

# Headteachers' Update

## The Daily 5 O'Clock Update For Schools

### Children Attending School and Settings

The constructive coordination and joint working between schools, education and social care continues in relation to vulnerable children and school attendance and we continue to receive positive feedback from headteachers on this.

As a consequence, we are seeing an incremental increase in the number of vulnerable children in attendance at school each day and the numbers of vulnerable children this week have, for the first time, exceeded 400, which is over 25% of the cohort. As can be seen from the Children's Social Care guidance below, this remains a priority for the government and we continue to be asked about numbers and schools in the weekly calls we have with the DfE.

Overall, we have over 140 schools open each week and now have around 1550 children attending each day. This includes just under a thousand key worker children and around 160 children with an EHCP, as well as our most vulnerable children as detailed above.

### Infection Control Advice

We have had a few queries from schools seeking support around making decisions about whether a child should attend school who has had contact with possible or confirmed cases of Covid-19. Providing advice around infection control is a specialist area and schools and settings are advised to seek advice from Public Health England. Their North of England office has a team of staff who are able to deal with these queries. They can be contacted on 0300 303 8596 option 1.

### DfE Updates

The DfE last night published the long-awaited 'Guidance for Children's Social Care': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services>

I would strongly urge all headteachers and Governors to read this guidance in full. I was particularly impressed with a section that reminds us of why we are doing what we are doing:

*The difficult and complex decisions that need to be taken during this period should be made in the spirit of the following principles:*

- *child-centred – promoting children's best interests: nothing is more important than children's welfare; children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support as curiosity about a child's wellbeing*
- *risk-based – prioritising support and resources for children at greatest risk*
- *family focussed – harnessing the strengths in families and their communities*
- *evidence informed – ensuring decisions are proportionate and justified*
- *collaborative – working in partnership with parents and other professionals*
- *transparent – providing clarity and maintaining professional curiosity about a child's wellbeing*

In addition, the guidance also provides a reminder us that:

*Educational settings remain open and safe for vulnerable children and young people. Being at an early-years setting, school or college can be an important lifeline for many vulnerable children and young people, particularly where their needs cannot be met safely at home.*

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, for the purposes of continued attendance at educational settings, vulnerable children and young people are defined as those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan whose needs cannot be met safely in the home environment
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision - this might include:
  - children on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services,
  - adopted children,
  - those who are young carers,
  - children and young people living in temporary accommodation,
  - others at the provider and local authority discretion.

There is a paragraph on Alternative Provision and other providers:

**Is the expectation that all alternative provision (AP) schools and providers must remain open?**  
We know that significant numbers of children in AP meet the definition of vulnerable – a high proportion of AP pupils have a social worker (children in need, those on child protection plans or those who are looked after by the local authority) and/or are children with EHC plans. Local authorities are responsible for monitoring demand and capacity. This may involve working with schools to provide places in alternative settings if necessary, and supporting residential special schools, alternative provision, and other special settings to remain open, wherever possible.

It may be helpful to refer to the [guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

The guidance (below) also re-states that closed schools need to work with the local authority to find alternative places for those children who are eligible, and their parents request it:

**What should happen to vulnerable children and young people if their provider is closed?**

Where a setting is closed, the provider should notify the local authority/social worker that they are closing. They should work with the local authority to ensure that the vulnerable children and young people who normally attend can be found a place in another educational setting.

Finally, there is a statement regarding adopted children in the guidance:

**Are adopted children entitled to attend education?**

Educational settings remain open and safe for vulnerable children and young people and being at an early-years setting, school or college can be an important lifeline for many of them. Providers have discretion – working with other partners where appropriate – to continue to offer education provision to children and young people who they deem to be vulnerable.

This could include adopted children or previously looked after children who have left care under special guardianship orders, child arrangement orders or wider kinship placements. The needs of some of these children will best be met by attending education and this may prevent the placement from breaking down. Local authorities and education providers should therefore consider sympathetically any such requests from adoptive parents and special guardian carers. These should be assessed on a case by case basis, taking into account the additional needs of many of these children and advice from local authority Virtual School Heads.

**Schools producing PPE**

Pupils and staff have turned their hand to producing PPE for frontline staff. Hundreds of visors, amongst other items, have been delivered to Blyth Sports Centre for further distribution. Andy Roberts, Executive Principal of Ashington Learning Partnership said, "Pupils have been assisting with the latest batch of 3D test prints of visors, face shields and surgical mask retainers."

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*The 3D printers from Bothal and Central Primary Schools have been working overtime for the past two weeks, to help create the vital equipment. The staff and children wanted to help and it made sense to use the existing technology equipment to engage in a meaningful educational programme during lockdown. To be making equipment to help their country will be memorable for them and makes us all feel very proud.”*

Thank you to:

- Ashington Academy
- Bedlington Academy
- Bothal Primary School
- Central Primary School
- Queen Elizabeth High School
- Berwick Academy
- Meadowdale Academy
- Hexham First School
- Glendale Middle School has provided material that are being used by: Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, Benfield School and Northumberland College
- Collingwood School and Media Arts College

