

Open Report on behalf of Martin Smith, Interim Assistant Director - Education

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	09 October 2020
Subject:	Update on the re-opening of schools in September 2020

Summary:

This report informs the Committee about the impact of the international pandemic on schools and education in Lincolnshire. It highlights some of the actions that have been taken by the Local Authority (LA) to support school leaders in dealing with this unprecedented situation and a move to achieve the government ambition that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the 1 September 2020.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and comment on the information within the report and seek clarification around the re-opening of schools.

1. Background

The Partial Opening of Schools – Summer Term 2020

Schools have remained open to some pupils since 23 March, welcoming more pupils back from 1 June. To assist schools with planning for phased re-opening, the LA provided schools with 'School Recovery Guidance in Response to Covid-19' (Appendix A) on aspects they should consider in preparation to re-open. This supports schools thinking about what capacity will be available on their sites with guidance to access their site plans and consideration of what leaders needed to think about to enable social distancing on pupils return. This includes guidance on the checks that need carrying out, HR guidance, and support for planning a return to the classroom environment. In following on-going government guidance, school leaders can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

Throughout the pandemic the LA has served the needs of the sector through regular communication (currently in excess of 150 examples of guidance and government updates) via:

Activity	Reach on average
Virtual engagement events for Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special schools with Assistant Director	300+ school leaders
Weekly virtual district drop in sessions	30+ school leaders per district
Termly MAT CEO networking	28 Multi Academy Trusts (MAT)
Virtual Governor partnership meetings	50 Governors
Virtual Clerk networking meetings	40 Clerks
Virtual Public Health Q&A session	180 school leaders
Virtual School Leader Recovery Coordination session with Dan Quinn, Assistant Director – Corporate Recovery	300+ school leaders
Weekly newsletters	365 schools
Email correspondence	365 schools

In addition there were on-going bespoke conversations with school leaders as and when required. This was a demand on the time of the whole education team but necessary to meet the individual needs of the sector.

With sector engagement high, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and as a result the team are well placed to continue supporting schools in line with government guidelines this academic year.

Through the summer term, with the vast majority of schools open, attendance in Lincolnshire schools was above national comparisons with disadvantaged and vulnerable children accounting for 14% of the cohort. As an LA we continue to communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to schools and families. Attendance data will be provided over the coming weeks as we seek assurance from our school communities regarding the number of pupils returning to school.

Welcoming children back to school – Autumn Term 2020

The Department for Education confirmed in July that all schools should re-open in September and welcome children back to their learning communities. The return to school, and other educational settings, is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children’s future ability to learn, therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later. The

government's ambition is to have all pupils back at school full-time at the start of the autumn term. However, every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a further national or local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education.

The Department for Education (DfE) published, and have amended a number of times, full guidance on schools re-opening which has been the core guidance used with all schools. The full guidance can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Before the start of the summer holidays, the Assistant Director held meetings to engage all schools. Everyone in attendance was positive and working extremely hard to ensure that their schools would be open and ready to welcome back all pupils. We have not been informed of any schools that would not be re-opening for all pupils.

Having assessed their risk, schools must work through the suggested system of controls, adopting measures to the fullest extent possible in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for their pupils, including full educational and care support for those pupils who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In preparation for schools re-opening to all pupils and young people, the LA offered guidance to schools in supporting children and young people who are at risk of [anxiety based school refusal](#), [transition resources and regulation toolkit](#), managing behaviour that challenges in response to Covid-19 (Appendix C), [post pandemic pastoral care playlist](#) and [transition resources and regulation toolkit](#). The continuation of partnership work with school leaders in supporting the most vulnerable children and young people across the sector ensures swift early help for families and social care intervention where appropriate. Throughout the pandemic, service provision has continued to meet needs.

A review of feedback from the sector by the Local Authority has resulted in the commissioning of the [Recover Lincolnshire Programme](#) via Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together. The programme will focus on a wide range of projects to help support schools. The offer includes English and Maths Curriculum Recovery, Mobilise Response, Confident Choices and the Thrive Network. In addition Peer Improvement Pathway, Stronger Governance, Mobilise, Small Schools Project, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) project and Ambition Lincoln will also be available to targeted schools or as a traded option. The Education Team continue to work closely with Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together to communicate consistent messages to school leaders regarding school improvement opportunities.

In July the government announced £1 billion of [catch up premium](#) funding to support children and young people to catch up. Funding will be provided to all state-funded schools and allocated based on pupil numbers. It will be for school

leaders to decide how the funding is best used to get young people back on track as quickly as possible. Schools will also have the opportunity to register an interest in the [National Tutoring Programme](#), which will offer additional targeted support for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.

The DfE has advised for the Catch-Up Premium, schools' allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in years Reception to Year 11. For special schools, Alternative Provision (AP) and hospital schools, each place in the academic year 2020/21 will attract £240.00 per place.

Using October 2019 census information as a basis for determining indicative overall funding, it will be c. £7.694m (Primary: £4.486m, and Secondary: £3.209m), and Special / AP £0.534m, a total of £8.228m.

Remote education

In the event of a national or local lockdown, schools should ensure learning is of high-quality, safe and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision. The government ambition for schools to teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the Autumn term is clear. However, substantial modification to the curriculum may be needed at the start of term to address significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. The government accepts a return to the school's normal curriculum in all subjects may not be possible until later in the academic year. The LA and Lincolnshire Learning Partnership supported school leaders with guidance and sign posting to national resources such as [Oak National Academy](#) and [BBC Bitesize](#) and how this could be integrated into curriculum learning on site and at home. In addition the LA coordinated virtual sessions with Lincolnshire schools across all phases (Haven High Academy, St Faith and St Martin Junior School and Boston West Academy) where all virtual platforms were showcased. In excess of 180 schools participated and as a result connectivity between Lincolnshire schools has increased and examples of effective practice shared widely.

More recently, guidance from the LA entitled 'supporting quality school and remote education' (Appendix B) supports school leaders to reflect, review and plan for a long term phased recovery towards education as we know and want it. Education Locality Leads will use this self-review as a basis to challenge, support and monitor school effectiveness as we move into the next phase of recovery.

School Transport as pupils return in September 2020

The Education Transport Team has been working hard with the Transport Services Group (TSG) to ensure entitled pupils have their school transport in place ahead of the new term. This has included processing many thousands of new applications in an unprecedented short space of time, with many parents delaying their application well into July and August given the uncertainty around the re-opening of schools.

At the same time, the team has sought to keep schools and the public informed of what they can expect from schools transport in September through local

networking and a comprehensive social media campaign. All arrangements are in line with government guidance.

Working closely with TSG, operators have been well briefed on government guidance and awarded small grants to ensure school transport is regularly cleaned and as safe as possible for children and young people. Bespoke arrangements have been put in place for a very small number of our most clinically vulnerable children to allow them to return to school in September with their peers.

The Council received £712k of short term government funding up to October half-term to increase dedicated school transport capacity. This funding has been used to ensure as many children as possible do not have to travel on the public transport network; so far, nearly 30 additional vehicles have been commissioned just for use by school children and almost 100 public transport services have been converted to dedicated schools transport services. The services will also be open to non-entitled pupils who normally pay a fare to get to school.

Autumn Term 2020 activity

The LA, working in collaboration with Lincolnshire Learning Partnership Board (LLPB) and Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Together (LTT), under the guidance of the Strategic Education Group (SEG), has communicated engagement opportunities with Lincolnshire schools. Planned activity includes:

- Virtual Leadership Briefings for Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special schools
- Virtual OfSTED development sessions for schools
- Virtual District drop in sessions
- Virtual MAT CEO networking
- Virtual Governor Partnership and clerk networking meetings
- Weekly newsletters – School News and Safeguarding Bulletin
- Virtual New to Lincolnshire Head Teacher briefing

The summer demonstrated the strength of relationships within the Education system in Lincolnshire between schools, settings and partners. We will continue to adapt and evolve our ways of working so that as much routine activity will resume supporting the recovery and continuity of education as we return to a new normal.

At the time of writing, attendance data had not been published but an update will be provided during the meeting to assure Members that our confidence in children returning has come to fruition.

2. Conclusion

There has been a significant amount of information and guidance published nationally and supported locally with our schools to support the return in September 2020. Some of this guidance was published a few days before schools returned, but this has not stopped the willingness of the sector to return to a more recognisable way of working for them.

Feedback and appreciation from the system has been very positive and relationships are strong to sustain the recovery in the forthcoming year. We will need to anticipate further amendments and changes as the new academic year progresses, but the Education Team and supporting partnerships are more than aware and ready for this evolution.

We will also need to be very aware of the consequent implications of the return to school as it is likely we will see an increased demand in LA services and statutory functions such Behaviour Outreach Support Services (BOSS), Healthy Minds, SEND support and referrals as well as transport demands.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not required

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	School Recovery Guidance in Response to Covid-19
Appendix B	Supporting quality school and remote education
Appendix C	Managing behaviour that challenges in response to Covid-19

5. Background Papers

This report was written by Kate Rouse, who can be contacted on 01522 553245 or katej.rouse@lincolnshire.gov.uk.