

COVID19 Bulletin – 27th May 2020

Advice to schools on reopening to more pupils

Summary

Lancashire County Council is advising schools in the county not to open to more pupils from 1 June, but instead to continue with the current arrangements. This is because, in our assessment, we do not currently meet all five of the government's tests in Lancashire which would allow this decision to be taken safely.

We will regularly review the situation and provide further advice so that we can advise schools to open to more pupils as soon as we judge it safe to do so.

We are actively encouraging schools to follow this advice.

Government advice for schools and parents

The government has released the following direction under scientific guidance regarding the re-opening of schools on June 1st:

- Nurseries and other early year providers, including childminders, are to begin welcoming back all children.
- Primary schools are to welcome back children in nursery (where they have them), reception, year 1 and year 6.
- Secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges are to begin some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils. We do not expect these pupils to return on a full-time basis at this stage.

Local assessment

The government's five tests are outlined below:

- Protect the NHS's ability to cope. We must be confident that we are **able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment** right across the UK.
- See a **sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates** from Covid-19 so we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak
- See that **the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels** across the board, although we don't see the results of all tests in a timely manner. In addition, we are starting to see social distancing not being followed everywhere across the county which poses the risk of new cases to rise.
- Be confident that **the range of operational challenges, including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand**, with supply able to meet future demand.
- Be confident that **any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections** that overwhelms the NHS.

Locally, we are currently able to meet the requirements of the first three tests; however, we do not meet the requirements for the final two tests. The test and trace programme is not at a state of readiness to respond to Covid-19 community setting outbreaks in a timely manner, which poses a risk to school environments. Furthermore, we are not confident that adjustments to the current measures of the lockdown policy will not risk a second peak of infections locally.

Consequently, our advice to schools is to not re-open to more pupils on June 1st, but to continue with their current support systems that are in place. The safety and wellbeing of children, their families, and school staff outweigh the benefits of opening schools of 1st June.

The key information supporting this advice is that:

- The current support system in schools for children of key workers and valuable children, which is how we describe our vulnerable children, is sufficient at this time. Additionally, safeguards are in place in Lancashire to support those children who are at risk in the community, and this support will continue.
- There has been no evidence of education outcomes worsening due to the effects of government lockdown policy.
- It is not going to be possible to implement social distancing in early years school settings.
- There is currently no evidence of widespread immunity in community settings.
- There is a significant risk that should outbreaks occur in school settings, the current system will not allow for tests to be conducted in a timely manner and therefore, the virus will continue to spread.

Schools will be kept well informed on a regular basis from the Director for Public Health in Lancashire and Lancashire County Council. We will regularly review the situation and provide further advice so that schools can re-open as soon as it is safe to do so.

In this challenging time, we recommend that everyone continue to follow the government advice of staying alert by:

- Staying at home as much as possible.
- Working from home if you can.
- Limit contact with other people.
- Keep a 2m distance from other people.
- Wash your hands regularly.

Dr Sakthi Karunathini
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
Lancashire County Council

a) Arrangements for Recovery Planning/Implementation

PPE Guide – updated version

The final version of the PPE guide is **attached (1)** with section 7 added; this covers the purchase of PPE for schools.

When using PPE in schools please refer to the [DfE guidance issued on 14 May 2020](#); this guidance explains the strategy for infection prevention and control, including the specific circumstances when PPE should be used.

If schools require any advice about cleaning of the school site, please contact the onsite cleaning operative who can offer guidance and support.

The Independent SAGE Report 2: Should Schools Reopen?

Formed on May 4 as an independent alternative to the government's SAGE organisation, the [Independent SAGE](#) convened as a group of preeminent experts from the UK and around the world, chaired by former HM Government Chief Scientific Advisor Sir David King and drawing on a range of international and British experts.

On 22nd May, the group published a [report attached \(2\)](#) offering their interim findings from a review of the international evidence regarding the wider opening of schools; the document attached provides an executive summary of this report. The information contained in the report might be of assistance to school leaders in carrying out risk assessments and planning to re-open safely in the context of the advice from the Director of Public Health.

Supply Cover Insurance and Maternity Scheme for Lancashire Schools Covid-19 Update June 2020

A Supply Cover Insurance policy update has been agreed with the Schools Forum and the Director of Education and Skills, which will allow schools to claim for staff that are self-isolating or shielding, where the school can demonstrate that they are incurring additional costs which could not be met by other flexible working options available at the current time. Under normal operation, the scheme only reimburses schools for sickness absence. Further information is available [here](#)

Free School Meal Voucher Scheme – clarification about claims from DfE

At a recent NWLMS virtual meeting with Gemma Donnelly from the DfE, a number of authorities asked for further clarification regarding the FSM voucher scheme, specifically where schools were doing something different and the conditions for claiming all related costs. The response was as follows:

- With the exceptional costs fund, DfE [guidance](#) confirms that schools are able to claim for additional costs incurred in supporting free school meal pupils where the national voucher scheme is not an appropriate approach.
- Schools are free to consider what is the best solution for providing support to their free school meal pupils during the current circumstances and that this is subject to certain criteria, **including a ceiling on the overall total cost that can**

be claimed and an expectation that schools do not claim if this will further add to any historic reserves.

- Some schools will have continued to provide food parcels and/or prepared meals, many have used the national voucher scheme, and others will have used alternative voucher schemes locally. The DfE has confirmed that these conditions do not prevent schools from working with the other suppliers, or for being fully reimbursed **where this will have a negative impact on their financial position.**

Communication with Lancashire Healthy Young People and Families Service

The service provides health visiting and schools nursing support. SPA has recently received a number of e-mails that are Egress password protected. Unfortunately, the SPA cannot open these e-mails. To avoid service delivery being affected by this, please do not send any Egress password-protected e-mails into the SPA. Staff can be reassured that all e-mails sent from [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) addresses to NHS address are already secure so do not need the extra layer of protection.

b) DfE Guidance and Information

Guidance (26 May 2020)

Return to settings of children and young people with EHC Plans/complex needs

Updated guidance to include new information on the recommended approaches that local authorities, educational settings and parents should follow for the return of children and young people with EHC plans, or those with complex needs but who do not have an EHC plan, to educational settings from 1 June 2020.

[Supporting children and young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for wider opening](#)

Preparing for wider opening from 1 June

Planning guides for school leaders to help them prepare to open their schools for more pupils during the coronavirus outbreak.

[Preparing for the wider opening of schools from 1 June](#)

These guides are for those responsible for mainstream primary and secondary schools. The secondary guidance is also for alternative provision secondary schools.

The [primary planning guide](#) should help school leaders prepare for extending their opening to include all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6 from the week commencing 1 June, alongside priority groups (vulnerable children and the children of critical workers). The guide includes the following **key phase-specific clarification**:

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- Re-opening should start to be phased in from June 1st for **all pupils** in Nursery, Reception, Y1 and Y6 (so far as staffing and site restrictions allow);
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- Were this is not feasible, places should be prioritised for priority groups in all years, and then for younger groups first (as these are at the lowest risk from infection);
- Consistent groups of no more than 15 pupils (ideally no more than 8 in early years settings) should be maintained, under the direction of one assigned teacher (and/or teaching assistant) - rotas should **not** be used;
- It is accepted that strict social distancing will not be possible for younger children;
- The government ambition is for pupils in all year groups in primary schools to return before the summer break

The [secondary planning guide](#) asks secondary schools to offer face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 pupils **from 15 June**, This is largely in line with other guidelines dealing with preparations for wider re-opening, but includes some important **phase-specific clarification**, in particular:

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- Remote education will remain the predominant mode of provision for all year groups during the summer term;
 - Whilst full-time places should continue to be provided for the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils, the face-to-face provision for students in Y10 and Y12 should **not** now take place before 15th June (schools are expected to amend any existing plans to open sooner);
 - **No more than a quarter** of the Y10 (and Y12) cohort should be on site **on any given day**, *including* critical worker and vulnerable children – this specifically rules out having rotas with different cohorts in school in the afternoon compared to the morning;
 - Some pupils might be encouraged to attend more frequently than others (e.g. disadvantaged pupils or those failing to engage with remote education);
 - Careful thought needs to be given to start and finish times to minimise the use of public transport and to avoid peak travel times.

A summary of the secondary guidance has been prepared locally and is **attached (3)**.

Comparison between Primary and Secondary Guidance

This summary, prepared locally, sets out the similarities and differences between the two sets of guidance and is **attached (4)**.

Planning guide for Early Years and Childcare Settings

A summary of the [guidance shared in the Bulletin on Monday 25 May](#) has been prepared locally and is **attached (5)**.

Press Releases

No new releases.

Statistics and Information (26 – 27 May 2020)

Updated details on how business professionals working in schools can find, join or create a network of local school business professionals.

[Find, join or create a network for school business professionals](#)

Staff numbers and costs for the Department for Education (DfE) group for the financial year 2020 to 2021. [DfE monthly workforce management information: 2020 to 2021](#)

This collection brings together documents relating to monthly workforce management information. [DfE: monthly workforce management information](#)

A summary of attendance in education settings since Monday 23 March and early years settings since Thursday 16 April. [Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

The latest official statistics covering monthly apprenticeship starts and apprenticeship service commitments, repurposed in this update to make more relevant to the current COVID-19 outbreak. [Apprenticeship and traineeships: May 2020](#)
