

SERVICE HIGHLIGHT REPORT – COVID-19 UPDATES

SERVICE AREAS:	Education
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REPORTING PERIOD:	February (report written to the 5 th March)
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Part 1 - COVID-19

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

The level of change and new guidance from government continues to be a key focus for our response to Covid-19.

- On the 22nd February, guidance was released on the reopening of school. The guidance released is similar to previous advice we have received especially when education fully restarted in September. Key areas such as preventative measures including bubbles remain the same. The key headlines are –
 - Opening - Primary schools will open fully to all pupils in the 8th March. Secondary and special schools will flexibly open during the week commencing the 8th March to allow pupils to be tested. All pupils will be in education full time from the 15th March.
 - Face Covering – In Secondary schools, pupils and staff will wear face coverings in classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained. This will be reviewed at Easter. Primary school staff will wear face coverings in school where they cannot social distance from other adults.
 - Testing – In secondary schools, all pupils will be tested 3 times, 3 to 5 days between tests, in school using a lateral flow test. Testing is voluntary but if a child has consent to be tested, they can only remain in school after their first test. Children not attending can attend when the other pupils attend. Testing will take some time and a staggered start will be required during the first week. After pupils have undertaken 3 tests in schools, they will be given 2 home based tests a week and will be required to report the findings to schools. Staff will also be given these test. Primary schools continue to have home tests for staff.
 - Attendance – this is mandatory and schools are advised to follow processes including legal action in the case of non-attendance. Our advice has been to work with parents to get pupils into school and work in the 3 weeks before Easter to build trust and confidence in the protective measures in place. Our focus will be on getting vulnerable pupils to attend and to follow up where pupils are persistent non-attenders.
 - Critically vulnerable children – the advice remains that these children should not attend until shielding is lifted on the 31st March. We have advised school only to consider children returning where there is a risks in remaining at home or mental health challenges. In these cases a full risk assessment will need to be undertaken.
 - Critically vulnerable staff – the guidance recommends the staff work from home. Where staff wish to attend, a risk assessment is required. It is likely that a shortfall in staff will mean some compromise in terms of educational delivery. Schools have been asked to consider redeployment or supply
 - Educational visits – The advice continues to remain that schools cannot undertake day trips or residential visits. This will be reviewed in June.
 - Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity - schools should resume all your before and after-school educational activities and wraparound childcare for your pupils, where this provision is necessary to support parents to work, attend education and access medical care, and to support pupil’s wider education and training. The financial viability of this sector is under significant pressure.
- Examinations – The government have released its intention for KS4 and KS5 examination outcomes for 2021 – the press release outlines a summary of the consultation. Teacher assessments will be used including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil’s course, such as essays or in-class tests. Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week of 9 August – moved forward from the week of the 23 August. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance

of accessing a place. Exam boards will conduct their own checks, through a combination of random sampling and more targeted scrutiny where they identify cause for concern.

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

- Winter Grant Scheme -
 - Half term - We have issued around 33,000 vouchers to parents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. A £15 voucher, funded by the LA via the winter support grant, will be allocated to all eligible child. Eligibility is for those parents accessing free 2 year old education, the early years pupil premium, free school meals (income eligibility) and the post 16 bursary. We also funded district council and voluntary sector organisation to provide wider support including supporting food poverty.
 - Easter Extension - We have been notified that the Winter Support grant will be extended will be extended to the 16 April 2021, providing an additional £59.1 million of extra targeted financial support for those in need during the pandemic. Cambridgeshire will receive an additional £507k and Peterborough £259k. We received £2.1m previously to provide support for 3 weeks over Christmas and half term. Our aspiration is to provide vouchers for this period. We are reviewing any underspend from half term and we hope to finalise our plans for the Easter holidays shortly.
- We have developed an attendance tool for schools to allow them to compare overall attendance against other schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This will support schools in dialogue with Ofsted. We have provided information for schools on how to deal with attendance issues when school reopen.
- Ofsted inspection during the period have been reduced to 1 day and will be suspended for the week of the 8th March. Full onsite inspections are expected to recommence in the summer term.
- Our family information services, led by our early years team, contacted around 130 parents who expressed an interest in accessing half term child care. We brokered offers for them via the various providers.
- The arrangements for testing in the early years settings has been less well supported nationally than in schools. Our teams have established a number of settings as workplace testing facilities and brokered support for wider settings through these facilities. We also provided information on community testing facilities.
- We have put together a tool that support heads to understand the prevalence of covid-19 in the communities from where their children are attending. Pupils travel to school from different communities and simply assuming the community covid-19 rate where the school is based could be misleading. We will be using this data to justify to the Department for Education and Public Health England the closure of classes, year groups and even the school if we consider the rates are too high.

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

- Both local authorities have had positive improvement in their Phonics outcomes with Cambridgeshire exceeding national average for the first time.
- To support ongoing distance learning and mental health, we developed a half term at home toolkit which included fun home cooking and local exercise activities for children during half term. The [toolkit is here](#).
- Catch up Premium – the government have announced three new strands of funding –
 - £302 million Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, to further support pupils who need it most. The average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra.
 - £200 to expand tutoring programmes made up of £83 million expansion of the National Tutoring Programme for primary and secondary schools, a £102 million extension of the 16-19 Tuition Fund for a further year to support more students in English, maths and other vocational and academic subjects and £18 million funding to support language development in the early years.
 - £200 million will be available to secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs but the government is suggesting they may want to initially target incoming year 7 pupils.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- Our guidance and advice to schools often goes beyond national guidance to support our leaders. We felt it was necessary to do this to support Heads and provide a framework for reopening.

NEW COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- The costs of continuing to run a test and trace process for Education has been supported by a range of skills individuals from within education and from the wider council. The ongoing need to provide this support and monitoring role will continue now at least until June and this has financial costs. We are also looking at options around supporting our secondary and special schools with the operation of Lateral Flow Devices at home. These costs are currently being quantified.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- The challenge of the regularity of opening and closing has placed a huge pressure on staff to support business as usual and provide additional support. We recently undertook training for senior leaders on mindfulness and we will be offering a mental health first aid sessions for staff this month.

COMMUNICATIONS

- We have held briefings for independent schools, FE colleges, governors and school leaders (with over 420 people attending the reopening sessions). Additional sessions were held with maintained schools to run through their risk assessments.
- Letters have been sent from Public Health and Education to [parents](#) and [staff](#) around opening. Included in the parental letter was clear expectations around behaviour outside of schools. We have also sent parents information on the [rapid testing facilities](#). Schools have been given [a toolkit of social media messages and posters](#) for reopening.
- [#BePartOfTheSolution](#) - A new video campaign directed primarily at children and young people (CYP) aged 13 - 18 has been identified as an effective way to engage with and motivate CYP to follow the COVID-19 rules more strictly than they may have been previously. The videos follows a local young person and highlight their fears, challenges, and hope for the future, and aims to encourage others to do their bit in the fight against COVID-19 and to be part of the solution, not the problem. We have developed [teacher-led discussion](#) resources.
 - Cambridgeshire - [full-length video](#).
 - Peterborough – [Shorter Version / Full Length Video](#)