

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Sheet 7 - Governance 8 July 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](#) (DfE) and [National Governance Association](#) (NGA).

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

DfE guidance for the full opening of schools

DfE has issued [Guidance for full opening of schools](#) as from September 2020. The guidance seeks to answer questions, covering a wide number of areas that leaders and those governing will want to seek assurance over ahead of September. The majority of the guidance is of an operational nature, with it being left to school staff to implement locally. Although the guidance is lengthy we advise that governors read the information as there are some key strategic considerations that emerge as a result of the guidance. Here is a brief outline of the key areas impacting the role of the governing board (as supplied by NGA and DfE):

Risk – Since schools have been welcoming back more pupils since 1 June, schools have been busy assessing risk and implementing proportionate control measures to reduce the risk of infection on school premises. However the guidance stresses it is a legal requirement to revisit and update that risk assessment for Autumn term planning. This includes a monitoring process that seeks to ensure controls are effective, working as planned and updated taking account of changes to public health advice. While this remains the responsibility of executive leaders, this should be shared with the governing board and there should be an ongoing conversation with the board regarding how robust the assessment is, with boards building in regular space on their agenda to review it.

Attendance – Attendance will once again be mandatory from September 2020. Leaders, staff, and parents are understandably keen to understand how this will work in practice. There may be few exceptions, including: if pupils are self-isolating in line with public health advice; if rates of infection rise in local areas and they are advised to shield as a result; pupils under the care of public health professionals. While parents could not be penalised for their child’s non-attendance at school during lockdown itself, the government is clear the circumstances have now changed. Absence fines will begin to be issued again in the Autumn term and headteachers continue to have legal discretion as to when to issue them as a last resort where there is no valid reason for absence.

There is likely to be some parents who remain reluctant to send their children to school and governing boards will need to continue to work with leaders to ensure that communications going out to parents are clear and as reassuring as they can possibly be. Governing boards should ask leaders what steps are being taken to encourage all children, and especially vulnerable children to attend school. Governing boards should consider supporting the communications from the school, which could involve the co-signing of a letter that goes out to parents.

School workforce - The guidance states from September 2020, the DfE expects that most staff will attend school, with the relaxation of shielding measures. More guidance is expected on this pause in shielding.

There is a reminder that governing boards should be mindful of staff work-life balance and wellbeing; this means governing boards working with school leaders to ensure that organisations are doing all they can to explain the measure being put in place to staff, delivering strong, clear communication that provides staff with the confidence they need to carry out their roles. The guidance also reminds governing boards of the key role employers’ play in providing a duty of care that takes account of mental health and wellbeing of staff, including their headteacher, especially as the impact of COVID-19 will continue to be felt for some time to come.

Extra-curricular activity – Schools are encouraged to resume breakfast and after school provision, while it is recognised a degree of flexibility is needed as disruption may continue as the new academic year begins. It is important that school leaders feel equipped to set realistic expectations with stakeholders including parents, and governing boards will need to be mindful that initially there may be some disruption to extra-curricular activity and this may lead to some disappointment from parents and pupils.

Curriculum and its delivery – The guidance specifies that the curriculum should remain both broad and ambitious, and that means a wide range of subjects continue to be taught, and where remote education continues to be needed, it is of high quality and aligns closely with in-school provision. The government expects an ambitious curriculum to be in action from the start of the Autumn term with the long term aim for everyone to return to the school’s normal curriculum in all subjects by the summer term 2021.

Contingency plans for outbreaks – The guidance contains specific advice for putting in place plans in the event of a local outbreak. The DfE will be involved in local discussions in the event of localised community spread, and will provide support in such an event. Localised spread may result in the LA or PHE health protection team advising schools to close, in which case, schools will be expected to immediately have a plan for remote education to continue. Governing boards should seek assurances from executive leaders that this is the case, and question how recent experience is being reviewed and how the remote education offer can be improved further.

Accountability, data and exams – The school performance tables remain suspended and no school will be judged on 2020 exams and assessments. DfE has confirmed within the guidance that they need to be able to assess the impact of Covid 19 on pupils, and will therefore continue with plans to conduct statutory primary assessment in the summer of 2021.

Following the decision to cancel exams, Summer 2020, Ofqual consulted on the views on their proposals for the key aspects of the arrangements for an exam series in the Autumn 2020 and their decision to offer the opportunity to sit exams in Autumn 2020 has been [released](#). Ofqual will now consult with the exam boards on the changes to their regulatory framework to implement these new decisions.

GCSEs and A levels will take place in summer 2021, but “with adaptations” which seek to free up teaching time. The start of the exam season may be moved to June. Last week Ofqual opened a further consultation seeking views to modify the assessment requirements for some GCSEs, AS and A levels 2021. The [consultation](#) closes on 16 July 2020 and is open to all.

Considering the amount of teaching time lost governing boards will therefore need to ask leaders how ready are pupils to face exams in 2021 and what other options there are to help equip students ahead of examinations next year, especially as more disruption due to Covid-19 in the Autumn remains a prevalent threat. NGA has produced some guidance for governing boards on [Reducing the impact of school closures on disadvantaged pupils - updated 19 June 2020](#), which may be useful.

Ofsted – The guidance states the intention is for routine inspection to resume from January 2021, meaning inspections will remain suspended during the autumn term. Instead, inspectors will be visiting a sample of schools, through a one day visit, to “discuss how they are managing return to education”. These will be collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations. While the visits will not result in formal judgements, “a brief letter” will be published following the visit, although at this stage it is not clear exactly what will be included, and how schools will be held to account with what the letter includes. There are some key questions that have emerged as a result of this announcement, including how schools will be selected for these visits, and exactly how the information gathered will be used, although the guidance does make it clear that “insights that inspectors gather will also be aggregated nationally to share learning with the sector, the government and the wider public”.

Additional Guidance Issued

[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#) - guidance which provides specific advice on approaches for reducing the risk of transmission and other operational considerations that special educational settings should follow as they prepare for welcoming all students back to their setting in September 2020.

This [guidance](#) explains the actions that further education (FE) and skills providers should take for all learners from September.

Early years providers will be following the same protective measures as schools. Further information about these [protective measures](#) is available on the DfE website.

Free School Meals and Breakfasts during summer holidays

DfE has released guidance on the [Covid Summer Food Fund](#) which will provide free school meals during the six-week summer holiday period as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including the [temporary extension of free school meal eligibility to children of families with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\) groups](#). Schools will need to place orders at least one week before their school term ends.

This is in addition to the [free school meals national voucher scheme](#) that supports children who usually receive benefits-related free school meals.

Thousands of children offered nutritious breakfasts during summer

Children from more than 1,800 schools in England who are currently part of our Breakfast Clubs programme will now be offered healthy breakfasts over the summer.

Paediatric First Aid Training

Early Years Providers will be aware of the statutory requirement to have someone with paediatric first aid on site. If certificates expired after 16 March 2020, Ofsted have extended that qualification until no later than 30 September 2020. The full guidance is available [here](#).

School funding

Exceptional costs associated with Covid-19

The government has issued details about how schools can claim for [exceptional costs associated with COVID19](#). The deadline for submitting the online claim is **Tuesday 21 July 2020** for eligible costs incurred to the time of the submission. There are 3 agreed cost categories against which you can make a claim:

- increased premises related costs of keeping schools open over school holiday periods, for vulnerable children and children of critical workers
- support for free school meal (FSM) children who are not attending school, other than through the national voucher scheme
- additional cleaning, over and above existing cleaning arrangements, where you have a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Alternative provision (AP): Year 11 transition funding

This one-off funding is intended to fund [additional transition support](#) provided by AP settings for year 11 pupils from now to the end of the 2020 autumn term.

Safeguarding

Keeping children safe online

As a result of necessary actions involved in dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak there has been a dramatic increase of time spent online, including children. DfE has produced and have been continually updating [guidance](#) to help parents and carers stay safe online.

Process for managing suspected cases of Covid-19 in schools and settings

Following discussion with schools and early years providers the CCCs Public Health Team has produced a one page summary [guide](#) covering the steps educational settings should take if there is a known or suspected COVID-19 case among staff or pupils.

Data Collections

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): reducing burdens on educational and care settings](#), provides a list of the current status of data collections and services from DFE.

Baseline Assessment

The Government has [announced](#) that plans to introduce the [Reception Baseline Assessment](#) this Autumn have now been moved back a year to Autumn 2021, due to the unforeseen challenges posed by the pandemic.

Secretary of State for Education updates

Ofsted Inspections

Secretary of State for Education issues a [third notice for July 2020](#), about changes to state-funded school inspections requirements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

School Attendance

Secretary of State for Education issues a [third notice for July 2020](#), to disapply offences for non-attendance in schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Education, Health and Care Plans, modification notice

Secretary of State for Education issues a [third notice for July 2020](#), to modify the duty relating to education, health and care plans during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Registration of pupils, modification notice

Secretary of State for Education issues a [third notice for July 2020](#), to modify pupil registration requirements when providing education on a temporary basis during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments

Secretary of State for education issues [further notice for July 2020](#) on the temporary changes to special educational needs and disability legislation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.