Twitter Thread by Steve Howell



Steve Howell
@SteveHowell30

PRUs and AP - A thread on the impact of the current situation....
Let's start by saying that I don't want us to be closed to any child at all, I want every pupil in accessing their education; but I want that to be done safely for children, staff and the wider community...

When the government announced a delay to pupils returning to school PRUs and AP were not included; then organisations like @prusapuk and beyond applied pressure to have this rolled back, we can now work with parents for the first week. Whatever that means...

Here's a few of the reasons why PRUs and APs must be treated equally:
Firstly, the view that all of our pupils are somehow vulnerable at home is disrespectful to our families. They did amazingly during the first lockdown and would do the same again; the same as any other family!

IT access is an issue, but we have had good engagement with online learning when bubbles have closed and this shouldn't, in my view, be used as a balance against safety and health! There are ways around it....

My experience is that we have a higher number of families living in 3 generation households than many mainstreams; pupils with elderly grandparents living with them! Protecting these families is crucial to protecting lives and the NHS capacity.

The view that we have lower numbers on site and therefore can manage social distancing better is a complete myth! The needs of some pupils mean that they simply can't / don't / won't distance. This is nuances the risk considerably.

Not only that, it ignores the chronic underinvestment by successive governments in our buildings. Some AP free schools have been placed in totally inappropriate buildings such as office blocks, not set up for schooling at all.

PRU sites are some of the worst buildings in the whole school estate... my own 5 secondary sites are made up of ex housing office buildings, children's centres and sites with classrooms so small I can't fit enough desks in for a whole group. Social distancing isn't possible...

This doesn't take into account the fact than many PRUs are catering for medical needs, some have pupils with such challenging anxieties, for example, that this period is actually making it worse for them.

Nor does it take into account that many PRUs and APs are tiny; with tiny staffing teams and budgets on their knees. Some have lost considerable funding due to the pandemic. Even 1 or 2 staff off in these settings makes managing almost impossible.

Finally, what about the fact that our pupils want to be seen as the same; they don't want to be different. We fight everyday for that in our settings with the education offer we provide and the government can support this with their decision making....

It also adds to the likelihood that they may not come anyway, knowing many pupils in mainstream are at home they will vote with their feet or their families will decide to keep them at home to protect them.... quite legitimately you have to say!

We need to be treated equally; whatever decisions are made for mainstream must be replicated for PRUs and APs. Treating our children and families differently is intolerable....