

SERVICE HIGHLIGHT REPORT – COVID-19 AND KEY SERVICE UPDATES

SERVICE AREAS:	Education
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To the 31 st January
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Part 1 - COVID-19

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

- School Opening during lock down-
 - Primary and Secondary schools remain open for [critical workers and vulnerable pupils](#) we made the decision to allow schools to close for a day to allow them to plan and develop remote learning. All school reopened on Wednesday. We issued [guidance to schools](#) in light of the government guidance that suggested all critical worker and vulnerable children should attend. We believe that children are safest at home and remote learning can support. Pupils should only access schools where parents need to work in a critical worker professions and where children who are vulnerable need supporting in school. We also offered a suggestion on prioritisation.
 - Early years settings are operating to all children and the rationale for being open has been poorly received (less transmission and impact on community). We have provided further advice on preventative measures including the use of face coverings in settings. Attendance numbers are dropping and this presents a financial challenge for these providers.
 - Special schools also have to fully open and accept all children but again the message around staying at home where you can is key. Separate advice is being issued next week to parents. All children in special schools meet the definition of vulnerable but we are working with parents to ensure that only those that need to attend are accessing provision.
- Free School Meals – the government has announced that schools have three choices on providing meals for pupils during school closure whilst not in school. These options are –
 - Food Parcels – the government preference. Schools have been allocated an additional £3.50 a week to do this. Schools receive £2.35 a day for providing meals in schools. Around £1.50 of this costs is normally spent on staffing and costs of kitchens which remain as schools have to provide meals in schools. The remaining 85p is available for providing meals (i.e. £4.25). The negative press on content relates back to this lack of funding – the additional £3.50 will support better quality food parcels. Only if schools cannot deliver food parcels, can they consider vouchers.
 - Local voucher scheme – the government will fund up to £15 a week for schools to access local voucher schemes. We have set every school up to use the Wonde system. We used this successfully during the Christmas holiday. Schools will claim back costs retrospectively.
 - National voucher scheme – the government have commissioned Edenred to operate vouchers for £15 a week. This system was poorly implemented in the summer but was working successfully by the end of term.
- Devices for remote learning – School have now received their full allocation of laptops from the DfE. A campaign for funding and donations will be commencing shortly. We have collated information on the shortfall -

LA, district and school phase	No. shortfall in devices (1 per child)	No. Shortfall in access to the internet (per household)
Cambridgeshire	6421	2454
Cambridge	1748	1158
East Cambridgeshire	487	107
Fenland	1275	280
Huntingdonshire	1899	608
South Cambridgeshire	1012	301
Peterborough	2981	634

- Exams 2021 - The [consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades](#) should be awarded in summer 2021 ran until the 29th January. A joint response was made between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Testing - There continues to be a roll out of testing in schools. Working with our public health team we have produced guidance for schools [Primary Testing Guide](#) / [Secondary Testing Guide](#).
 - Schools with secondary age pupils continue to offer lateral flow testing to their staff but this will now be on a twice weekly basis. The need for a confirmatory PCR test (i.e. a NHS administered test) has now been removed so we will now isolate bubbles using the school initiated test. They are all conducted in school.
 - Primary schools began receiving home testing kits this week. They will receive an initial shipment of 800 and these are bi weekly tests for staff which they undertake at home. Any test needs to be validated with a PCR test (booked via NHS/119) before a confirmed covid-19 case is identified. It is asymptomatic testing for the whole workforce. There are no plans to test children at this point.
 - We have offered Early years setting access to the community testing and have set up workplace based testing. Given the workforce and our large geography, this is unlikely to meet the needs of all staff and we continue to ask for home testing kits for this sector along the lines of the primary schools.
- Ofsted have released [operational guidance](#) on their inspection programme starting on the 25th January until half term. These will be remote monitoring inspections will usually last for 2 days and involve 2 inspectors. The inspection will cover inadequate schools and those with 2 requires improvement judgements. Up to 48 hours' notice will be given before any inspection. The inspection will have a focus on discussing with school leaders and those responsible for governance the actions being taken to provide education in the current circumstances, supporting vulnerable pupils, effectiveness of remote learning and how governors are contributing to support effective leadership. The school will be judged to either be taking effective action or not to address the current position. The outcome will not change a school's current grade. A formal report is produced and published.
- Attendance – the table below shows the position for overall attendance on the 28th January. All sector measures are above the national average and we have good attendance from children known to a social worker and vulnerable children (including Education, Health and Care Plans). We will continue to monitor attendance.

	Overall %	Primary %	Secondary %	Special %	EHCP %	Social Worker %	Critical Worker %
Cambridgeshire	16.1	24.1	5.3	30.6	36.4	51.3	75.2
Peterborough	14.0	22.1	4.8	29.3	32.1	43.5	74.3
National	14.9				36.3	42.7	70.9

- School Reopening - the Prime Minister announced that providing it was safe and vaccinations continue to roll out at the current pace, education would begin to restart on the 8th March. At least 2 weeks' notice before face to face teaching can recommence. We have no further details yet of the expectations for reopening. The government will provide FSM for eligible pupils until reopening (parcels and vouchers) and there would be a further year of catch up funding in the next financial year. There will also be a longer term plan for catch up over the next 3 years.
- Half term - The Department for Education has confirmed that schools will not be required to open during half term. We are concerned about childcare for health and social care workers. We have developed a form for parents ([Microsoft Form](#)) to identify their childcare needs (and we will seek to broker support for them. Our family information service will support parents and they can be contacted via 0345 045 1360 (Cams) or 01733 864446 / fis@peterborough.gov.uk (Peterborough)

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

- Winter Grant Scheme – We will be writing to parents in February to outline the allocation of a further £15 voucher for eligible families and the reopening of the wider support scheme. We will be encouraging more parents to sign up for a free school meal.

- Snow – having had fires, floods and every other challenge around opening schools, we had 70 schools closed (51 in Peterborough, 19 in Cambridgeshire) on the 25th January. We have a number of reoccurring issues with heating systems and further investment will be needed.

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

- A briefing for Headteachers on the requirements for remote learning and best practice took place this month. Slides from the LA presentation can be [found here](#) and the case study from Robert Arkenstall Primary in Haddenham can be [found here](#). 275 schools attended the briefing. We also held a briefing for council employees on how they can support their children at home. In February, Ofsted will be briefing our schools on their expectation during this period of partial closure.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- We took the decision to get early years setting registered as a workplace for the purpose of delivering lateral flow test. Our teams have worked really hard to be trained in testing and will be passing testing onto larger settings.

NEW COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- None

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- Delivering dual education in schools is placing a significant pressure on staff. In our weekly meetings with unions, we have been discussing the pressure on our staff and meeting often unrealistic expectations set by the government.
- Despite schools closing, our statutory duties remain the same and our workforce are stretched in delivering business as usual and support schools and education with Covid-19.

COMMUNICATIONS

- To support parents with SEND children, we have [co-produced a letter](#) with our parent carer forums and SENDIASS to outline the principles of our approach for accessing education.
- Governor briefings were held across January and over 160 governors joined the meeting. The meeting covered remote learning, governance changes and Covid-19.