

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Sheet 6 - Governance 24 June 2020



The Local Authority (LA) continue to circulate communications via email, to leaders in schools. These updates contain up-to-date information for schools. All Covid-19 Schools Updates can be viewed on the Cumbria County Council (CCC) website: <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/education.asp>. There are also regular updates released by [Department for Education](#) and [National Governance Association](#).

The information and guidance contained within this document highlights recent updates for the attention of all governors.

Education planning during summer break

Schools in Cumbria have received correspondence from Senior Leaders which clearly states that there is no expectation for schools in the county to remain open over the summer holiday period.

A copy of the letter can be downloaded [here](#).

Catch up fund

The government has announced a new £1bn catch-up fund, with £350m earmarked for a national tutoring programme for the “most disadvantaged” pupils, and a further £650m provided to both primary and secondary schools for catch-up education for pupils who have missed out on education due to the coronavirus pandemic [more information is provided here](#). The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that further information will be available next week.

Free internet vouchers

A six-month free wireless internet scheme will be made available to families without adequate internet access, through a joint scheme run by BT and the DfE. The scheme aims to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to continue their education remotely throughout the pandemic.

Free School Meals

Further to increasing pressure on the government, including a campaign led by footballer Marcus Rashford, calling for school meal vouchers to be provided throughout the summer holidays has led to a reversal in the government's plans. The DfE will now provide families, with children who are eligible for free school meals, a food voucher that can be used for the entire six-week period. The DfE says that schools will be asked to submit orders for the support required with further guidance on this due to be released soon.

Updated NGA guidance on Governing in COVID-19 times: preparing for the next stages

NGA has updated its COVID-19 guidance for governing boards on business continuity with new content that looks forward to September when schools begin to gradually welcome back more pupils and governing boards will also be returning to more normal business routines.

The guidance recognises that the board's cycle of meetings, reports, monitoring and decision making are informed by high level strategic priorities for the school and for the time being at least, boards will also be maintaining a strategic overview of their school plans for ensuring that as many pupils as possible can return safely from September 2020 based on the government advice, which may or may not allow for all pupils to return safely in September 2020.

Governing boards should be considering how their annual schedule of business will work in practice, if the national guidance, which advises against the governing board meeting in person, remains in place beyond September 2020.

NGA has also updated its FAQs, which now cover a range of issues governing boards and schools are facing as a result of COVID-19.

Ofsted inspection reports to be released

Back in March, Ofsted announced that the majority of [school inspections were to be suspended](#) as schools partially closed to pupils who were not classed as vulnerable or a child of a key worker at that time. This temporary suspension included suspending the release of inspection reports that were due to be published. Ofsted decided that the release of inspection reports should not add to the pressures schools faced while responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

This week, Ofsted have announced that they will resume the publication of inspection reports for schools that were held back, as more schools begin to reopen to more pupils. Ofsted stated that “to delay publication would not be in the best public interest”. Ofsted have not released any information about a timeline for the possibility for future inspections.

Flexible wider opening to pupils

DfE has confirmed that that primary schools with extra capacity can welcome back pupils from any year groups this term, providing it does not require additional funding, staff or classrooms to do so. [Government guidance](#) has been updated to reflect that it is up to primary schools to decide which pupils to prioritise, based on their knowledge of the children concerned and the local community, should they have room to do so safely.

There is no expectation on primary schools to welcome back additional children where they do not have the capacity to do so at this point, with provision for children of critical workers, vulnerable children, and children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, remaining the priority, with schools ensuring as many of these pupils attend as possible.

Governing boards should be assured that any such moves do not compromise the robustness of the relevant risk assessment and its compliance with approaches set out in the guidance on [implementing protective measures](#).

As most secondary schools across the country have now opened more widely, the DfE has confirmed that they are not able to welcome back more children to class this term, beyond the current offer to Y10 and Y12 pupils, and provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. However the guidance has been amended to say that (as long as it happens in line with wider protective measures guidance, and guidance on the numbers of pupils permitted on-site at any one time), the DfE would encourage secondary schools that are keen to invite pupils in other year groups in for a face-to-face meeting before the end of this term to do so where it would be beneficial. This time can be used to check-in on pupils, and ensure they are supported before a return to school from September or moving into employment or the next stage of education.

