

## Summer term briefing 2020 The “Keep Calm and Carry On” Edition

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# Covid-19

## Key information

### Actions for schools during the Corona Virus outbreak

Government advice, updated regularly, outlining the current responsibilities for schools.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

Schools will remain closed until further notice, except for children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are encouraged to attend where it is appropriate for them to do so. We will only re-open schools when the scientific advice indicates it is safe to do so, and will consult closely with the sector on our approach. It is important to underline that schools, all childcare settings (including early year's settings, childminders and providers of childcare for school-age children), colleges and other educational establishments, remain safe places for children. Reducing the number of children making the journey to school, and reducing the number of children in educational settings, will protect the NHS and save lives by reducing the risks of spreading the virus.

Schools, and all childcare providers, are therefore being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response.

While as many schools as possible should try to stay open for eligible pupils, this will not be possible for all settings, and the local authority should oversee arrangements so that pupils are able to access provision elsewhere.

The following guidance should be read alongside:

[guidance on implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings](#)

[guidance on critical workers](#)

[guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)

The guidance includes the following sections

1. [Responsibilities](#)
2. [Prioritising pupils](#)
3. [Funding](#)
4. [Attendance](#)
5. [Working with parents](#)
6. [Safeguarding](#)
7. [Workforce](#)
8. [Staffing levels and deployment](#)
9. [Holidays](#)
10. [Pay](#)
11. [Supply teachers and other contingent workers](#)
12. [Practicalities](#)
13. [Admissions](#)
14. [Exclusions](#)
15. [School meals](#)
16. [Exams](#)
17. [Types of setting](#)

The Local Authority has produced a regularly updated spreadsheet of both the DfE and the Local Authority guidance, and all of the guidance, template letters, local and national advice can be found on the Covid-19 page on the Essex Schools Infolink.

<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>

### Free School Meals guidance for schools

This DfE guidance explains what schools should do to make sure eligible pupils have continued access to free school meals where the pupil is not attending school. Information regarding which pupils should continue to attend school is available in the guidance on [maintaining educational provision](#). Schools which are open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children should provide meal options for staff and children who are in school, and free school meals for all eligible pupils in attendance. Further details are set out in this guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>

As you will be aware the rollout of the Edenred voucher system has been fraught with delay and problems,

and a small number of schools still don't have an activation code, never mind sight of a voucher!

<https://www.edenred.co.uk/reward-recipient/Free-School-Meal-Vouchers/>

*If you decide not to continue with the system and use a local solution, make sure that you keep careful records of your expenditure – this should be one of the costs that is recoverable.*

### **COVID19 Testing**

As you will be aware, all essential workers are now able to access testing along with members of their households if they are showing symptoms, this includes all education staff. There is further guidance in this youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVB6TC49ss0&feature=youtu.be>. Essential workers can book tests for themselves and their household via a new online portal on [gov.uk/coronavirus](http://gov.uk/coronavirus). Testing is most effective within 3 days of symptoms developing.

The understanding is that individuals should generally apply themselves, but where they can't do this, the employer can do so on their behalf.

Only those showing symptoms (or living with someone with symptoms) can apply for a test so not all schools would need to register initially, unless this is the case.

The employer is required to email to receive a log-in to the system and then submit the names/details of the individuals they are putting forward for testing. It would not be efficient to do this on a county wide level and so schools should manage this directly.

### **DfE Laptop Scheme Update**

The LA is working with Social Care and IT colleagues to digest the guidance and move forwards with the DfE laptop and WiFi scheme. Schools will be asked to identify those pupils within a school who meet the criteria. They will send a request for this information by the end of the week (by 01/05/20). As a reminder, Academy Trusts will be responsible for ordering equipment for their eligible year 10 students and the LA will be responsible for ordering equipment for eligible children with a social worker and eligible year 10 students of maintained secondary schools. The LA is clarifying with the DfE what the likely timescales for distribution of the equipment will be, but Gavin Williamson has announced that they are unlikely to be delivered before the end of May and more likely into June.

### **Paediatric First Aid**

The LA has now received confirmation from the DfE that the requirement for at least one person who has a full paediatric first aid certificate to be on the premises at all times when children are present remains in place where there are children below the age of 24 months. If children are aged 2-5 within a setting, providers must use their 'best endeavours' to ensure one person with a full PFA certificate is on-site when children are present. If after using best endeavours they are still unable to secure a member of staff with full PFA to be on site then they must carry out a written risk assessment and ensure that someone with a current First Aid at Work or emergency PFA certification is on site at all times children are on premises.

If your paediatric first aid certificate is due to expire, see [advice from the Health and Safety Executive](#). It has announced a 3-month extension to the validity for all certificates coming up for renewal on or after 16 March 2020.

### **Local Authority CYP Response Plan**

See safeguarding section below

### **Remote learning guidance and online safety guidance**

The LA has produced guidance to help schools with a home/remote learning offer to pupils, including advice about online safety. These documents have been produced to support schools with suggestions and details of the ways in which different schools are offering home learning and how the challenge can be managed, as well as how to support children and young people to stay safe online.

- **Digital education platforms** - the Department has also partnered with Google and Microsoft to provide funded support to help schools get set up on G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education. [Use our digital education platform resource hub](#) to decide on the right platform for you and apply directly for the DfE-funded support
- The [Oak National Academy](#) and [BBC Bitesize daily lessons](#) launched on 20 April, providing free online resources for teachers and parents

### **May Bank Holiday**

The DfE has now announced that schools should decide, in consultation with the parents of children who are currently attending school, whether it is necessary for them to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children on Friday 8 May 2020. If you are able to close please notify the LA as usual.

No decision has yet been made about the half term holiday, but the LA is keen to develop local options, such as using sports/childcare clubs to enable schools to close completely, **if they choose to.**

**Plans for reopening schools (29/04/20)**

See DfE section below

**Data collection** – see DfE section below

**Relevant Documents and Guidance**

**DfE website**

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing>

**Essex Schools Infolink**

<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>

**NHS website**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Your “do-list”**

- Make sure that you are reading the daily emails from Clare Kershaw to keep up to date with guidance and developments from both DfE and the Local Authority.
- Register your staff (or ask them to register) so that they can access a Covid-19 test if they display symptoms.
- Identify those children who may be eligible for a laptop to support their home learning (i.e. those with a social worker and no access to IT) and let the LA know.
- Keep records of all Covid-19 related expenditure, that is over and above your normal operations.
- Continue to offer provision for children of critical workers and those who are vulnerable, in line with government guidelines.
- Send any questions and comments to EPHA – to Pam Langmead [pam@langmead.me.uk](mailto:pam@langmead.me.uk) and/or to the School Communications team [Schools.Communication@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Schools.Communication@essex.gov.uk)
- Stay safe and well!

# Safeguarding and Attendance

## Key information

**Safeguarding** - the DfE has published [interim safeguarding guidance](#) and has [delayed](#) its consultation on updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education from September 2020 (with no date proposes to restart the consultation). It has also published suggestions for [how to safeguard pupils during remote learning](#)

## **COVID-19 Children and Young People (CYP) Response Plan for EYS settings – Summer term 2020**

Schools and other educational settings and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for CYP. In conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding CYP during the current emergency arrangements due to COVID-19. During this period, settings retain their statutory duties to safeguard CYP and must adapt their existing processes to the current situation to ensure they continue to operate effectively. As well as supporting safeguarding, **regular contact** with children and families will enable schools to provide important support, address any relatively minor concerns before they escalate and to maintain relationships with their pupils. This will be of value as part of re-opening arrangements as settings will be able to identify any additional interventions required to support CYP when they return.

The CYP Response Plan, produced by Essex LA, in discussion with the Headteacher Associations, aims to support headteachers and schools in their continuing duty to safeguard and support all children and young people on their school roll, and in particular the most vulnerable, and those who are at increasing risk.

The document gives an outline of the expectations for universal, additional, intensive and complex (in line with the Essex Effective Support windscreen of need) and guidance around risk assessments and welfare checks, with links to risk assessment forms suitable for a range of children and young people.

## **Support with risk assessments**

A team of social workers to support settings with this work has been identified and they will be making contact over the coming weeks. This is intended to be a supportive measure to build capacity and expertise around assessing risk and to support Designated Leads and Deputy Designated Leads who may be managing cases with high levels of risk involved. This team will be phoning schools to discuss children with a social worker ('vulnerable' children). However, settings may also wish to discuss risk assessments for other vulnerable children (those below the threshold for an intervention from Social Care). The team is also happy to support with this and can be contacted via Lynne Hooper at: [lynne.hooper@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.hooper@essex.gov.uk).

## **Child Protection Policy update**

A Child Protection model policy reflecting the unique safeguarding demands and responsibilities during the school closure period and Covid-19 pandemic has been produced by Jo Barclay. Your school should amend and adopt the policy and publish it on the school website. This may be approved using Chair's Action, and should be shared and read by all staff.

## **Safeguarding forums for schools**

Due to the school closure and impact of the national lockdown, it is unlikely that the safeguarding forums will be held in the normal way this term. Jo Barclay will continue to produce safeguarding briefings on a regular basis, and particularly when any requirements and circumstances change.

## **Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings**

The TAFSO team have produced a guide on how to hold a virtual TAF meeting. This is available on the [Effective Support website](#)

As a reminder the TAFSOs are continuing to support wider partners who feel that a family could benefit from a virtual TAF, they are contactable [TAFSO@essex.gov.uk](mailto:TAFSO@essex.gov.uk)

## **Essex Child and Family Well-being Service (ECFWS)**

To support families during the COVID-19 pandemic and in recognition of the challenges to families due to school closure, the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service has created a [brand new resource hub](#).

## **Essex Safeguarding Children Board dedicated [Coronavirus hub](#)**

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) has a dedicated [Coronavirus hub](#), which aims to provide a single point of access for anyone needing information and resources in relation to safeguarding children and young people.

## **Advice for parents on when to seek medical help for their children**

There is an increasing concern regarding the reduction in children attending A&E and seeking medical advice during the COVID 19 crisis. Much of this is due to the misunderstanding that all NHS services are focusing on COVID and normal services are not 'open'. This poster has been approved by NHS England for dissemination to support parents and carers of when to seek help and advice and which service they should

contact. <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/covid19-advice-for-parents-poster.pdf>

### **Attendance**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

From Monday 23 March, educational settings will need to temporarily change their attendance recording practices and inform the department using this [online form](#).

Educational settings that remain open are required to complete the online form every day by 12:00.

#### **How to record attendance during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak**

To minimise the burden on educational settings and ensure that only the most important information is submitted, settings must:

- Stop taking their normal attendance registers
- Consider making use of the above record of attendance spreadsheet to record attendance for all children at the educational setting.
- Use the information in the record of attendance spreadsheet, or from another source if the information is held elsewhere, to complete this [online form](#) notifying the Department for Education about your status regarding COVID-19.

DfE has updated the statutory guidance – **School attendance parental responsibility measures**

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the government has relaxed the law so that the parent of a child of compulsory school age is not guilty of an offence on account of the child's failure to attend regularly at the school at which the child is registered (section 444 of the Education Act 1996). This means that parents will not be penalised if their child does not attend school.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

The Local Authority gathers information from the DfE about attendance during the partial closure. This is in order to inform support and guidance to schools, including understanding which groups of pupils are accessing school provision, but this is not about monitoring attendance. There is no indication from the DfE when attendance records and monitoring will return to normal.

### **Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- Child Protection Policy – Covid-19 update  
<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/safeguarding/>
- CYP Response Plan
- Essex Safeguarding briefings and guidance  
<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>
- Attendance information and link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>
- Advice for parents – seeking medical help for children – poster  
<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/files/covid19-advice-for-parents-poster.pdf>

### **Your “do-list”**

- Update and adopt the Covid-19 Child Protection Policy, share with your staff and upload it on your school website.
- Undertake a risk assessment for all of your pupils, and ensure that you and your staff are carrying out regular welfare checks to safeguard those who are vulnerable, and to keep in touch with (and assess) all pupils.
- Keep up to date with Jo Barclay's safeguarding briefings and guidance.
- Use the Social Care team to support risk assessments of vulnerable children.
- Ensure that you are signed up to Andrew Hall's brilliant weekly safeguarding briefing  
<http://www.safeguardinginschools.co.uk/>



## DfE updates and publications

### Key information

Inevitably most of the information coming out of DfE at the moment relates to the Covid-19 pandemic. All government guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>  
Specific guidance for education and childcare at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>

The LA is maintaining a spreadsheet, which gives details of the guidance that has been produced by both the DfE and the LA, including any updates. This is sent out on a regular basis as part of Clare Kershaw's daily communications to schools.

### Data collection arrangements during the school (partial) closure period

New Guidance on cancelling or pausing data collections at this time has come out - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-reducing-burdens-on-educational-and-care-settings/reducing-burdens-on-educational-and-care-settings>. To help reduce the burden on educational and care settings at this time, the Department for Education (DfE) and its agencies have cancelled or paused all but the most essential data collections, services and requests from educational and care settings until the end of June 2020.

Data collections which are paused will be reviewed and the pause period extended if necessary. A decision on data collections or services which are not due to go live until later in the year will be made in due course. Not all data collections will be paused or cancelled, so note those still taking place.

### Education, health and care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some aspects of the law on education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans are changing temporarily to give local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education settings and other bodies who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus (COVID-19). For a limited period of time these new laws relax (but don't remove) the requirements and timescales for assessment of EHCPs, as well as how provision and support may be secured. The guidance gives examples of alternative arrangements.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

### New free online learning platform to boost workplace skills

Free courses are available through a new online platform hosted on the gov.uk website, called [The Skills Toolkit](#). The new platform gives people access to free, high-quality digital and numeracy courses to help build up their skills, progress in work and boost their job prospects.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-free-online-learning-platform-to-boost-workplace-skills>

### Plans for reopening schools (29/04/20)

The re-opening of schools in England is expected to take place in a "phased manner", says the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson. He told the Education Select Committee (on 29/04/20) the date for opening would depend on scientific advice – but schools would get "as much notice as possible". The suggestion is that government will start to give some indication of their plans in the week commencing 4 May.

But when pupils start returning it could just be for some year groups.

"All schools returning on day one with a full complement of pupils would not be realistic," he told MPs.

With schools closed by the coronavirus outbreak, the education secretary faced questions on a timetable for re-opening and how to support the disadvantaged, while pupils were meant to be learning online from home. Committee chair Robert Halfon warned of a "wave of educational poverty" that could come from the lockdown. Speaking to an online session of the select committee, Mr Williamson said he was keen for schools to return as soon as was safely possible because of the disruption to pupils' learning.

"Every child is going to have suffered from not being in school," he told MPs.

But he said it would be a staged return, with schools given "proper notice" to prepare.

"When we bring schools back - and I think everyone wants to see schools returning - they will return in a phased manner," said Mr Williamson, as all pupils going back at once would not be "realistic or practical". There were no details from the education secretary on which pupils might return first.

But last week, Geoff Barton, leader of the ASCL head teachers' union suggested that Years 6, 10 and 12 might go back first, with 1 June the earliest realistic date.

A limit on pupil numbers in school would be necessary to maintain social distancing, said the heads' leader,

which could mean only some year groups going back or pupils rotating between studying at home and in school.

The education secretary said he did not expect this term to be extended into the summer holidays - although committee member David Simmonds suggested some schools were already planning to open over the summer to help pupils catch up. The experience of other countries where some schools have opened, such as Germany and Denmark, would be taken into consideration, said the education secretary.

In Wales, Education Minister Kirsty Williams has also indicated that [there will be a "phased approach"](#) to allowing schools to open.

Mary Bousted, joint leader of the National Education Union, highlighted ongoing challenges for staffing in schools when it was safe to re-open

"All staff with underlying health conditions or who are vulnerable will need to be at home so timetables will be tricky and the full curriculum simply impossible," said Dr Bousted.

"We will need an extended, flexible recovery plan, and no one should be under any illusion that there is some catch-up magic bullet."

Mr Williamson gave more details of the scheme to lend laptops to disadvantaged pupils studying at home - saying there would be 200,000 laptops, with the first expected to be delivered by the end of May, with most arriving in June.

This would help to address the "digital divide" in terms of access to computer technology.

Mr Williamson said he had been in discussions with the BBC about putting schools programmes on television, which could help those without internet connections or unable to afford mobile phone data.

The education secretary was challenged by MPs on [failings with the free school meal voucher scheme](#).

Ian Mearns said school staff were spending "hours and hours" trying to resolve problems with the food voucher system being administered by Edenred.

He said there were "horror stories" from schools about a computer system that did not seem to have capacity to cope - with teachers having to find their own ways to get food to young people.

Mr Williamson recognised there had been "big challenges" and the level of service was not what was expected.

### **Annual Written Reports to Parents**

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) have advised that with the removal of statutory assessments there will be no formal reporting requirements to parents this year. However, STA recognise that in the absence of reported test results or teacher assessment information, parents will still want information on their children's achievements. Guidance on reporting to parents will be made available to schools. There are no details about what will be included in the guidance or a publication date as the ideas that have been proposed for inclusion are to be shared and discussed with an LA reference group.

### **Other DfE publications**

#### **DfE statistics**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>

1 May 2020: Publication of 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): attendance in education and early years settings' transparency data

26 March 2020: COVID-19 and the production of statistics

DfE expects to cancel the follow publications for 2020 as a result of the assessments not taking place:

- National curriculum assessments: key stage 2, 2020 (interim). Release date: July 2020
- National curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2020 (provisional). Release date: August to September 2020
- National curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2020 (revised). Release date: December 2020
- Multi-academy trust performance at key stage 2, 2020 revised. Release date: December 2020
- Early years foundation stage profile results in England:2019 to 2020. Release date: October 2020
- Phonics screening check and key stage 1 assessments: England 2020. Release date: September to October 2020
- Multiplications tables check: 2020. Release date: September to October 2020

This list is not exhaustive and they are currently working through impacts on other statistics. The DfE will not publish School Performance Tables in 2020.

#### **Primary performance tables and statistics**

Added information about the cancellation of the Primary school performance tables: 2020 publication.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-performance-tables#history>



**SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years**

Guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25, from 1 September 2014. One change to the document: Added link to guidance on 'Changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to coronavirus'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25#history>

**National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)**

Updated on 30 April to reflect availability of NPQ scholarship funding from 1 April 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-headship-npqh#history>

**Early years foundation stage statutory framework (EYFS)**

The standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5. 24 April: Added guidance to the temporarily disappplied, and modified certain elements of the EYFS statutory framework.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2#history>

**Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- Specific Covid-19 guidance for education and childcare at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>
- DFE latest documents <https://www.gov.uk/government/latest?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>

**Your “do-list”**

- Note which data must still be collected by schools and academies, and ensure you meeting the deadlines where relevant.
- Don't worry about producing the normal school reports this term, but wait for LA guidance on what to report to parents at the end of the summer term.
- Send your thoughts about reopening to Pam or directly to the LA at [denise.hobbs@essex.gov.uk](mailto:denise.hobbs@essex.gov.uk)

## Policies, school websites and data protection

### Key information

#### This term you need to review and adopt (if not already done):

- Child Protection Policy – Covid-19 version
- Business Continuity Plan – see notes below
- Mental Health and Wellbeing (good practice, not mandatory)
- Relationship and Sex Education Policy (for use from September – or later in the year)

You may want to adopt a Bereavement Policy (new LA version being produced soon) and ensure that your data protection policies, especially regarding remote working, are fit for purpose.

Updated HR policies (see list below)

- Leave of Absence Policy – April 2020
- Discipline and Dismissal – January 2020

*Policies can be adopted by using the Chair's power to take urgent action, but see the Governing Body section below for advice on continuing your meetings during the school closure period. If a policy is adopted by Chair's action make sure that is noted at a future Governing Body meeting to ensure that it is formally recorded as adopted.*

#### Child Protection Policy – Covid-19 version

This should be adopted alongside your school's Child Protection Policy

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/safeguarding/>

#### Current ECC HR policy list for schools, academies and free schools

Policy or procedure	Mandatory or recommended	Current edition
Agency workers regulations		June 2013
Audit of HR function		November 2015
Capability procedure for all staff	Mandatory	May 2018
Code of conduct	Required by KCSiE	June 2019
Cover and PPA	Recommended	April 2016
Discipline and Dismissal	Mandatory	January 2020
Equality and Diversity in Employment	Recommended	May 2018
Flexible Working	Recommended	May 2018
Grievance	Mandatory	April 2019
Leave of Absence (and guidance)	Recommended	April 2020
Mental health and wellbeing	Recommended	January 2020
Pay Policy	Mandatory	September 2019
Performance Management (all staff)	Recommended	May 2018
Pre-employment checks		May 2018
Probation procedure	Recommended	March 2019
Recruitment	Mandatory	August 2018
Redundancy and restructuring	Recommended	August 2018
Sickness Absence management	Recommended	January 2019
Sabbatical	Recommended	May 2018
Whistleblowing	Mandatory	May 2018

#### Leave of Absence Policy

HR Policy updated April 2020 to include the new Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave regulations.

#### Business Continuity Plan

Check that your existing Business Continuity Plan reflects the current situation and challenges. Here are 5 areas you should consider – does your Plan:

1. Prioritise people safety and continuous engagement?
2. Reshape the plan for business continuity during and beyond this crisis?

- e.g. Determine how the COVID-19 crisis affects budgets, staffing and the school development plan
3. Communicate with relevant stakeholders?
  4. Maximise the use of government and Local Authority support?
  5. Build resilience in preparation for the new normal?

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Positive mental health is key for a productive and efficient workforce. Mental health problems affect 1 in 4 people each year and poor mental health is a leading cause of sickness absence with estimates it costs employers between £33-44 billion annually in absence, presenteeism and staff turnover. It has never been more important to understand the effects of poor mental health on your employees and address any issues that impact negatively on their mental health and wellbeing. In addition, as part of the new Ofsted framework for leadership and management inspectors will be looking at the extent to which school leaders take into account the workload and well-being of their staff. Education HR has produced a **new** [Mental Health and Wellbeing policy](#) for schools and academies to adopt as part of their mental health strategy.

**EPHA has developed lists of statutory and mandatory policies for schools and academies, based on DfE and other guidance.** The current checklist is May 2020.

The checklists include information about review frequency, the level of approval and additional notes.

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/model-policies/>

### **Updated version (January 2020) of the website checklists**

I have updated the website checklists for both maintained schools and academies – available on the EPHA website.

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/model-policies/>

There will some aspects of your school website that simply can't be updated – performance data, for example – and some that will not be relevant for the time being. We recommend that a school should keep its website up to date wherever possible, but the focus at the moment will be on effective communication with pupils, parents and the community about the Covid-19 pandemic. Ofsted has assured the LA that they will not “suddenly” resume inspection, so schools should not worry if their sports premium report isn't bang up to date!

### **Data protection and GDPR**

There is a useful article on the GDPR for schools website about data protection during the Covid 19 pandemic.

<https://www.gdpr.school/covid-19-and-schools/>

From both an educationalist's point of view and as someone working in data protection and privacy, the drive on remote learning that has been generated by Covid-19 (coronavirus) has been interesting to watch. Schools have a strong history of dealing with critical incidents, due to weather, illness or environmental factors (e.g. asbestos). Every school will have a Critical Incident Plan. Some may call it a Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery (BCDR) plan or slight variations, but it amounts to the same. This can be extremely specific or can be more general and flexible, but the [DfE has some core guidance on approaches to take](#). *(My note: however, this guidance has not been updated since 2015 and in no way relates to the current situation.)*

From a data protection and privacy stance, there are some key areas that all staff need to think about and follow, and these should also be within a home working policy. GDPR for Schools has produced a helpful and accessible video to talk through the areas staff should be aware of and this is openly available for all schools to use with their staff.

<https://www.gdpr.school/covid-19-schools-must-secure-personal-data/>

The educational drive to find the right tools to support home learning during a school shut down has led to some risky actions by some schools. Whilst some schools already have tools and learning solutions in place that have undergone a rigorous procurement process including risk assessments (DPIAs), a thorough adoption programme with staff, learners and parents... many have not. As a result, insufficient due diligence is being carried out on many of the offerings from EdTech providers. We (*GDPR for Schools*) have put

together some simple actions that schools and trusts should take, and that EdTech providers should be aware of and support.

1. Make sure that you can access and have reviewed your suppliers' Privacy Notices and any associated policies / T&Cs.
2. Where the service is delivered through the school (i.e. not directly to the parents/children) ensure the relationship is clear that you are the Data Controller (i.e. you make the decision about the purpose and the means) and the provider is the Data Processor. Where the provider is making some decisions, this could make them a Joint Data Controller and agreements need to reflect this.
3. Ensure you know the lawful basis for processing. Where you are the data controller, this will be more easily established. The DfE Data Protection Toolkit for Schools states that Public Task is a possible lawful basis after Legal Obligations. Some providers will tell you that you must get parental consent. This is based on approaches in the US to comply with their legislation and not appropriate for most educational activities that are part of your official duties.
4. Where the provider is also a data controller, you need to ensure that they are transparent about what they are doing with the data and that you are happy with that. If you are making it so that children have to use this tool, then consent cannot be appropriate, even if the provider insists on Parental Consent.
5. Make sure you know how long the data is kept for. It may be that you are only trialling this tool. You need to make sure that any data will be removed and destroyed when it is no longer needed by you and that you can show evidence of this.
6. There should also be a clear explanation of how any data breaches a provider (or their sub-processors) experience will be reported to you, the Data Controller. Remember that where a breach is reportable, there are 72 hours to report it. Make sure you are being told when a breach occurs.
7. You are likely to need to undertake a risk assessment / DPIA. These are a crucial requirement on new services/types of processing and are often insightful even for legacy services.  
<https://www.educationdatamatters.org.uk> has some example templates for DPIAs to help you with what questions you must ask yourself.
8. Where you already have access to tools through your Local Authority, your MAT, your broadband/services provider or other groups you are part of, a significant amount of checks will already have been done and it is more about how you use the tools that are important. Speak to these providers to see how you get the most out of tools you already have.

### Relevant Documents and Guidance

- EPHA website requirements checklists <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/model-policies/>
- EPHA statutory/mandatory policy checklists <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/model-policies/>
- HR list of policies for schools, academies and free schools available on the secure log in of Juniper website <https://junipereducation.org/>
- DfE website requirements <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online> Useful website links for home and digital learning  
<https://iscdigital.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Developing-Digital-Leadership-Bulletin-CoronaVirus.pdf>  
<https://www.cobis.org.uk/schools/useful-links/school-closure>  
<http://homelearninguk.com>  
<https://coronavirus.lgfl.net>  
<https://community.secure.school/>

**Your “do-list”**

- Adopt the Covid-19 related Child Protection Policy (to be used alongside your current child protection policy)
- Develop and approve the Relationships and Sex Education Policy so it's in place for September (if it's ready for approval). Publish on the school website.
- Adopt the Leave of Absence Policy – for use when schools get back to normal.
- Ask your DPO to review your data protection and remote working policies and privacy notices.
- Use Chair's action to adopt urgent policies, but ensure that this is reported at a later date.
- Check the HR policy checklist and ensure that you have the most up to date versions
- Download the EPHA statutory/mandatory policy checklist (May 2020) and ensure that you are compliant
- Update your website in line with most recent guidance, using the checklists provided by EPHA (January 2020).



## HR Information

### Key information

The DfE has produced guidance on personnel issues that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. There is also guidance on “business as usual” matters, including ongoing performance management and recruitment, and how to conduct these in the current situation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing>

The following is a list of the various sections and questions in the DfE guidance – I have included the answers to key questions (e.g.) DBS – otherwise, refer to the guidance.

### Staffing levels and deployment

- *How many teachers and other school staff will be needed to keep schools open?*

- *Should schools be using temporary workers?*

- *Will teachers and other school staff be asked to work in alternative settings?*

- *Do teachers and other school staff require new DBS checks to work in an alternative setting?*

Where members of the school workforce are already engaging in regulated activity, and already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained for them to temporarily move to another setting to support the care of children.

The type of setting on the DBS check for example, a specific category of school, is not a barrier. The receiving setting should risk assess as they would for a volunteer. See paragraphs 167 to 172 of [keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\)](#).

Whilst the onus remains on schools to satisfy themselves that someone in their setting has had the required checks including, as required, those set out in part 3 of KCSIE, in the above scenario this can be achieved, if the receiving setting chooses to, via seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks.

- *Will there be changes to the way DBS checks are carried out as a result of social distancing guidance?*

Yes. Please refer to the [guidance on changes to DBS ID checking guidelines](#).

- *Will there be enough support staff to provide support for pupils with EHC plans?*

- *What are the expectations on school staff working from home?*

We would expect school staff to continue to support the education of pupils, and wider work of the school, in appropriate ways agreed with their school leadership team, but school leaders should be mindful of staff wellbeing and practical circumstances when designing these arrangements.

- *Can schools use volunteers to support the care and supervision of children?*

- *What advice is available for teachers from overseas?*

### Recruitment

- *Can schools continue to recruit teaching and support staff during coronavirus (COVID-19) closures?*

Yes, they can. It is important that schools have the workforce they need, and recruitment should continue where it is necessary and practical to do so, in line with social distancing guidelines. We trust schools to use their judgment on whether recruitment is needed and how this can best be done given the circumstances. DfE is asking publicly funded schools to use the [Teaching Vacancies service](#). This is a free, national service for searching and listing teaching roles. Listing vacancies here will help save schools money and enable the department to gather information on the impact of school closures on teacher recruitment.

- *Can schools continue to recruit head teachers during coronavirus (COVID-19) closures?*

The recruitment of headteachers is a matter for individual schools and their governing bodies. Schools may wish to refer to the guidance issued by the [National Governance Association \(NGA\)](#) on how governing boards should recruit headteachers during coronavirus (COVID-19).

- *How can schools recruit while social distancing is in place?*

[Social distancing guidelines](#) will mean it is not possible for schools to hold face to face recruitment processes. Interviews should either happen remotely, for example, via an online video or telephone interview, or be delayed to a later date. Schools will need to ensure that all employment laws are met and that applicants have equality of opportunity throughout the selection process. We trust schools to use their judgment in implementing this.

- *Will there be changes to the way pre-employment checks are carried out as a result of social distancing guidance?*

When recruiting, schools must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks. We refer schools to part 3 of the statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#). Please

note that the following temporary changes have been made to the DBS standard and enhanced ID checking guidance:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted
- the applicant will be required to present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role (the change came into effect from 19 March 2020)

In addition, the [Home Office guidance](#) regarding face-to-face interviews when checking the right to work has been revised.

- *Can schools extend notice periods during coronavirus (COVID-19) closures?*
- *Can schools retract offers of employment for new staff due to financial implications of coronavirus (COVID-19) closures?*

### **Pay and Performance Management**

- *Will teachers and other school staff continue to be paid?*  
Yes. Teachers and other school staff will continue to be paid during this period as normal, and we expect schools to continue to fulfil their contractual duties to their staff.
- *Will teachers and other school staff, be entitled to sick pay for an absence caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), including the need to self-isolate if a member of their household has displayed symptoms?*  
Arrangements for teachers and school staff sick pay are agreed between employers and relevant unions. We have confirmed that schools will receive the same level of funding regardless of any period of partial or complete closure, and so would expect pay to continue as normal.
- *Should appraisals and performance management processes continue for teachers during this period?*  
Yes, maintained schools must continue to adhere to the [School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document \(STPCD\)](#), which includes the requirement to ensure that all pay progression for teachers is linked to performance management. However, we would expect schools to use their discretion and take pragmatic steps, consistent with the Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 to adapt performance management and appraisal arrangements to take account of the current circumstances e.g. by basing performance on the period schools were open, adjusting, if necessary, for expected trajectory had there been no closures.
- *Should appraisals and performance management processes for support staff continue during this period?*  
Appraisals and performance management for support staff should be carried out in accordance with the employee's contract of employment. The department does not specify pay or terms and conditions of employment for support staff.
- *Supply teachers and other contingent workers*  
For information on supply teachers and other contingent workers in state funded schools, please refer to the [guidance on financial support for education, early years and children's social care](#).
- *Should schools continue to pay contingent workers that they directly employ?*
- *Should schools continue to pay contingent workers that they directly employ on a zero hours or casual basis?*
- *What should schools do if they have already ended contracts with contingent workers that they directly employ?*
- *Should schools continue to pay agencies for workers on live assignments?*
- *How much should temporary workers be paid if they are furloughed?*  
Read information about the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and how it operates](#). This includes how payments for furloughed workers are calculated.
- *What support is there for self-employed workers?*
- *Can schools start new temporary contracts with agencies and workers?*
- *Will schools receive additional funding to manage the cost of hiring additional temporary workers?*  
Schools will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure, and this will ensure they are able to continue to pay for staff, and meet their other regular financial commitments, whilst providing the reduced provision required during this unprecedented period.

### **Can schools Furlough staff?**

Furloughing is a job retention scheme whereby employees who would be at risk of redundancy due to the unavailability of work, are kept on the books, but not required to work. Employers can claim up to 80% of their salary from the Government.

The Government finally published guidance on furlough for schools on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early->

[years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care](#)

The guidance confirms that Schools cannot Furlough staff who are paid from the school budget but can Furlough some staff where they are paid from alternate income streams and and after all other potential options have been fully considered, including seeking to make the necessary savings from their existing budget and considering options to redeploy these staff.

**Please see HR's separate detailed [guidance on Furloughing](#).**

**Juniper HR for Schools** is providing regular updates on the personnel issues cropping up for schools, including what to do when staff have Covid-19 symptoms, are self-isolating, or are refusing to come into school (or desperate to return!). These are available to all schools and are being sent out in the daily communications and on the infolink.

### **Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- Covid-19 related documents and guidance  
DfE <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing>
- Juniper <https://junipereducation.org/>  
Direct dial number for HR 01245 698378
- Essex Schools Infolink <https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>

### **Your “do-list”**

- Refer to the DfE and HR guidance when making decisions about Covid-19 related issues including the impact of school closure on school staff.
- Continue, as far as possible, with performance management processes (adapting them as you see fit) and recruitment for September.
- Take advice from your HR consultant when necessary. Make sure you have noted the direct dial number for HR 01245 698378

# Ofsted

## Key information

Ofsted announcements since March 19th

### All routine inspections suspended

We have suspended all routine inspections of schools, further education, early years and social care providers. The Secretary of State [has allowed](#) Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to do this.

Urgent inspections where specific concerns have been raised are still going ahead. This allows us to prioritise the immediate safety of children where necessary. However, this section applies only to:

- early years and childcare providers
- children's social care providers that Ofsted inspects under [the social care common inspection framework \(SCCIF\)](#)

### Inspection reports and management information

We are not publishing reports from our recent inspections of schools, further education and early years providers until they reopen as normal for all children/students. We continue to publish a small number of reports from recent social care inspections.

We are writing to providers ahead of publishing their reports so that they can give a copy to all registered parents and pupils at that time. Providers can, if they wish, share the findings of their report once it has been finalised. If they do this, they should make clear that Ofsted has not published the report.

We continue to publish statistics and transparency information. We will publish management information on inspections carried out up to the suspension, then we will pause.

### Ofsted staff

Since the crisis broke, we have been amazed but not surprised by the resourcefulness, determination and kindness shown by teachers, social workers, childminders and all those who work in education and social care.

With our routine inspections suspended, we've been matching our staff into supporting roles across education and social care, working closely with local councils to provide support where it's most needed.

We have spoken to more than 50 councils that have asked for help with tasks like mapping and supporting vulnerable children, developing safeguarding processes and communicating with school leaders. We have agreed for suitably qualified colleagues to work in children's homes, and others to staff advice lines for parents and schools.

Some of our people are moving to other government departments to support the wider Civil Service response and a significant number of our staff have volunteered to be emergency foster carers.

### Consultations

[Changes to Ofsted's post-inspection processes and complaints handling: proposed improvements](#), which was due to close on 31 March, is open to responses until 30 April 2020.

We plan to publish the new initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework in the summer term to give providers time to familiarise themselves with it. By then – and through discussions with the DfE – we may be able to clarify when routine inspections will resume, including those of ITE providers.

### When will Ofsted inspections return?

Monday 27th April

Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman has stated that Ofsted Inspections are unlikely to return before the end of the summer term. More information in this Schools Week article: [https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coronavirus-routine-inspections-not-likely-before-summer-says-spielman/?mc\\_cid=3ec6f795f5&mc\\_eid=28d3d62999](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coronavirus-routine-inspections-not-likely-before-summer-says-spielman/?mc_cid=3ec6f795f5&mc_eid=28d3d62999)

Spielman said it was "impossible" for her to say how long schools will get before they are inspected once inspections resume.

Asked how inspections would be run if pupils' return is phased, she said: "We have so little certainty about the kind of phasing that we might see, that it is impossible for me at this stage to say 'no inspection until...'" "It's simply too uncertain at the moment."

The chief inspector said Ofsted's deferral policy, which allows schools to delay inspections under certain circumstances, was "always under review".

She said that "of course we'll want to look" at the policy in the aftermath of coronavirus, and at when it will be "sensible and proportionate" to consider delays.

### *Schools won't be inspected on COVID-19 response*

Asked whether Ofsted will be looking at how schools have responded to the coronavirus crisis, Spielman said: "We're not going to be judging schools per se on their response to COVID-19."

Once inspections resume, they will once again be focused on the quality of education, Spielman said. The chief inspector also reminded MPs that there are no specific expectations from government of what schools should be doing in terms of education during COVID-19

"There is no standard of home or online learning by which we would be able to judge schools."

She added: "We wouldn't be asking for evidence of what you set children. There would be no 'prove that you set children meaningful work'."

### *'Serious' concerns about impact on vulnerable pupils*

Spielman told the committee that she was "seriously concerned" about the impact of partial closures on the most vulnerable pupils, for example, those in alternative provision.

"The longer the closure or almost closure, the greater the problems for those children," she said.

The chief inspector added that COVID-19 "is clearly going to present the biggest problem for the poorest, the lowest-achieving academically and the least motivated children.

"Whether we like it or not, it is going to widen gaps, especially in the short term."

### *Many Ofsted staff are 'less than fully occupied' ...*

Ofsted has a "considerable number" of staff who are "less than fully occupied" at the moment, Spielman told MPs, adding that her staff were "very willing" to do other work.

She revealed the inspectorate had surveyed all of its staff during the first week of the lockdown to work out if they had additional skills to help elsewhere, and these details were passed to other government departments.

Asked how many staff are volunteering for other work, Spielman said: "Our default assumption is that everybody who is not required for the business as usual work or redeployment to...other departments is available for wider work."

Matthew Coffey, Ofsted's chief operating officer, told the committee that over 230 Ofsted staff are now working with councils, with a focus on those rated 'inadequate' and those that have not improved since their last inspection.

### *But there 'isn't demand' for help in schools*

Despite the availability of Ofsted staff, Spielman claims they are not needed in schools.

She referred to polling by Teacher Tapp, which showed that more than half of teachers are working "much less than usual".

"There isn't demand from the school sector at the moment for additional support," she said.

"We are absolutely open and responsive to all initiatives but the general reaction from schools at the moment, and it might change when they reopen, but at the moment is that there is not a perceived need by schools for additional capacity."

### **National Home Learning Support Helpline for Parents**

A national parent helpline has been set up, known as StarLine, and backed by the new virtual Oak Academy, as well as Star Academies, the Confederation of School Trusts, Triple P UK and a number of academy trusts. It is also staffed by Ofsted inspectors who have been redeployed alongside teachers to provide advice about home learning to parents. The helpline is designed to help parents and carers create regular routines and study habits, offering practical steps to take and access to resources, such as support with a specific topic or advice on how to structure the day, deal with difficult behaviour or manage the learning of several children. StarLine is open six days a week and covers all areas of the curriculum across all phases of education. The number to call is 0330 313 9162 (calls charged at local rate).

### **(Partially) Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- School Inspection Handbook –section 5 including evaluation descriptors *November 2019*
- School Inspection handbook - section 8 *November 2019*
- Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills setting – *October 2019*
- EPHA audit of Ofsted safeguarding requirements – January 2020
- Ofsted online presentations <https://www.slideshare.net/Ofstednews>
- The Education Inspection Framework – education, skills and early years *November 2019*
- Ofsted inspection website <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

All guidance can be found on GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-inspections-of-maintained-schools>



or on the EPHA website [www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk](http://www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk)

Information about Ofsted inspections at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/being-inspected-as-a-maintained-school-or-academy>

### **Your “do-list”**

- Enjoy an Ofsted inspection-free period, one of the few upsides to the current pandemic.
- Consider tasking someone to focus on your school website, making sure that it is kept up to date, as far as possible. One day Ofsted will return!

# The Governing Body

## Key information

When schools closed on 20<sup>th</sup> March it is likely that, for many, governing body business also paused. Some managed to start up remote meetings immediately, while others used Chair's Action to agree urgent matters (such as the approval of the Covid-19 Child Protection Policy). Some years ago governing bodies were encouraged to consider whether their standing orders should include the option of conducting meetings remotely when necessary – at that time most of us couldn't see when this would ever be necessary, but included this as an option. Check your standing orders – it needs to include something on the following lines:

### **Alternative arrangements for governor participation at meetings**

*Governors may participate and vote at meetings using telephone conferencing facilities in exceptional circumstances, as determined and agreed by the Chair of Governors.*

*A meeting will only take place if there is a physical quorum for the meeting (i.e. if a quorate number of governors are in attendance at the stated venue for the meeting). If governors participate/vote at meetings but are not in attendance due regard will be paid to confidentiality and fair and equal contribution to the meeting.*

*The clerk will attend the meeting in order to record the minutes.*

If your standing orders includes this already, make sure that you record this at each meeting, for example by adding in a sentence under attendance such as follows:

*"The meeting was held online (in accordance with the standing orders to be enacted in exceptional circumstances, in this case as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic)."*

If you have not adopted this ability to hold meetings remotely ask your Chair of Governors to agree this under "urgent action" and report back to the Governing Body at a later date.

In my experience so far, the "attendance" at Governing Body and Committee meetings held remotely is excellent! (*Just remember to change out of your pyjamas if using cameras!*) (*You know who you are!!*)

## **Governing Body guidance – summer term 2020**

The Local Authority has produced guidance for governors about operating during the partial school closure period. You may also find the following article helpful:

### *Article from The Key*

Your summer term agenda won't be business as usual; remote meetings should be focused on urgent, time-bound decisions. It is most likely that meetings will be held remotely this term.

Usually you'd use the summer term agenda to look at things like pupil achievement, attendance, and reviewing your progress towards school improvement plan ([SIP](#)) objectives.

But due to coronavirus, you'll need to use this year's agenda differently - this is because you're likely to be working without data and your [remote meetings](#) will be shorter than normal meetings.

This agenda is a general guideline - your board might do things differently.

### *Update from the headteacher on the current situation*

Governors will probably want to receive a headteacher report of some description – do refer to any updates that you have already given.

What governors may ask the report to cover:

- Attendance
- Skeleton staff
- Remote learning
- Safeguarding
- Vulnerable children
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- Children of critical workers
- Pupils receiving free school meals
- Finance and premises
- Health and safety
- Recruitment
- Parental engagement
- Staff wellbeing and continuing professional development (CPD)
- Additional support your headteacher needs from the governing board

## **Performance data for 2020 won't be published**

Usually the headteacher's report would include pupil progress data, but it's unlikely governors will be given any data to look at this summer, given the circumstances.

[The Department for Education \(DfE\) has also announced](#) that it won't be publishing school or multi-academy trust (MAT) level performance data or accountability measures based on summer 2020 tests and assessments.

Where students are awarded grades, this data will not be used to hold schools to account, or used by others organisations, such as Ofsted and local authorities - they'll use data from previous years to assess school performance.

*The following questions are suggested for governors to ask – you might want to answer these within your report.*

### **Parents and carers:**

What support are you giving to parents and carers to help pupils learn at home?

How is the school keeping parents connected.

### **Pupil progress:**

How are you monitoring pupils' progress and interaction with remote learning?

How are pupils with no internet access managing?

How have teachers been giving pupils feedback on any work they've completed?

### **Staff and finance:**

How is the school paying for regular external staff who aren't furloughed? (e.g. music/P.E. teachers)

How is the school covering coronavirus-related costs?

You'll want to hear what arrangements are in place to carry on paying staff as normal (as is expected if your school directly employs them).

Governors will also want to hear that the school plans to claim for other coronavirus-related costs under the government's scheme.

### **Pupils and safeguarding:**

How are you providing care for vulnerable pupils/pupils with EHCPs/SEND/children of critical workers?

How are you monitoring the safety and wellbeing of these pupils who aren't in school?

How do you make sure your skeleton staffing rota always means that pupils in school can be cared for safely?

How is the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) coping?

What support has the DSL received from the local authority?

Governors will want to hear that the DSL has received support and is always contactable.

### **Approve the budget**

Schools will still need to approve your 2020/21 budget in time.

Maintained schools: check your LA's deadline (it'll be between [May and June](#)).

Academies: your budget (part of the budget forecast return three year – BFR3Y) must be [submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency](#) (ESFA) by July. But do check your funding agreement in case your deadline's different.

### **Check arrangements for relationships and sex education**

Your school will have to teach [relationships and sex education \(RSE\) from September 2020](#).

You'll want to check where senior leaders are with preparing for the new requirements. There's no set timeline for the consultation and curriculum/policy review process, and schools will do it differently. Your school's plans may also have been disrupted by coronavirus. If you haven't already, ask:

- Has the school completed consultations with parents over any changes?
- If not, can any consultations be completed virtually?
- Have you finalised the curriculum offer for RSE to start in September?
- Is the new RSE policy ready for approval? If not, when can we expect it?

Governors may want to hear that senior leaders are on track, or if they aren't, that they've got a plan in place to make sure everything is ready for September.

### **Approve urgent policy updates**

Below are examples of some urgent policies. You may have different/additional policies to approve (*see section above*).

Safeguarding

Approve the [addendum to your child protection policy](#) – the [DfE has said](#) it's important for schools to review

and revise their child protection policy to reflect new arrangements in response to coronavirus.

Relationships and sex education

Approve the RSE policy so it's ready for September (if it's ready for approval).

### **Admissions appeals**

Appeal panels don't need to be held in person. There are [new regulations](#) set to come into force on 24 April 2020 until 31 January 2021.

These regulations will:

Give flexibility to hold panel hearings by telephone, video conference or in writing

Provide for appeal panels to proceed with 2 members should the 3rd withdraw

Amend the deadlines relating to appeals

Where an appellant can't take part in the hearing and you can't offer an alternative date, the appeal can be decided on written submissions.

You'll want to check that arrangements are in place to facilitate these changes.

### **Exclusions panels**

Exclusion timeframes still apply, but the [DfE recognises](#) they might not be met.

You need to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the meeting should be delayed (and held as soon as practicable), or held remotely by telephone or video-conferencing.

You'll want to ask whether you're due to hold any exclusion panels, and whether remote panels can be facilitated if this is practical.

### **Consider staffing arrangements for 2020/21**

Reorganise your staffing structure if necessary. Even with the current challenges of dealing with coronavirus, there may be reasons why your leadership team wants to reorganise the school's staffing structure. This might be where:

- Your budget-setting process has shown that you need to make savings
- If coronavirus costs have impacted your budget, you can claim some finances back under a government scheme.
- Staff have resigned and you need to think about what this means for the staffing structure as a whole
- You're thinking about changing how your school delivers education and want to try something new in September
- Recruit a headteacher if yours has resigned

Be clear on the process for [recruiting a headteacher remotely](#).

### **Less-urgent items**

Discuss these items in focus groups or if you've got time as a board after you've completed your urgent tasks.

Set the strategy for 2020/21

It might be a good idea to set up a working party for strategy development.

Short term: we don't know yet when schools will re-open, but you'll likely focus on a strategy for the transition back into school (with a particular focus on vulnerable pupils).

Make sure your strategy is flexible to allow for different solutions. Remember, while you'll be involved with the strategy, the actual implementation of this approach and how it'll work in practice, is down to senior leaders.

Medium term: this'll likely focus on closing the learning gap between pupils. You might also look at wellbeing and staying healthy too.

Reflect on your board's skills and effectiveness

While you're reflecting, consider how your board has performed over the year. Discuss:

How well you've worked together. This may cover:

How your chair and board has responded to the coronavirus situation, and if there are any areas for improvement you can implement going forward

How remote meetings have worked, including if they're effective and everyone can contribute

Whether you have all the skills you need on your board, and what extra skills you would like

Whether you need to make any changes to work more effectively over the next year

Carry out a skills audit to help with this and discuss the results in a meeting. Discuss your training needs, and what you can do about them as a board.

*Article from The key, produced by:*

*Keith Clover is a national leader of governance. He chairs two governing bodies within a multi-academy trust and is an academy consultant for a diocese.*

*Fiona Stagg is a national leader of governance and an independent clerk. She is also an experienced chair of governors, conducts external reviews of governance, and supports and mentors chairs and clerks. She is also a facilitator for the DfE's governance leadership programme.*

### **Governance Annual Statement – Maintained schools**

“Best practice” for maintained school governing bodies.

In January 2014 the Department for Education published departmental advice in relation to the the School Procedures regulations 2013. A number of additional recommendations, not mentioned in the Procedures regulations, were made in the advice document, **including reference to the publication of an annual governance statement.**

*It is also good practice for the board to publish an annual governance statement (as academy trusts are required to do through the Accounts Direction) to explain how it has fulfilled its responsibilities – particularly in relation to its core functions, including:*

- *the governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of any committees;*
- *the attendance record of individual governors at board and committee meetings; and*
- *an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the board and any committees with details of any particular challenges that have arisen.*

Since September 2015, it was mandatory for all schools to publish information about their governors on the website. Whilst accepting that the publication of a governance statement **is not mandatory**, it is good practice and an effective way for governors to demonstrate that their accountability to parents, at least annually. We suggest that governors agree a statement and publish this on their website, perhaps at the end of the summer term each year. **This year governors may want to publish a report about the school's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

### **Get Information about Schools**

Please continue to update the Get Information about Schools website. There was a system update on 18 March and a reminder that schools should check and update their current contact details.

<https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>

### **Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- Covid-19 Governance Support Guidance – produced by Essex LA
- SFVS 2019 – 2020 checklist and dashboard  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs>
- “Get information about schools” <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>
- National Governors Association <http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx>

### **Your “do-list”**

- Ensure that your agreed Standing Orders (the “terms of reference” for the Governing Body) include the permission to conduct governor meetings remotely. If they don't, agree this using Chair's Action and inform your governors.
- Encourage your governors to focus on critical business at the current time. You may not want to hold every planned meeting this term – decide, in discussion with your Chair, which meetings are necessary.
- Circulate the ECC Governance Support guide to your governors.
- (Possibly) ask governors to write an amended governance statement for approval and publication on the school website at the end of the term.
- Update your school's information on the Get information about Schools website



# The Local Authority

## Key information

Inevitably, most of the focus for the Local Authority since March has been on supporting Essex schools during the Covid-19 pandemic and on interpreting and sharing guidance to manage the challenges of the partial school closure. Clare Kershaw, the Director of Education, and LA officers, have worked closely with the Headteacher Associations and Unions to try to offer a consistent and helpful response, despite the plethora of (sometimes unclear and contradictory) guidance from the DfE. Their main priority has been on safeguarding pupils and staff, and managing the huge number of new requirements for schools, such as offering free school meal options for eligible families. Edenred has taken up a disproportionate amount of time!

A secondary, but important consideration, has been considering what kind of home and remote learning schools might offer and how this can be achieved. One principle that the LA has followed from the outset, which has been appreciated by schools, is not to dictate how the requirements are followed, leaving schools to decide the best way of continuing their provision. The regular communications from Clare Kershaw have been welcomed by schools, and the School Communications team continues to collate and post guidance on the Covid-19 page of the Essex Schools Infolink.

<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>

The Local Authority teams, including the School Effectiveness Partners, the SEND Workforce and Social Care, continue to offer support to schools. **You should continue to contact your SEP, the Inclusion Partners, and other teams when you need help and support.**

## Pupil Transitions

The LA recognises that the COVID19 outbreak will have an impact on transitions for all young people, including those with SEND, their families and all educational settings. This includes children or young people who are:

- starting school for the first time
- moving from infant to junior or primary school to secondary school
- joining a new class or school
- leaving school for college or work-based learning
- leaving education altogether

The LA recognises that schools will be in the process of planning transitions for children and young people, including how to manage this differently under the current circumstances. LA Officers are working with partners across Essex to put together guidance, advice and support to educational settings and the parents/carers of their children and young people. They will also be encouraging you to share your own, existing good practice.

## SEND and Inclusion

Most “business as usual” has been paused, though the **Essex Inclusion Headteacher Round Table** is continuing to work on a framework around what good SEND practice looks like in schools. This document should be published this half term. The minutes of the last meeting (held before the school shutdown) are available on the EPHA website <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/send-strategy/>

## LA weekly surveys

The Local Authority is mindful of the need to reduce workload while headteachers and staff focus on safeguarding and managing the partial closure of their schools, and so is determined not to ask for unnecessary data and information from schools. Where possible data will be gathered from other sources. However, in order to plan and decide support and guidance for schools the LA does need to collect some information and is doing this mainly via a weekly survey. This is generally published on a Thursday morning for completion by Friday lunchtime. The questions (and results) are considered in discussion with the Headteacher Associations. It is important to respond to the survey, even if your school is closed. If you have any comments to make please contact me to discuss.

## Relevant Documents and Guidance

- Daily Schools Communications
- Essex Schools Infolink

## Your “do-list”

- Make sure you are reading the daily communications and accessing guidance from the infolink.
- Contact your School Effectiveness Partner or other LA Officers for help and support.
- Complete the weekly survey to share vital information about the school closure period.

## EPHA events and dates

### Key information

According to my information so far, just 6 primary schools in Essex have new headteachers this term

#### North East

Anthony Cosans                      Unity Primary Academy

#### South

Jen Govier                              South Green Infants (Acting headteacher)

Susan Twaites                        Kelvedon Hatch Primary

#### West

Renette Fourie                        Hereward Primary (now substantive headteacher)

#### Mid

Jennifer Kendall                       Larkrise Primary (Acting Headteacher)

Demelza Collins                       Larkrise Primary (Acting Headteacher)

Guy Niven continues as headteacher at Baddow Hall Juniors for the summer term (having tried to retire at Easter!)

*As usual if you are aware of any other new or acting headteachers this term, please let me know. They are starting headship at a tricky time!*

### EPHA termly headteacher meetings 2019-20 and 2020-21

It is difficult to know what the medium-term future of large gatherings and meetings will be, and unlikely that the headteacher meetings will go ahead as normal this term. If this is the case, we will consider how to share the information that would normally be presented, and set up an opportunity to meet virtually with headteachers and LA Officers.

The dates for the next year, in a spirit of optimism, are:

#### North East EPHA – Colchester United Football Stadium

Wednesday 10 June 2020

Wednesday 11 November 2020

Wednesday 3 March 2021

Wednesday 16 June 2021

#### South EPHA – Holiday Inn, Basildon

Thursday 11 June 2020

Thursday 12 November 2020

Thursday 4 March 2021

Thursday 17 June 2021

#### West EPHA – Stansted Business Centre, Takeley

Wednesday 17 June 2020

Wednesday 18 November 2020

Wednesday 10 March 2021

Wednesday 23 June 2021

#### Mid EPHA – Chelmsford City Football Club

Thursday 18 June 2020

Thursday 19 November 2020

Thursday 11 March 2021

Thursday 24 June 2021

The minutes of these and other meetings can be found on the EPHA website. Try reading the ones from March 2020 as a “blast from the past”. We were in a different world!

### County EPHA Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 7 October 2020              Chelmsford City Football Club (9.00 am start)

### **EPHA Primary Headteachers' Support Directory**

The document can be found on the EPHA website at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/welcome-pack/>

### **Conferences**

**Deputy Headteachers' conference** – Friday 2 October 2020 – Colchester Football Stadium

At the moment, it is not clear whether or not this conference will be able to take place. If it is not possible to run a traditional conference at the venue, EPHA will plan a virtual conference, to celebrate and support the work of deputy and assistant headteachers. More information will be shared in the second half of the summer term.

**Headteachers' conference** – Friday 19 March 2021 – Stock Brook Country Club (programme will be sent out in January 2020). If you have applied (and possibly paid) for the 2020 conference, which had to be cancelled, I will assume you want a place next year and will carry over your place to 2021. Of course, if you decide that you don't want to attend next year your payment will be refunded. I will contact everyone late in the autumn term/early spring term to discuss this further.

### **EPHA Primary Headteachers' Support Directory**

The document can be found on the EPHA website at <https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/welcome-pack/>

The **2020/21 EPHA funding contribution** will be paid directly from the DSG – therefore there will be no need to collect subscriptions from schools in the next financial year – please let your finance officer know.

### **Relevant Documents and Guidance**

- EPHA website [www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk](http://www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk)
- What headteachers get in return for their EPHA contribution 2019/20  
<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/about/constitution-and-finance/>
- EPHA Headteachers' Support Directory

### **Your "do-list"**

- Be especially kind to new colleagues (and existing ones!)
- If you are, or know of, a new or acting headteacher, please contact Pam to access the EPHA Colleague Supporter programme.
- Look out for further information about the headteacher meetings and future conferences.
- Find documents and information on the EPHA website, including the 7-minute staff meetings.
- Contact Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer, at [pam@langmead.me.uk](mailto:pam@langmead.me.uk) for any support or information that you need.