

Guidance for Managers and Staff on Quarantine on international travel during the summer holidays (correct as of 27 May 2021)

With the easing of restrictions on the Government's roadmap including changes to the measures in place for international travel and being mindful of the proximity to the summer holidays and the information published by the Joint School Workforce in May 2021, we felt it important to provide an update on the previous guidance that we issued on 1 July 2020.

Everyone has worked hard to keep schools open and minimise the disruption to our children's safety, wellbeing and education over the last 15 months. We know that staff continue to be committed to minimising the disruption for children as we start the new academic year in September 2021.

It is not possible at this point to ascertain what the exact position will be in August and therefore whether (or not) staffing in September will be affected by quarantine requirements that may still be in place (or perhaps reintroduced) on re-entering the UK from some countries.

Current UK Government guidance on international travel is that "We continue to advise against all non-essential international travel to some countries and territories. You should check the country page for your destination. We also currently advise against cruise ship travel. We are monitoring the international situation closely and keeping our advice under constant review, so that it reflects our latest assessment of risks to British people."

At present the restrictions are that travelling abroad and then returning to England is based on a system of lists (denoted by colour) depending on the country you are travelling to. These are green, amber and red list countries. The rules on each are set out here Red, amber and green list rules for entering England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Whilst, in the past, it has not been appropriate to ask our staff their personal plans and where they intend to take leave outside of the school term, we are now in a position where international travel requirements on return has the potential to impact on the ability of school staff to physically return to work in school at the start of the school term.

Given the clear traffic light system any employees going abroad must be fully cognisant of the quarantine requirements on re-entering the UK and the impact this may have on their availability for work.

Current government guidance is clear that individuals should not travel to red or amber list countries or territories. However, should an employee set out to travel to or through a red or amber list country, they will be doing so in full knowledge of the requirement to quarantine for 10 days on their return (either in an approved hotel or at home depending on the status of the country returning from). Therefore, the period of that quarantine should be taken into account in order to ensure that they are available to attend school on the first day of term.

Travel is now allowed directly to / from Green List countries and there is no requirement to quarantine on return, but a COVID test must be taken on arrival or within two days two of arriving back home.

If that test returns a positive result, then the employee will be instructed to self-isolate and follow the usual procedures that they would adopt after receiving a positive covid-19 test, including a period of 10-day self-isolation. If fit and well do so, they would be expected to work during this time, although we recognise that this is not ideal within a school environment.

Due to the pandemic no travel is risk-free, and many countries have closed their borders, restricted entry to UK travellers and introduced requirements for a negative test result and/or quarantine measures. Therefore, anyone can expect that any country may further restrict travel or bring in new quarantine rules at short notice.

All employees are expected to plan carefully, follow local advice and avoid any unnecessary risk wherever possible. There may be situations where an employee has booked to travel to a destination on the green list, however due to regulations in the UK changing whilst they were out of the country they have unwittingly found themselves needing to self-isolate. Any such cases will be looked at on an individual basis and evidence of travel arrangements will likely be requested in these circumstances.

In any event it is important to ensure everyone is fully cognisant and understands their responsibility to check the quarantine requirements before embarking on any travel abroad, so that they may allow sufficient time to complete any period of quarantine or self-isolation before the return to work date.

Where requirements for those returning from abroad are known in advance, any period of term-time quarantine or self-isolation resulting from foreign travel may have to be taken as unpaid leave, unless permission has been agreed in advance with the relevant authority that the employee is able to carry out their work from home. There will be a number of considerations that need to be explored before making a firm decision:

- Working from home (undertaking their own, or alternative, duties)
- Repaying the absence as additional hours worked over a period of time (applicable to support staff whose expected schedule of work could be undertaken at other times)
- taking additional paid annual leave (*applies to all year-round support staff only*)
- taking unpaid leave

There is no one-size-fits-all, or blanket approach; each case should receive full and sympathetic consideration on its merits. For example, circumstances may include:

- family funeral abroad
- pre-booked holidays that cannot be cancelled without incurring financial cost (i.e. insurers will not reimburse cost) that were arranged before quarantine could have been envisaged)
- pre-booked holidays that the tour operator has not cancelled but has instead rescheduled on fixed dates which, if cancelled by the customer, would be at financial cost to them.

Any staff affected by this guidance should raise the matter with their line manager prior to travel, in order that their options on return are discussed and agreed in advance.