

Covid 19: Quick communications to schools 24 November 2020

Dear colleagues

Thank you for your commitment and resilience in continuing to provide an education for pupils at such a challenging time. We fully recognise the scale of expectations on school leaders and we want to do all we can to support you. We are communicating key concerns back to the DfE through appropriate channels. The information you have provided through surveys has been so important and I want to thank you again for your cooperation.

Here are some very brief updates for schools:

Attendance

As of Friday, all Ealing schools remained open for pupils with attendance still well above the national at 88% (vs 83%). Attendance for pupils with EHCP and for pupils with social workers has dipped to 77% and 76% respectively.

Capacity

Teacher attendance is 92% and TA/support staff 91%. 32 schools reported that bubbles had been sent home. Three schools reported more than one whole year group being sent home.

If you think that you may not be able to remain open to pupils, please contact us in the first instance to discuss your decision-making. We will offer you a rapid multi-agency meeting to support your decision making.

Funding pressures

In early November, we returned the results of the survey you completed to the DfE which indicated clearly that more funding is needed if our schools are to remain open and provide quality education for pupils. This message has been conveyed through all channels to central government.

Wellbeing and workload

We asked headteachers to send through practical suggestions that might help ease the pressure on headteachers. At the current time, there are no relaxations to the statutory responsibilities of schools and schools are expected to stay open right until the end of term. However, we are working with governors to provide guidance and support to help reduce unnecessary workload and reporting. There is also a dedicated wellbeing and mental health page on EGfL with useful information and practical resources to support staff wellbeing.

Ofsted

The information gathered through HMI's visits to schools in Autumn has demonstrated the huge variability in the experience of children and significant pressures on school leaders. The learning from these visits is **very significant** and is now being used to inform Ofsted's approach in 2021. Summary slides attached.

Examinations

A further policy shift is required to address the differentials in lost learning. The DfE is currently reviewing proposals and an announcement is expected by 30th November.

Track and trace app

The DfE is about to issue a FAQ on the status of the app following widespread reports on ambiguities around instructions provided to close contacts. School leaders are advised to follow the DfE guidance and this takes precedence over track and trace instructions. Our teams will provide further clarity on this issue.

Christmas provision for eligible families

Councils have been provided with additional funding to support eligible families. Schools are asked to ensure that the information on SIMS is up to date. No decision has been made yet on how the funds will be distributed to families. The council is in discussions with a range of suppliers and we hope to provide an update at Schools Consultative Group on Monday. We are also asking schools to [complete a survey about their capabilities to help](#).

Remote learning and curriculum

Significant challenges remain in securing pupils' access to remote learning across the curriculum. We have now brokered support via EdTech for primary and special schools and we will continue to use the ELP clusters to maximise collaborative learning across schools. We will support additional training for staff and look to sponsor lead schools who are willing to share resources/support other schools.

Vulnerable pupils

As school attendance has fallen for some key groups of children including those with EHCP; those with social workers and our traveller children, we will conduct an analysis of attendance for these children and ask that you report concerns as appropriate to your responsible social worker. We are also liaising with London traveller organisations to support contact with families. Further guidance for schools with GRT pupils will follow together with a dedicated network meeting for schools with external input.

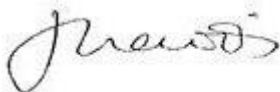
Local authority health checks and reviews

We have now suspended our programme of school effectiveness health checks until Summer or September 2021. However, if schools would like specific leadership-focused support from our associate team, please contact Julie Lewis. Support for schools in the Securing Good Programme will continue but will be adapted in view of the current pressures to best support headteachers. We will tailor the approach with individual schools to take full account of staff wellbeing. Peer reviews, organised through ELP clusters have been suspended and we are working with cluster leads to agree the most useful support for schools in the Spring term.

Under 18 free travel for children

As part of our recent Government funding agreement, it was confirmed that the Mayor and TfL wished Londoners to continue to benefit from travel concessions for under 18s. The Mayor has always been clear that he did not support the removal of free travel for under 18s, therefore all work on the temporary removal of Under 18 concessions has now been stopped and young people under the age of 18 can be reassured that they will continue to benefit from free travel on buses and trams.

Best wishes



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