

*Dear Colleagues*

*Understandably, schools are concerned about how the current unprecedented situation will impact on school admission appeals as we approach the busiest time of year for appeals. I understand that schools are having some difficulties in convening appeal panels and making practical arrangements for appeals to be heard.*

*At the moment, the Department for Education have made no official statement on whether schools can make any adjustments to the current arrangements as outlined in the School Admission Appeals Code. However, the Catholic Education Service is actively pursuing this with the DfE and will provide further guidance as soon as it is available.*

*Parents will be understandably anxious and schools will want to resolve the situation as soon as possible. However, at the moment schools may need to advise parents that until further guidance is issued by the DfE that there may be a delay to their appeal being heard.*

*In terms of the timescales for appeals, these are all based on school days and as schools are currently closed, then in my view it is unlikely that school days won't begin to be counted until schools officially reopen for all pupils.*

*Although the DfE haven't confirmed this, in my opinion there is unlikely to be a situation where schools will be criticised if they postpone the process for the moment. Parents would need to be informed that it is not possible to continue with their appeal at the moment due to the Government's guidance on social distancing but that as soon as the appeal hearing can be convened then they will be informed. Please ensure that parents understand that their appeal will go ahead, but that the current situation means that it could be delayed but will not be cancelled entirely. It is also possible that parents will have many other concerns at the moment and some may even take a postponement as a welcome relief if they have other issues that they are struggling with.*

*Please be assured that I will continue to pursue this with the Catholic Education Service and as soon as further guidance is received from the DfE on how to proceed with appeals, I will update schools further.*

*With best wishes*

*Rebecca Tonks*