

NCC Chair of Governors and Vice Chairs meeting with Dave Cookson and Governor Support.

**A meeting was held on Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 10am
remotely through Google Meet.**

Present:

Over 68+ Chairs of Governors

**Dave Cookson, Commissioner for Secondary Education
School Support Team**

1. Welcome

Welcome to everyone by Vicki Evans, Acting Governance Support Manager.

2. LA Update Covid 19 and the wider reopening of schools- Dave Cookson

DC - Began by thanking everyone for the support and felt sure that everyone was ready for a break. He explained there were approximately 10,000 pupils in schools yesterday (14/7/20) and thanked governors for supporting staff to help make it happen. The guidance that was being received now was fairly clear.

In terms of the wider reopening the following was covered: -

Risk Assessments - These had caused the most consternation. A new version would be provided by the authority, which at this stage is as comprehensive as possible. There is a possibility the DFe may issue new guidance on 11 August and if so then a further RA would be provided. Governors are required to “sign Off” the RA. This must then be shared with ALL Trade Unions. NCC has provided a link detailing all the Trade Unions (on NCC website). The RA also had a section covering Ethnic Minorities. There was an expectation that the vast majority of staff would be returning to school in September (HR to be consulted for further advice if not).

Pupils are all expected to return to school in September. We know some parents remain concerned. Fines for non-attendance are the last resort. Would hope to deal with that through dialogue and discussion, and not fines, if at all possible. Need to reassure families that school is a safe place.

If pupils choose not to attend - schools are not expected to provide remote learning - although you may wish to do so, to prevent them falling behind their peers.

Workloads of staff to be considered.

Extra-curricular activities are expected to resume from September. DfE would like them in bubbles - if possible, but it's not mandatory. Use the Risk Assessment process to decide if appropriate in your own school.

A broad balanced and full curriculum is to be offered from September - appreciate for some subjects, e.g. music or drama etc, do the best you can.

Assemblies - enshrined in law to be a daily act. It may well be a question to ask your school leaders about.

Contingency plans in your school, to link to NHS Test and Trace and self isolate processes. Links to NCC website in time about the prevalence of outbreaks being low in localities of Northumberland.

Exams are expected to take place in 2021. A full exam season is expected.

Ofsted full inspections will take place from January 2021 at the earliest. However, Ofsted intends to visit all Inadequate Schools from September to December to comment on the provision how schools are addressing the educational needs and gaps. They also intend to visit some other schools - don't know how they will choose those.

SIAMS Inspections - will not be held until January 2021 at the earliest.

NQTs - will have missed an element in their teaching provisions. Give consideration to their support from September and sign up to one of 4 bodies for the Early Career Framework - which is a free support programme for NQTs.

School Transport - the biggest barrier at present. The school transport team is working on a plan to transport pupils to schools in bubbles. DC feels that may be impossible as there is a lack of bus capacity and he expects there to be a different plan from September which might say pupils can travel on school transport and be asked to wear face masks. Lot of work going on in the background on that. Keeping Children Safe In Education - new section for September - please bear that in mind.

There is no expectation from the DfE or the LA that schools should open over the summer holidays.

Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy - quite a number were out of date or not there at all on school websites. Schools to work with School Support Officers to get up-to-date policy agreed and on websites.

There is an expectation that Headteacher Performance Management will resume from September. Be prepared for that.

3. HR Update- Joanne Blackhall

Apologies were received from our HR colleagues but participants were asked to ask any questions they may have and a written response would be made by HR. A briefing note from HR will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

4. Question and Answer Session

If parents have concerns over transporting their children to school from September, is there a narrative from NCC on whether contingencies will be put in place and when more information may be available to parents?

DC said that's the million dollar question. As soon as he receives any information, he will ensure that it is made available to governors and parents.

HT performance management - surely objectives for the year were overtaken by events. How will we deal with this?

DC said that would be precisely the type of conversation to have with Headteachers, to recognise that the objectives set for this year were overtaken by other priorities due to Covid-19 and therefore were not met. Nevertheless there needs to be recognition of the work that Headteachers have done for their school over this unusual time, and to set new priorities and objectives for the next academic year.

Question of risk and trust and knowledge of the situation in school and the concerns of parents about misinformation and disinformation out there. It would be helpful if NCC could provide advice to reassure parents about the safety in schools and localities, given that the Council has more access to data than in the public domain.

DC agreed to request the Director of Public Health to provide for her locality information and to circulate that advice. Response from PHE- PHE will put together a

letter to reassure parents of the measures taken across school at the beginning of next term.

What is the position or advice/guidance on recruitment. Especially of senior managers

DC said that the LA has talked to schools about recruitment, a lot of which has been done online, to meet their needs. There have been some online and face-to-face interviews with mitigations in place, held on a case by case basis. Example given about Alnwick The Duchess's High School Headship.

Please talk to your HR Adviser or School Support Officer for appropriate advice.

Will testing kits be provided to schools?

DC agreed to check and provide feedback. It was understood that testing kits will only be provided to schools in the case of an outbreak - and not provided more widely than that. PHE Response- There are no plans to make testing kits available to schools. If there was a significant outbreak in a school Public Health England might call on either a Mobile Testing Unit or local support to conduct tests on the whole school but that decision would be made on a case by case basis.

Is there any support available for teachers and head teachers during the summer - stress related, for example?

DC said that it had been hoped to have that information provided by the HR Team update and to answer any questions related to the wellbeing of Headteachers and teachers. There would always be someone available in Education Support over the summer break and he would ensure that would continue. Looking forward to the next academic year, there will be Chairs and Vice-Chair briefings and Governor Training sessions planned in the calendar - even if they are to be held virtually.

Bizarrely there has been an uptake in teacher recruitment over this unusual and very busy period - it would be helpful if there was a similar uptake in interest in becoming a Governor.

Statutory training, too?

DC Chairs' Briefings in the Autumn Term will continue in the same format, remotely. In addition, there will be remote training sessions to cover any new Governors.

Ofsted RI

Only schools that are "inadequate" would be visited - the remainder were on hold for January 21.

Catch up funding when will be more information be available

Not known how much or when it will arrive, expectation is during summer holidays. Funding based on numbers rather than need.

DC concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for all your hard work undertaken in supporting schools. There had been approximately 200 pieces of information issued to schools from the DFE. The responses from Headteachers had been absolutely fantastic, so a huge "Thankyou" from the Authority.