

Dudley MBC initial commentary on DfE September 2020 guidance for schools

The following is a set of initial comments on the guidance.

It is not intended to be a definitive list of answers to all the questions we know schools will wish to raise; rather a collection of suggestions and identification of matters you might need to consider when planning for September.

HR

- We do not have a feel for a union response to the guidance yet. We are meeting with unions again locally on the 14th July.
- In the event of staff absences due to Covid-19, the DfE is directing schools to its list of approved agencies. We need to identify support and signposting.
- Schools will need to manage the fear element with staff who are anxious about returning. Learning & Organisational Development have been asked to develop sessions to support schools in courageous conversations.

Health + Safety

- It would be prudent to place the risk assessment in the public area of schools' web pages for reassurance to all who use the school.
- The guidance document discusses the use of Bleach, which is effective in the removal of COVID-19 from surfaces. However, this has to be risk assessed and a control measure put in place to ensure the bleach is used in accordance with manufacturers' directions and that neat bleach is not left on surfaces so as to cause a H&S burn risk.
- Enhanced cleaning and more frequent cleaning of toilets will mean cleaning staff may also be required on the premises during the school day. This adds to the school staff loading and increases potential contact issues.
- How will school mealtimes be organised to keep social distancing working – will meals be taken in class?
- If schools have to move furniture out to get a more front on teaching style, do they have storage facilities a) within the school or b) elsewhere?

The Local Authority will be reviewing the risk assessment shared with schools in the run up to the expansion of provisions on 1st June and updating it to support schools in their September plans.

Safeguarding in Education

Schools should consider revising their child protection policy to reflect the return of more pupils. Schools must have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, (KCSIE) and should also refer to the coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers' guidance. A new CP policy is being sent to DSLs in the next few weeks which will ask them to include any differences to their normal arrangements and ensure the above legislation is cited within their policy

Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be provided with more time, especially in the first few weeks of term, to help them provide support to staff and children regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns, and the handling of referrals to children's social care and other agencies where these are appropriate. In particular, we suggest that;

- DSLs share safeguarding responsibilities with their Deputy DSLs to ease their caseload
- DSLs ensure that all staff understand how to raise a concern and contact partner agencies particularly if they are moving between sites or the normal arrangements have been amended.
- DSLs consider online virtual teaching and the safeguarding implications if still teaching to a cohort of students that are not in school
- Schools review and amend school online safety and acceptable use policy to reflect the current situation
- DSLs update any pupil's care plan in writing, with any changes to staff rotas,
- DSLs must be contactable using KCSiE guidance 'adequate and appropriate cover for any out of hours or out of term activities'. DSLs do not have to be on site during the holidays but should ensure a senior member of staff is able to lead on safeguarding duties and contact them asap.

Communication with school nurses is important for safeguarding and supporting wellbeing, as they have continued virtual support to pupils who have not been in school. Gail Hooper and her School Nurse team are available to offer continuous support to all pupils of concern. The team have also been visiting children at home to do safe and well checks.

Access and Inclusion

Many children will have experienced trauma and loss during their time at home and this will make their return to school very difficult. These children will need support and the move from stay at home to everyone back to school must be carefully managed.

After such a long period of time away from school some of the less well engaged pupils may find it more difficult to re-engage with school. The use of the formal powers to exclude need to be used sensitively in these situations as they may not support reintegration, simply create a wider gap between the school, child and family.

Transport could be a significant issue, particularly if buses are not at full capacity in September, and schools might need to consider making allowances in the interpretation of their attendance policies.

We could see a rise in families moving to Elective Home Education and need to be aware that, for our most vulnerable groups, this is not the best option.

As such we are currently liaising with the DfE over the precise timescale for when using fixed penalty notices will be required, on the basis that we want to encourage pupils to return to school, rather than going down a more punitive route. We will keep you updated.

Early Years

The issue for schools regarding early years is that there are two separate sets of guidance to be looked as both refer to early years including nursery and reception.

There is not clarity always around which early years groups they are referring to in the guidance and who the youngest or younger children are.

We have raised this issue with the DfE and are awaiting feedback.

The table below identifies the key discrepancies.

	SCHOOL GUIDANCE – 2 nd July 2020	EARLY YEARS GUIDANCE – updated 2 nd July 2020
Who does it apply to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘It applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), infant, junior, middle, upper, <u>school-based nurseries and boarding schools</u>’ 	When they mention early years settings, they seem to be referring to PVI group settings and childminders on the early years register
Groupings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘We recognise that <u>younger children will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group</u>’. ‘Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. They have been used in schools in the summer term in recognition that children, and <u>especially the youngest children, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other</u> and this provides an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or ‘bubbles’ that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible. In this guidance for the autumn term, <u>maintaining consistent groups remains important</u>, but given the decrease in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, <u>schools may need to change the emphasis on bubbles within their system of controls and increase the size of these groups</u> Where staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. <u>Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger children and</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Update - From 20 July, early years settings will no longer be required to keep children in small, consistent groups within settings.</u> Settings should still consider how they can <u>minimise mixing within settings</u>, for example where they use different rooms for different age groups, keeping those groups apart as much as possible. <u>Reception is subject to school admissions (infant class size) regulations, therefore, until the end of the summer term, schools should follow the primary guidelines for reception which sets a limit of 15 children per group. New guidance has also been published for schools for autumn term from September</u>

	<p>teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other, and from children. <u>We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger children, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help.</u> <p>By younger and youngest children do they mean nursery and reception? Not all schools have a nursery so their younger children are reception. Also the reception children will be only four years old on entry and many of them for some time.</p>	
Ratios and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>In nursery classes in maintained schools, caring for children aged 3 and over, reasonable endeavours should be used to ensure that at least one member of staff is a school teacher. Where this is not possible, there must be at least one member of staff for every 8 children, with at least one member of staff who holds at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification. Providers should use their reasonable endeavours to ensure that at least half of other staff hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification</u>
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For children in nursery settings, teachers should focus on the prime areas of learning, including: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and physical development. For pupils in Reception Year, teachers should also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary.</u> • Settings should follow updates to the EYFS disapplication guidance. • <u>For nursery settings and Reception, consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor learning</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For children in pre-reception settings, practitioners may focus at this time on the prime areas of learning, including: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and physical development. For children in reception year, teachers should also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary.</u>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an update on Early Years Foundation Stage reforms (7.6) and Reception Baseline Assessment (7.7) –