

Service Highlight Report Covid 19

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Service Area: | Education |
| Report author: | Jonathan Lewis |
| Reporting period: | October |

New Guidance and Impact

We continue to receive significant amounts of government guidance since the start of term.

Remote Learning – the DfE has published a [temporary continuity direction](#) which places a duty on schools to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children unable to attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). This came into effect from 22 October 2020 and run to the end of the academic year. The direction poses no additional expectations on the quality of remote education expected of schools beyond those set out the guidance. The legislation changes requires -

- Where a class, group of pupils, or individual pupils need to self-isolate, or there are local or national restrictions requiring pupils to remain at home, schools are expected to provide immediate access to remote education.
- This requirement applies to pupils who are of compulsory school age and pupils who are below compulsory school age but who would usually be taught in a class with compulsory school aged children (most commonly in a reception class). This Direction does not apply to post 16 education.

The DfE have also published good practice on remote learning which can be [found here](#). Our Cambridgeshire ICT Service is supporting schools to access DfE funded routes for support including online learning platform and has published some [great guidance and support](#) for schools. We have pulled together a guide to [Remote Learning requirements](#) for schools and also [a policy document for schools](#) to complete to share with parents. We have reviewed compliance with all maintained schools.

Providing Free School Meals - DfE has amended [guidance](#) on school food from September 2020. The key areas of the guidance are:–

- These meals must still comply with the [School food standards](#).
- DfE expects drinking water be provided free of charge at all times to pupils on the school premises.
- Support for pupils who have to stay at home - Schools should work with their suppliers to prepare meals or food parcels for pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are not in attendance because they:
 - are self-isolating
 - have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
 - are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - are not attending as a result of local lockdown arrangements
- Food parcels should contain food items rather than pre-prepared meals due to food safety considerations. They must contain appropriate packaging sizes for household use, rather than wholesale sizes and contain items which parents can use to prepare healthy lunches for their child/children across the week.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium allocations - In July, the government announced a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. Schools are receiving £80 for each pupil aged 4 and over recorded in Reception to Year Group 11 in mainstream schools and £240 for each high needs place recorded in a specialist setting. The allocation by school can found [here](#) and our schools will receive around £9.8m.

Laptops for Pupils Unable to access remote education – The government has set up a new scheme to provide laptops for pupils who need them ('disadvantaged') who are otherwise unable to access remote education. Examples of this include disadvantaged children with no digital devices in their household, whose only available device is a smartphone, with a single device in their household that's being shared or who do not have a fixed broadband connection at home.

Orders can be placed when:

- face to face education within a school is disrupted following official advice
- a school supports a [clinically extremely vulnerable child who is shielding](#) following official advice
- a school is supporting disadvantaged children who live in an area subject to local restrictions which means they're unable to attend

Each school have been allocated a number of devices which takes account of previous allocations of laptops and the socio-economic context of the schools. However these were updated on the 23rd October which has led to Cambridgeshire's allocation reducing from 1,589 to 419. This has been justified in terms of a more open definition of access and pressures in the North.

Ofsted supportive visits have started. These visits are to assess how schools are responding to COVID-19 and will inform DfE policy and Ofsted's approach from January. We have had 6 visits to review 4 key areas in school – attendance, curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding. We are supporting all schools with the visits and all have been positive to date. We are starting to see a number of schools receive a HSE visit to check their protective measures. We have provided schools with our advice in a [quick guide](#).

Assessment and Accountability Measures – the government have confirmed that all primary assessments for 2021 will continue unchanged from previous years. There is a catch up scheme for those pupils who didn't undertake the phonics assessment in the second half of the autumn term. GCSE and A-levels will start 3 weeks later with Ofqual announcing reduced expectations around the curriculum coverage. The DfE are currently considering other concessions that might be needed if schools are required to close.

DfE Public Health Hotline - In response to a rise in cases and Public Health England struggling to deal with demand, the Department for Education set up a helpline for schools to deal with confirmed cases. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough our local system was working well but the new DfE approach caused confusion. We have also had to correct repeatedly the poor advice from this helpline. From the 19th October, we have taken back this role and schools and settings are getting quick responses.

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

- We continue to monitor the weekly local public health data reporting to help inform schools and early years providers of position around COVID-19 including pillar 2 testing. The test and trace process continues to operate well and we are working well with Public Health to provide advice and guidance to schools. The chart below shows the position for schools (including independent), colleges and early years setting for the first half term.

Our number of cases is significantly lower than other schools. We have had no full school closures in this time.

| | Confirmed Cases | Staff Isolating | Children Isolating |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Cambridgeshire | 154 | 253 | 2832 |
| Peterborough | 145 | 200 | 2952 |

- As a result of the shortage of testing, we have worked with the CCG to ensure that testing is available to frontline education staff via direct booking system using pillar 1 testing. This testing has been operating since the 9th September and has allowed staff to return to work quickly. We believe this approach has supported high attendance in our schools. We have run locations in Cambridge and Peterborough and the CCG has agreed to fund this service until after half term. We are the only LA in the Eastern region that has been able to secure this type of direct access. There is expected to be a priority testing scheme for 'teachers' when new prioritisation for testing for key workers via pillar 2 testing becomes available in November.
- There has been a lot of confusion for both parents and schools over the difference between a cold and COVID-19. There is also confusion on the action they need to take if their child is unwell. We have produced 2 guides - [Self-isolation quick guide for parents](#) / [Parents - quick reference guide](#) and also a post for parents on self-isolation - [Cambridgeshire](#).
- Pupil attendance in our schools has been in the top third of the county since the start of term, consistently around 90% attendance. Attendance for pupils with EHCPs and those with a social worker have been lower but is increasing (between 86% to 90%). There is an emerging challenges with COVID-19 refusers and understanding what is a cold and what is COVID-19. We are monitoring part time timetables to support reintroduction into school. Attendance for the 22nd October can be seen below -

| Phase | Cambridge | East Cambs | Fenland | Hunts | South Cambs | Peterborough | Grand Total |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|-------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Primary | 95.6 | 96 | 93.9 | 96 | 95.8 | 93.7 | 95 |
| Secondary | 88.2 | 92.6 | 91 | 93 | 91.3 | 89.7 | 91 |
| Special | 90.5 | 84.6 | 88.6 | 81.2 | 78.2 | 88.5 | 84.9 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Grand Total | 17830 | 11695 | 12659 | 21395 | 21005 | 34120 | 118887 |
| % of children in schools | 93.2% | 94.4% | 92.3% | 94.6% | 93.6% | 92.1% | 93.2% |

- Early years settings continue to be open but attendance is currently running at around 75% of previous year's attendance as parents remained concerned about COVID-19. The LA is funding settings in line with previous years children numbers but this protection will end in January. We continued to be concerned around the viability of the sector although there are only a few closures so far, none which have been directly linked to COVID-19.
- Free School Meals – there has been a significant increase in free school meals claims since January. The increase in numbers will mean around £18m of additional funding over 6 years – Cambridgeshire has 1,778 new claims. We hope shortly to get a direct data feed into the Department for Works and Pensions which will identify eligible families through data matching to school census. We have updated our [letters to parents](#).
- We continue to provide advice to schools on all issues around COVID-19. During the last month we have provided advice on Relationships and Sex Education, flu vaccinations, the application of the rule of six in schools, QR codes, complaint processes, changes to the DBS process, COVID-19 symptoms, ventilation and attendance coding. We also provide a weekly data update on COVID-19 infection rates across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including maps.

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

- We are developing advice and guidance for schools on catch up funding and remote learning.
- A workshop is being held in both Local Authorities to support Year 6 catch ups.
- We continue to provide extensive daily update to schools on all government guidance and Local Authority advice. Over 1,000 are subscribed.
- A meeting was held with Independent Schools on the 9th October and with FE establishment on the 22nd October to provide coordinated support for COVID-19.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

None

NEW COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- The rising demand for Elective Home Education has meant we have a shortage of capacity to process all the applications and make contact with parents. Cambridgeshire now has 1,276 EHE cases. The request for new EHE placements is around 4 times higher than in previous years. A bid will be made to the MHCLG COVID-19 fund to make sure we have enough capacity to support this important function. We also have pressure on transport and will be adding additional resource to ensure we meet our statutory duties.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- Education services have been responding to the COVID-19 crisis since early March. Most services continued to operate over the summer. We continue to be responsive to schools need – we have responded to over 1,200 emails from schools in September from our shared mailbox. Staff are becoming exhausted and we are trying to protect our staff ensuring they do not work excessively.
- We have had to redirect staff from other key functions to support the test and trace process. This is not sustainable and we will need further support.
- The stress being placed on education leaders (especially Headteachers) is significant. The relentless nature of new government expectations coupled with the additional work from COVID-19 is leading to staff absence. We have worked with Headteacher groups to provide additional support.

COMMUNICATIONS

- The Service Director for Education [wrote to parents](#) at the end of term to thank them for their efforts and to outline some of the challenges around managing COVID-19 and remote learning.
- We have held two Headteacher meetings this term – both at the 300 capacity where we have shared updates. We have also briefing over 150 governors / board members on the COVID-19 situation. Two early years briefings are taking place in October and November.
- It has sometimes been challenging to get parents and children to adhere to social distancing requirements outside of school. In response to this we produced a series of posters for schools to share with parents - [Teacher 1](#) / [Teacher 2](#) / [Social Distancing](#) /

[Remote Learning](#) / [After School Play Date - Boys](#) / [After School Play Date - Girls](#) /
[Hanging out with Mates](#) / [Hanging out with Mates 2](#) / [Sleepover - Boys](#) / [Sleepover - Girls](#)
/ [Sleepover - Girls 2](#) / [After School Kick About](#) / [After School Kick About 2](#)