

Annex 2 - Monthly update on schools and early years

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Background

The purpose of this paper is to provide a monthly update on the opening and operation of early years settings and schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Planning for full opening in September

It is the government's intention that all settings, schools and colleges should be fully open in September. The Department for Education has published a range of guidance for early years settings and schools to support planning for full re-opening in September. In York, leaders and managers and headteachers share this aim and have been working hard during the summer term to implement measures to facilitate the safe opening of their settings and schools for all children and young people from 7th September. On 2nd July, the Department for Education published guidance to support settings, schools and further education colleges with planning for full opening in September.

The rationale for full opening is fully articulated in the guidance documents but central to the government's decision are the following considerations:

- The prevalence of coronavirus (Covid-19) has decreased and the NHS Test and Trace system is running.
- Public Health England is clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools.
- Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing -we know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.
- The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school.
- Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well-qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households, school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.

Planning for the full return to school in September has meant that settings and schools have had to revise their risk assessments and this process will continue throughout the summer in response to any further updates to guidance from the Department for Education. Central to the planning has been the need to minimise

contacts between groups of children and adults to prevent any potential spread of the virus. This requires schools to work in year group bubbles of children and young people. This grouping by bubble reduces the need for social distancing in classrooms. The guidance published by the Department for Education on 2nd July is less prescriptive than the guidance published prior to the extended opening of schools from 1st June. The guidance acknowledges that individual schools will need to develop operational plans which will vary according to the context of each school, but the common factor for all schools is the need to strictly enforce prevention and infection control measures. To ensure that schools are preventing spread of Covid-19 they must take the following actions:

- 1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
 - 2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
 - 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
 - 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
 - 5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
 - 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time. Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances. Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.*

Schools have been provided with information about how to deal with a case of infection. These measures include:

- 7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
 - 8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community
 - 9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice
- Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.*

In York, settings and schools have been provided with detailed guidance by the city's public health team and have been proactive in contacting the public health team to ask for additional guidance and support throughout the summer term. The Public Health nurse consultant, Anita Dobson, has continued to attend meetings of the York Schools and Academies Board, the early years reference group and the maintained heads meetings. These briefings have been highly valued by early years managers and headteachers and have helped to inform their work on risk assessments.

School transport and planning for full opening of schools

The council is working with schools to promote the importance of walking and cycling to school for those children and young people who are able to do so. For those schools with dedicated school buses the school services team have been working with each school to discuss their plans for the full return of all pupils in September. The majority of schools in the city want to avoid making too many significant changes to the structure of the school day through having to have staggered arrivals

and departure times. This means that they have been developing site plans which keep year groups separated through using different entrances and dedicated outdoor spaces for year group bubbles. Schools which use dedicated school transport are:

- Applefields Special School
- Danesgate
- Hob Moor Oaks Special School
- Fulford School
- Huntington secondary school
- Tadcaster Grammar

The school services team have been meeting with school leaders and York Pullman to review school transport arrangements for September and to put transport plans in place. This is a complex piece of work as the requirements for each school varies according to the operational plans being developed by each school. Huntington secondary has requested that transport should be provided in year group bubbles. In practice this will increase the number of buses needed and this would increase the cost of school transport to the school by £40-50k per term. As there are already pressures on the school transport budget this needs to be considered carefully and alternatives are being explored including the mixing of year groups but ensuring the face masks are worn. Both Fulford School and Tadcaster Grammar have decided not to ask for transport for each year group bubble. The guidance published by the Department for Education states that:

The approach to dedicated transport should align as far as possible with the principles underpinning the system of controls set out in this document and with the approach being adopted for your school. It is important to consider:

- how pupils are grouped together on transport, where possible this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school
- use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and/or disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles
- organised queuing and boarding where possible
- distancing within vehicles wherever possible
- the use of face coverings for children over the age of 11, where appropriate, for example, if they are likely to come into very close contact with people outside of their group or who they do not normally meet

Secondary pupils will be asked to wear face masks which pupils/parents will be asked to provide. For the two primary school services, under 11's are exempt from wearing masks, so it will be business as usual.

For Hob Moor Oaks and Applefields transport is being planned according to the bubbles the pupils will be in, this has resulted in having to use 5 additional vehicles. For all other pupils to all other schools using taxi/ 8 seater mini buses including SEND and CLAC transport will not be in in bubbles. Work is taking place with Danesgate as they are moving towards delivering a more normal school day. This

would help to manage costs as larger vehicles can be used. School services will continue to work with schools and colleagues in transport services on over the next 7 weeks to ensure that transport plans are in place to support the full return to school in September.

DfE ICT devices scheme

York received delivery of 454 ICT devices (laptops, chrome books and dongles) on 18th June. These will be allocated to children 0-19 with a social worker, care leavers and disadvantaged Year 10 students in maintained schools. The laptops have been delivered to the majority of children and the remaining laptops will be delivered to families in early August.

Free School Meals over the summer holidays

During week beginning 15th June the government confirmed that it would be looking to extend support for children in receipt of free school meals over the summer holiday. This has resulted in an extension of the voucher scheme to cover the 7 weeks of the summer holidays. Schools were required to order vouchers for eligible children by Friday 10th July. Families will receive an e-voucher for £105 to cover the 7 week summer holiday.

The Covid Catch Up Premium

The Department for Education is allocating £80 per pupil in reception through to Year 11 to all mainstream schools to support universal catch-up activities. Special schools, alternative provision and hospital schools will be provided with £240 per pupil. The money will be paid in 3 tranches, with the first part payment being made in the autumn term. The funding will only be available for 2020/21 and schools are advised not to allocate it per pupil but to view it as a single total from which to prioritise support for pupils according to their need.

In addition to the universal premium additional funding is available to provide targeted support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils through the National Tutoring Programme. Schools will be able to access support from approved tuition partners who will be available from November 2020.

Schools in the most disadvantaged areas will be supported to employ in-house academic mentors to provide small group tuition to their pupils.

Teach First will be supporting the recruitment, training and placement of the first cohort of academic mentors and their salaries will be subsidised by the government.

Schools have flexibility about how to use the premium but use of the premium will be monitored by Ofsted. In York discussions will be taking place with the York Schools and Academies Board to ensure that the impact of the premium can be maximised for all children and young people through developing a local response to use of the premium.

Bags of Creativity and Doodle Books

The Council has been working with the Cultural Education Partnership (REACH) to develop resources to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people over the summer holidays. Through the Arts Council 'Bags of Creativity' project cultural partners in the city have filled 1000 bags with arts materials and activity postcards. The bags have been filled by volunteers at York Explore and will be delivered to children and young people by Children's social care. 1000 Doodle Books have been developed to provide KS2 and KS3 children with a book of creative things to do over the summer. The books have been developed through a partnership between the Council and REACH.

Communications Plan

A back to school/ settings communications plan has been developed which focuses on increasing parents/carers confidence in the return to school/childcare and in sharing best practice from schools/settings linked to the Covid recovery plan.