communicate effectively with stakeholders in a time of ongoing uncertainty. Interactive Schools recognises that effective, integrated and coordinated communication is integral to the future success of the sector.

This supportive framework has been devised to help school leaders as they develop a strategy to mitigate the risks presented by COVID-19, build understanding amongst the school community and look towards a positive future.

This can be applied in the context of any school and aims to help school leaders to:

- Retain current students and their families
- Ensure recruitment targets are met
- Support the wider school community.

This framework should be implemented with positivity and confidence. Whilst it may seem unrealistic to focus on recruiting

new families in the midst of a pandemic, a recent study concluded that there does not appear to be a major drop in parents' ability to pay school fees.

Furthermore, parents who currently pay no fees said they would be prepared to sacrifice a new car **(45%)** or holidays **(36%)** in order to afford an independent education for their child¹. This provides a great opportunity for schools to use their fantastic work in recent months as a springboard for increased admissions enquiries in the next academic year and beyond.

This document also includes a social media content plan. This will help schools to structure their communications approach to fulfil the objectives above. Whilst it may be appropriate for schools to use this in its entirety, leaders should amend according to the school's size, type and available resources.



SIMON NOAKES
Founder and CEO



BEN WESTON-CONWAY
Marketing Manager

¹MTM Research, 2020



FRAMEWORK

The following principles should be at the heart of communications across all channels.

RATIONAL

Display sound logical thinking

ENCOURAGING

Focus on positive steps

ACCESSIBLE

Identify channels for maximum engagement

COOPERATIVE

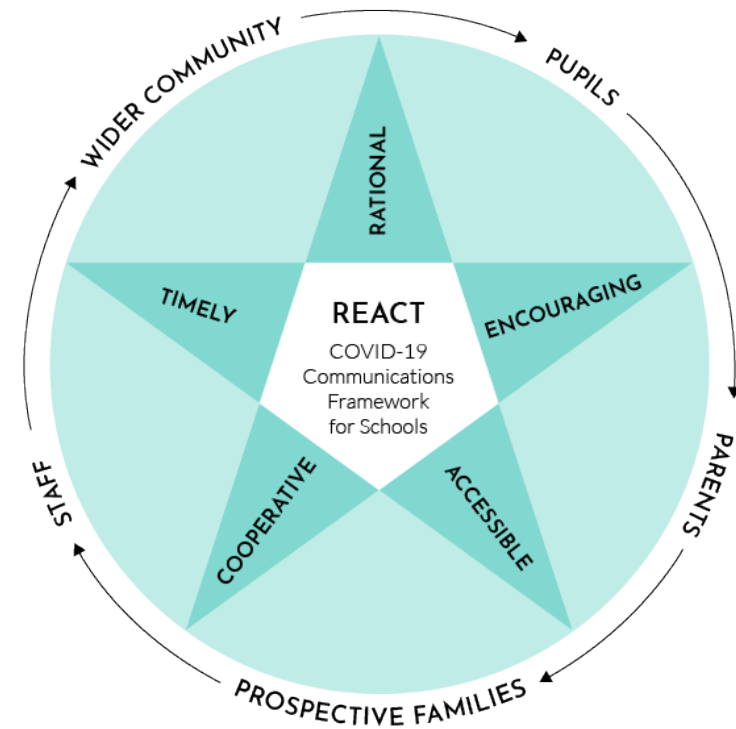
Listen to and understand stakeholders

TIMELY

Allow space for measured decision-making

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Pupils
- Parents
- Prospective Families
- Staff
- Wider Community



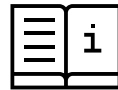


CHECKLIST



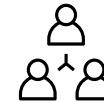
CREATE A BACK TO SCHOOL LANDING PAGE ON THE WEBSITE

As the return to school approaches, information will change regularly. It can be helpful to direct your community to a page on your website where they can access the most current information.



A GUIDE FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Give your school community a document that outlines your thinking for the new school year. We've included a full template for you - you just have to put the information in!



FORWARD PARENT COMMS TO STAFF

It's easy to forget your staff in the hustle and bustle, so ensure they're always copied in on parent communications. If parents know things that staff members don't, then questions will be raised.



SET UP A DEDICATED EMAIL ACCOUNT

Creating a dedicated email account to receive your stakeholder's questions will ensure nothing is missed. Ensure this address is clearly advertised on your website and across social media channels.

TOP TIP: To ensure people don't start calling up and banging the front door down, set up an automatic reply saying that you'll reply to all emails within 2 working days.



SCHEDULE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Use your social media channels to raise the spirits! Summer is often a downtime for school socials, but with just months until the new academic year (and recruitment cycle) it's important to build momentum.



DON'T FORGET YOUR ALUMNI

The last few months have shown us the importance of community. Many of your older alumni might've spent considerable time alone during lockdown so try and make yourself available to them - they'll reward you one day.



CREATE YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL LANDING PAGE

It might seem obvious to create a back to school landing page on the website, but deciding what to include is the difficult part! We suggest the following to ensure that the school community remains informed, inspired and positive.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You'll save a huge amount of time answering emails if you create an FAQ section. Using questions that have already been asked is a great starting point, but be sure to put yourself in the shoes of all the stakeholders in the REACT Framework.

VIDEOS

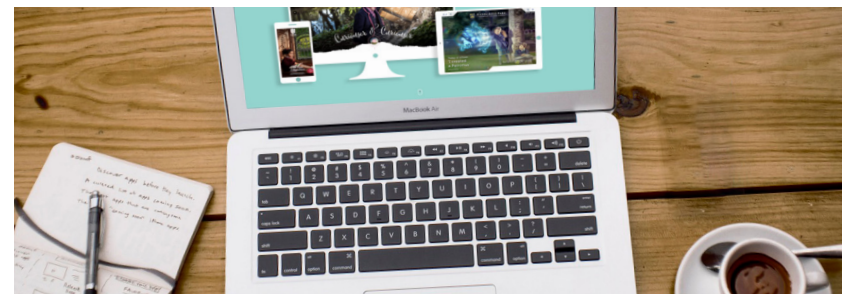
Reassuring the school community that you're going the extra mile to keep them safe is easily displayed through a short video. Perhaps you'll have the Headteacher or Principal introducing your approach or the Director of Estates discussing the additional clearing protocols. However you decide to go about it, a face-to-camera video always helps to build confidence and trust.

SCHOOL PLEDGE

Have you considered writing a pledge that all members of the school community must adhere to? If we're going to beat this virus, everybody will have to take accountability for their own health, the wellbeing of others and cooperate with anti-infection measures.

SIMPLE GRAPHICS

In addition to FAQs, consider creating a graphic that translates all the complex reopening contingencies into an easily-understandable, color-coded image. Your school community will appreciate the simplicity in these stressful times!





CREATE YOUR GUIDE TO THE 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR

During this time of ongoing uncertainty, keeping your stakeholders informed and engaged is vital.

You're unlikely to recruit new pupils without providing an adequate level of information, so why should you expect to retain them without letting the know how different their school will look? Think of this document as your one-off prospectus for the new academic year.

This is primarily an information piece, but there's extra marks for schools who can weave their brand values into their guide (think resilience, adaptability, community).



INTRODUCTION

Tell your school's unique story. Acknowledge the incredible effort the community put in to carry on teaching during lockdown and give hope for a safe and successful future.

All schools will have faced their own unique challenges in the last few months and are likely to look very different when the new academic year arrives. Explain what this document will include, why it has been written and where the school community can access further information and support.

TEAM

You probably have a specific COVID Response Team (or one with a less scary name!) working tirelessly to prepare for the new academic year, so let people know who they are. This will build confidence amongst the school community, especially if it's being led by a well-respected senior staff member.



ESTATE PREPARATION

Presenting a comprehensive plan prior to the start of term will allow parents, pupils and staff to sufficiently prepare for any new protocols. You'll also be alleviating the element of the unknown so the more thorough you are the better.

ADDITIONAL DISTANCING MEASURES

How will you adhere to social distancing measures? Explain the systems you plan to put in place, such as one-way corridors or placing students in 'bubbles' or 'pods'.

CLEANING

Highlight the improvements you've made to your cleaning service, such as increased staff numbers or additional quality control.

TRANSPORT

New parents will be particularly anxious about transportation anyway, so some additional info about bus services and drop-offs would be well received.

ENTRY POINTS

Are there any changes to the entrances and exits that require explanation? Communicating these comprehensively will avoid confusion and save you a lot of time on the first day back.

EVENTS

Events such as assemblies and chapel services are a vital part of school life, so highlight if and how these will continue. Explain what needs to happen before they return to normal.

LUNCH

Have you changed your lunch procedures? If you're planning to use tactics such as staggered sittings, let the school community know.

VISITORS

Explain the changes you've made to your visitor policies. Staff may have already started planning activities and parents will want to know that their children aren't exposed to risk.

HEALTH CHECKS

Do you plan to take temperature checks? Pupils and staff will be disappointed if they aren't warned, so be honest and open about your plans.

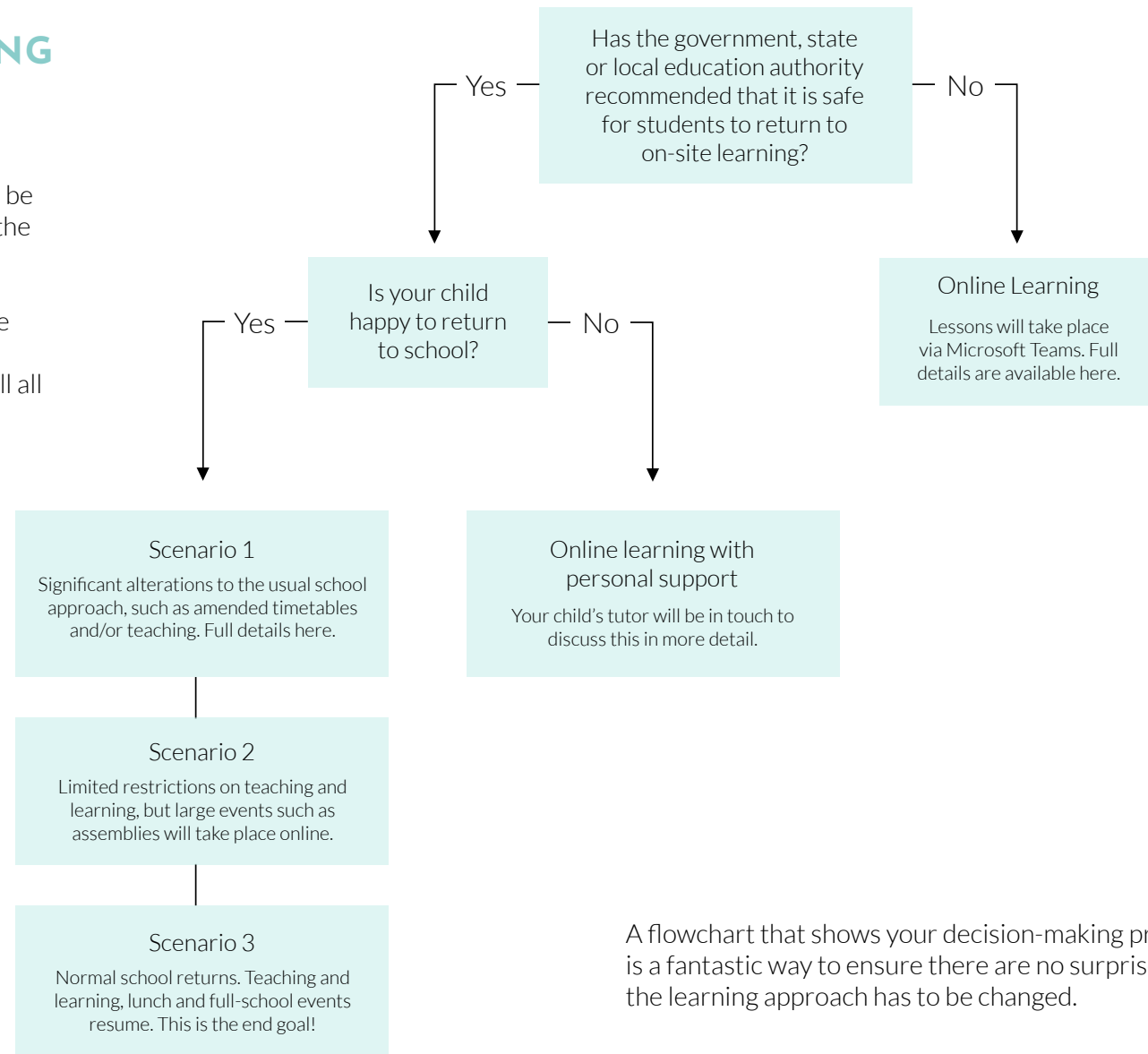




TEACHING AND LEARNING

Emphasise any changes to your timetable and curriculum. Although many schools have adapted well to remote learning, parents will be very eager to ensure their child gets back in the classroom with a 'live' teacher soon!

Explain how you will approach teaching in the new academic year. Will there be no on-site lessons, only some pupils will be on site or will all pupils will be on site?



A flowchart that shows your decision-making process is a fantastic way to ensure there are no surprises if the learning approach has to be changed.



EXAMINATIONS

Exams and grading will likely be adjusted or changed for most schools. Whatever your curriculum, ensure that you include key information from the exam board, government advice and your own plans.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Be open and forthright about your plans for school trips. Whether you plan to cancel them all, press on ahead or reassess closer to the time, lay out your decision-making process. Parents may have invested heavily and pupils will be excited for them, so be honest early.

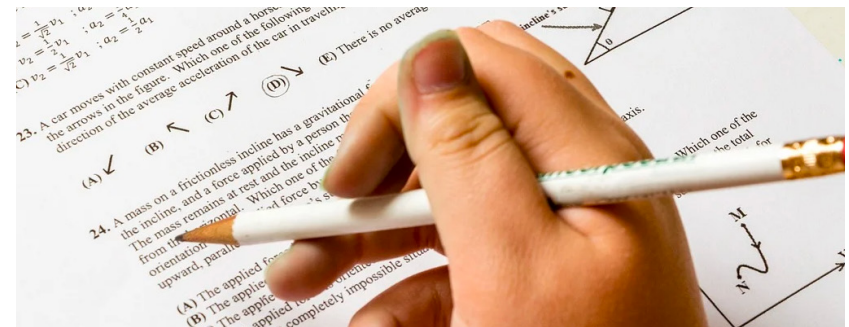
CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The co-curricular programme is often the reason many families choose a school. Lay out your plans for the upcoming year and note any activities that will not be taking place, those that will and those that will be adapted.

ADMISSIONS

Be unequivocal about your admissions process. How will open days take place? Will you still have an assessment process? Do you plan to interview students remotely and how will you help them navigate the challenges of that?

Update your website with any decisions you make. Families will already be anxious about making admissions decisions so any clarity you can give will be vital. They'll also appreciate the lengths you're going to already to ensure safety for current pupils so linking to this guide can't do any harm!





CONTENT PLAN

Creating content for social media can be a thankless task, especially when there are numerous stakeholder groups to consider. This content plan will help you to engage with your audiences on an emotional level, which will increase engagement and enhance brand affinity.

	SUMMER BREAK				2 WEEKS TO GO..				BACK AT SCHOOL					
PUPILS (including new entrants)	Normality	Enjoyment	Pride	Reflect & Throwback	Reassurance	Excitement	Normality	Logistics	Pride	Normality	Enjoyment			
PARENTS (including new entrants)	Logistics	Thanks & Gratitude					Thanks			Reassurance		Enjoyment		
STAFF	Enjoyment						Thinking of you			1:1 calls with alumni		Thinking of you	Thinking of you	Virtual events
WIDER COMMUNITY	Thinking of you						Excitement			Lead Generation		Lead Generation	Virtual Open Events	1:1 Calls with applicants
PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES	Enquires Welcome						Pride			Logistics		Excitement	Lead Generation	Virtual Open Events

For examples of amazing Back to School communications that we love,
check out our Content Hall of Fame on Twitter at **#IntSchoolsHoF**



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