

Headteachers' Update

The 5 O'Clock Update For Schools

DfE Updates

[Responsibility for autumn exams](#)

Page summary - Guidance for schools and colleges on who should enter students for autumn exams, the health arrangements for exams and the support DfE is providing.

Change made - Added 'Public health arrangements for autumn exams'.

[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#)

Change made - Amended the information on risk assessments for those with an education, health and care plan.

[Informal childcare and caring arrangements will be allowed to continue across the nation](#)

Page summary - Confirmation of the lifting of restrictions on informal childcare in the north of the region.

[Use of the NHS COVID-19 app in schools and further education colleges](#)

Page summary - Actions for schools and further education colleges when using the NHS COVID-19 app in education settings.

Change made - First published.

Covid Cases Update

You will be aware that unfortunately the number of Covid cases are increasing across Northumberland. This has already begun to impact on our school communities with 26 schools, to date, reporting actual cases.

The positive news is that those schools involved have all responded with distinction. Best practice has involved following the attached flow chart, filling in the Public Health webform, identifying 'close contacts' and swiftly communicating with parents, all done with the support of our LA Public Health Team. In addition, so far, we have very limited school-based transmission. This is further testament to the rigorous infection control strategies you have in place.

To continue to protect your school communities, it remains vital to:

- Keep the infection control strategies you have firmly in place
- Try to keep bubble sizes as small as possible
- Ensure bubbles do not mix
- Keep a close record of all seating plans, to support identification of close contacts where social distancing is possible
- Ensure all staff keep socially distant from each other unless there is no alternative

Follow the [flow chart](#) for all Covid related issues.

Get Laptops and Tablets (DfE) - LA Maintained Schools

We have now been given access to the latest [DfE IT Kit scheme](#). This time, schools will be able to order the devices directly via the DfE, rather than through the Local Authority. Devices will be available for, "disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 and those in any year group who are affected by disruption to face to face education at their school, or have been advised to shield because they are clinically extremely vulnerable".

To access the ordering process we need to provide the DfE with a named contact at each school. IF YOU DO NOT WANT THE NAMED CONTACT TO BE THE HEADTEACHER please add an alternative contact via [this form](#) by Friday.

Academies and free schools will be contacted by the DfE separately.

Return to School Pop Up Hub

Schools are reminded that there is a referral pathway for children and young people who are suffering from anxiety and other emotional health issues specifically related to the return to school.

In the first instance, staff should use the resources on the [Return to School padlet](#) which cover a whole range of areas related to the return to school. On the padlet there is a specific link to another which relates specifically to emotional health and wellbeing and supports a graduated response, signposting towards many different ways to prevent and intervene early when there are signs of anxiety. From there, for children and young people about whom you remain concerned, you are able to access the referral form for the Return to School Pop Up Hub. Once the referral is received, any services already involved will be alerted. If there are no services involved, any support needs will be allocated to the right place.

Referrers will be notified of the outcome as the joint working with schools is, of course, of paramount importance.

Please note that usual routes should be used for referring pupils presenting with mental health issues which are not related to return to school.

Qwell

Please can we remind Headteachers to circulate to staff the following details of events aimed at explaining Qwell and its resources to teachers and teaching assistants. Qwell has been commissioned in Northumberland to support staff with their own emotional wellbeing and mental health:

Tuesday 22nd September, 4:00pm - 5:00pm
Thursday 24th September, 4:00pm - 5:00pm
Wednesday 30th September, 4:00pm - 5:00pm

If you would like to register for one of these sessions please visit the form [here](#).

Remote Education Plan

A reminder that the DfE expect all schools to have a remote education plan in place by the end of this month:

"Schools are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September." (from [Guidance for Full Opening: Schools](#))

There is an example of a draft policy/plan [here](#) which you may find helpful as you prepare yours. There is no expectation for a policy, but some form of written plan would be advisable.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) spot checks

The HSE published an Education [eBulletin](#) on 4 September, announcing its intention to carry out spot checks on schools. We understand that the HSE has contracted out these initial calls to an organisation called Civica and that some schools are concerned that they are receiving hoax calls. We can confirm that Civica is acting on behalf of the HSE and that schools should engage with the process. We understand that the HSE has briefed its staff appropriately in case they are asked to confirm their identity.

During the call they will be looking for assurances around social distancing, cleaning measures and regimes, and awareness and adherence to public health guidance. There is an [article](#) in Schools Week with the information that schools need to know about the spot checks, and the LA Health & Safety team have produced a list of potential questions which is available [here](#). We can confirm that these questions were asked of a Northumberland secondary school last week.

Coronavirus School Funds for exceptional costs arising from Covid-19

The ESFA has made an initial payment in respect of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Schools Fund for those exceptional costs arising from Covid-19 and the partial re-opening of schools during the summer term. At this stage the only schools to have been paid are those which claimed solely for the three eligible categories of **premises**, **free school meals** and **cleaning** costs, and did not include any other costs. A total of £151,307 was paid to 37 maintained schools in August (Code 300016 CS1001).

As indicated prior to the deadline, other costs not within these 3 categories are subject to further assessment by the ESFA. The ESFA indicates these payments may be made in November though this could be subject to delay.

While the original claim deadline was 21 July 2020, the ESFA have also previously said that there will be a further opportunity to claim in the autumn term, where you will be able to claim for further costs incurred during the period up to the end of summer term in July. Further information in relation to this is still awaited.

Further information on the Coronavirus School Funds for exception costs is available [HERE](#).

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Does My Child Need To Wear A Face Covering At School?

Unless exempt, in education settings where students in Year 7 and above are educated, including middle schools, face coverings should be worn by staff, visitors and students when moving around in corridors and communal areas.

FAQs can be found

here <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronaviruses/Latest-information-and-advice-on-Coronavirus.aspx>.