

**Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee**

**8<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

**Schools Update Report**

**Summary**

1. The report provides members of the Scrutiny Management Committee with an update on schools following the implementation of the third national lockdown from 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The current period of national lockdown has closed schools to all year groups other than for the children of critical workers and children from vulnerable groups (this includes those with a social worker, children with an education, health and care plan and those deemed vulnerable by schools).

**Staffing levels in schools**

2. All 63 schools in the city are open for the children of critical workers and children from vulnerable groups.

3. Schools are required to provide the Department for Education with a daily data return which collects information about attendance on school sites and the number of teacher absences. The council's school attendance adviser provides a daily summary of this data, which the education team use to monitor the pupil attendance. The data is also shared with the members of the York Schools and Academies Board. This data varies day to day based on the number of schools that have submitted returns on a given day however, overall attendance in York has remained in line with national at approximately 95%.

4. The number of teaching staff absent since January 5<sup>th</sup> has fluctuated but has been between 95- 85, with the numbers absent due to being Covid positive being under 10 individual cases on any given data return.

5. The staffing levels in individual schools have not so far reached a level where schools have been unable to deliver on site provision or their remote learning offer.

### **Critical Worker Places**

6. Unlike during the first national lockdown the government have not set limits on class size as one of the control measures to prevent transmission of Covid19. This initially caused confusion for schools as the updated guidance from the Department for Education was not immediately available when the third national lockdown was announced.

7. The city's schools have continued to work closely with the public health team to ensure that they are implementing control measures to prevent the transmission of Covid19 and have worked to reinforce the importance of maintaining regular handwashing, ensuring classroom/year group bubble arrangements are in place and face coverings are being worn in communal areas.

8. In order to minimise the number of contacts schools have worked with their local communities to try to have a safe number of children on site each day and have asked critical workers to consider whether they need their children to attend school. This is in line with the revised guidance produced by the Department for Education. The number of critical worker children attending school varies across the city's schools however overall schools have been able to offer places to an average of 70% of critical workers. The main reasons for schools being unable to offer places has been due to high levels of occupancy and concerns about the safety of going above 50% capacity. Where schools have had concerns about capacity due to space and having sufficient staff to deliver remote learning they have prioritised places for vulnerable children.

9. The impact on schools varies according to their size, staffing structure and the physical space within their buildings. In particular, small primary schools are finding it more difficult to manage high numbers of children on site and to manage the remote learning offer. During the first week in January, a small number of parents contacted the Council's education team to highlight problems with accessing school places, each case was worked through and solutions found.

10. Headteachers have also had to manage increased concerns from teaching and non-teaching unions about the need to restrict class size

to address the health and safety concerns that they have about their members. The members of the York Schools and Academies Board, which includes City of York Council, are continuing to meet weekly with the city's teaching and non-teaching unions and professional associations. The meetings provide a forum for effective dialogue between YSAB and the unions.

### **Access to equipment to support home learning**

11, There has been a change from lockdown 1 in the expectation about what schools are required to deliver. During lockdown 1 the focus was on providing childcare for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. The expectation now is that schools continue to provide a quality education offer both for children attending school sites and those accessing remote learning. Statutory requirements are now in place defining the number of hours of remote learning that schools should be providing according to age and phase. Ofsted is to conduct monitoring visits to evaluate the quality of schools remote learning during the spring term.

12. There is now a statutory requirement for schools to provide remote learning for pupils who are unable to attend school due to Covid19. The remote learning offer should be as a minimum:

Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day

Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day

Key Stages 3 and 4: 5 hours a day

13. All schools are required to publish the details of their remote learning offer and to have a digital platform in place to support the delivery of remote education.

14. Schools are able to order digital devices and 4G wireless routers from the DfE to loan to disadvantaged children. The numbers of devices available to each school is by a DfE estimate of the number needed by each school based on free school meals data, an estimate of the number of devices a school already has and private device ownership.

15. A number of schools in York have been using their catch up funding to buy additional chrome books and laptops to ensure that disadvantaged children have access to devices. There have also been offers of devices from some members of the community however there are some problems associated with re-purposing donated devices for

school use. These include older devices not being of the required specification to access the schools remote platforms and the need to install additional security firewalls. The council's education team are working with the community furniture store, which runs an IT reuse scheme and schools to ensure that donated laptops and other devices can get to families who need them.

16. We have been working through the York Schools and Academies board to share practice on remote learning and have run a workshop for schools and developed an information sheet for parents and carers (see Annexes 1 and 2).

### **Contact Details**

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**Report Approved**

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Annexes

**Annex 1: Remote Learning Statement**

**Annex 2: Remote Learning Information for Families**