



Essex County Council
Cabinet Office
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September 2020

Dear Chair of Governor and Local Authority Governor,

Welcome back to the start of this new academic year; indeed, it will be a start unlike any other in recent times due to the ongoing challenges of the Covid19 pandemic. The summer break now seems something of a distant memory, but I hope that you were able to take some time for yourselves to refresh as well as reflect in preparation for what I am sure will be another very busy term.

Governing bodies and Trust boards are playing a crucial role in supporting, challenging and safeguarding provision for all stakeholders, of their respective schools, during these immensely challenging Covid19 times. As your Local Authority, we are here to support, advise and guide all schools, academies and settings as best as possible to ensure our children and young people return to school as safely and appropriately as possible. This coming autumn term will bring new challenges as we learn to live alongside Covid19 for the foreseeable future and therefore this regular update is part of our commitment to supporting you in your role. I hope you will find it useful.

ECC Education Directorate Priorities 2020-2021

I would like to use this welcome back message to share the ECC priorities for the new academic year. Of course, there is no doubt that continued support and guidance around COVID-19 will remain in place, but just as schools and education establishments are getting back to your core business of education, ECC Education Directorate too will be getting back to our core priorities and statutory functions.

With regard to our core business for this year, we remain absolutely resolute in our commitment to achieve the highest educational outcomes as possible for the children and young people of Essex and to ensure that we have the most inclusive education system across the county. In order to achieve both of these outcomes we will continue this year with the following key priorities:

- We will continue to work with all schools and MATs to improve the quality of education and also support the catch-up programmes that will be needed;
- We are refreshing the School Partnership Strategy and embedding a culture of partnership working across school improvement and outcomes for children and young people;
- We will continue to work with the Headteacher Roundtable to develop a suite of tools and expectations to ensure every school can be as inclusive as possible for all pupils;
- We will embed the new SEND teams to ensure the highest quality of support to schools and families for pupils with EHCPs and those identified as requiring SEN Support;
- We will implement our countywide strategy to further improve the quality of education, provision and outcomes or disadvantaged pupils;

- We will deliver against the actions required in the Written Statement of Action following the SEND inspection last year, which will include a full review of the EHCP processes, and the High Needs Block spend;
- We will accelerate the roll out of Trauma Perceptive Practice across all schools and education establishments;
- We will publish a new Early Years strategy during the autumn term;
- We will continue to promote the safety and emotional wellbeing of all children and young people across Essex;
- We are reviewing all of our processes that are in place for children not in full time education and will publish an action plan in response to this review during the spring term and
- Finally, we will launch the Headteacher Wellbeing programme across primary, secondary and special schools.

Full Reopening in September 2020

The Department for Education (DfE) released its most up-to-date guidance on plans for Full Reopening for all schools on 28th August 2020; the DfE guidance can be accessed [here](#). The full opening guidance has been updated with further information on:

- risk management;
- age requirements related to face coverings on public transport;
- revised guidance on cleaning;
- how the Department for Education will be supporting schools on communications with staff, parents and pupils;
- pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCPs);
- managing contractors and other visitors to schools, including immunisation programmes;
- clarify some details of the test and trace process;
- additional advice on staff who are clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable;
- expand on use of space and ventilation; *and*
- provide a link to the recorded webinar on mental health and wellbeing, clarify resources available from MindEd, and link to e-Bug resources to support teaching children about hygiene measures.

One of the prime aims for all schools and academies will be to support their pupils' wellbeing and mental health as they return to full school reopening after a significant number of months out of school. There is a specific section in the guidance around pupil well-being which can be found [here](#).

In addition, the SEND Gateway from the National Association for Special Educational Needs has further useful guidance, including COVID-19 SEND Review Guide and a leaflet 'Returning to school after a period of absence'. You can access the SEND Gateway resources [here](#).

Finally, the DfE have released guidance for Local Authorities with regard to possible local lockdown protocols, as exemplified by the recent Leicester local lockdown, which can be accessed [here](#).

Early Years provision on your school site

If your school or academy has additional Early Years provision on site, either managed by the school itself or a third-party provider, it will be important for governing bodies/ Trusts to keep abreast of the latest DfE guidance within the Early Years sector which can be accessed [here](#). The most recent Early Years guidance has been updated to reflect:

- autumn funding update and hyperlink to updated local authority guidance;
- updated information on the validity of paediatric first-aid certificates;
- updated information on wraparound care;

- updated information on managing requests for site visits from parents and carers for admissions in September;
- updated information about data collection changes;
- updated information about reporting to Ofsted when there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting;
- updated information to reflect the removal of the requirement to keep children in small, consistent groups within settings but still minimising mixing where possible; *and*
- updated information to reflect changes in legislation to the 30 hours free entitlement.

The most important factor/ consideration for all settings, schools and academics for September full reopening will be to ensure that it has implemented a robust and realistic risk assessment and plans for full reopening, that has been consulted on, and communicated to, all relevant stakeholders within the establishment. As the term commences, governing bodies/ Trust should assure themselves that the school's risk assessment remains a live document, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation in light of updates and/ or changes to the way the school looks to mitigate risk to all relevant stakeholders with regard to Covid19.

Safeguarding Update

The interim safeguarding guidance for schools was withdrawn at the end of July, so Keeping Children Safe in Education will again be the sole source of advice. The Government has now published the new version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

For ease, both KCSIE Full Document and the standalone Part One for quick download can be accessed here as a zip folder: [KCSIE September 2020 FULL AND PART ONE.zip](#)

The gov.uk page is here: [Keeping Children Safe in Education September \(2020\)](#)

Attendance and Exclusions

As you will be aware, Attendance has been a huge discussion across the media, particularly the approach to issuing penalty notices. Of course, we would want every parent to send their child(ren) back to school, but realistically we know that some parents will be very anxious about this decision. We want to work with parents to understand their anxiety and seek to reassure them as much as possible to ensure the attendance is voluntary in the first instance. However, schools will know their families best, and so your discretion to request a penalty notice is there for schools to use; however, the LA will want to understand, first, the support schools have given to families.

The same is true of behaviour. Again, the decision to exclude for significant breaches of your Behaviour Policy remains, however if the poor or challenging behaviour is as a result of the lockdown and out of character, we would want an understanding and supportive approach to be the first response provided. We have therefore based Attendance and Exclusions guidance to schools on the core values of the Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) Programme: compassion and kindness, hope and connection and belonging.

Headline Data

Usually at the start of a new academic year, I am able to share with you the performance outcomes of Essex pupils from assessments and examinations taken during the summer term of the previous academic year. However, in light of the changes to the examination protocols for Summer 2020 due to the Covid19 pandemic, national data and thereby comparisons, will not be published at the time of writing.

Essex Outcomes - Director of Education Termly Conference for Governors

The termly chairs' conference led by Clare Kershaw, Director of Education, is an excellent opportunity for networking, sharing ideas and learning from each other.

As well as the termly Safeguarding update for governors, the termly Director's conferences provide updates on Financial, HR and Curriculum matters as well as updates on the progress of Essex LA strategic priorities across the Education Directorate.

Please see below for the schedule for the Director's termly conferences for this academic year 2020-2021. To book a place at the briefing on Tuesday 20th October 6pm to 8pm please contact sally.reife@essex.gov.uk by 16th October.

	Autumn term 2020	Spring Term 2021	Summer Term 2021
When?	Tuesday 20 th October	Tuesday 23 rd February 2021	Tuesday 8 th June 2021
Where?	Virtual conference via Zoom	Chelmsford City Football Club or Virtual conference via Zoom [TBC]	Chelmsford City Football Club or Virtual conference via Zoom [TBC]
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recovery curriculum post Covid19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Catch up programmes ○ Statutory full entitlement ○ Innovation & adaptation ▪ Disadvantaged pupils ▪ Safeguarding ▪ Well-being for all, particularly Headteachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment arrangements 2020-2021 ▪ Moving to National Funding Formula ▪ Effective school self-evaluation ▪ Governor survey request* ▪ Effective inclusive provision for SEND 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Life without labels ▪ Effective strategic planning ▪ Governor survey request*

* After each termly Director's conference, Governors will be surveyed to determine what governors may like to hear more about at the following conference. Please note agenda is subject to change.

Education Essex Newsletter

If you have not done so already, I encourage you to subscribe to the Education Essex Newsletter. This gives a useful roundup of all the Local Authority education news and is sent electronically regularly to all subscribers. Governors can subscribe to the newsletter by clicking [here](#).

We continue to move forward in our unrelenting pursuit of supporting all children and young people, schools and governing bodies into the next phases of the Covid19 pandemic and therefore urge all governing bodies to keep in very regular contact with their respective school leaders as well as reading updates published on both the websites of National Governance Association (www.nga.org.uk) as well as the Essex Schools Governance Association (www.esga.org.uk); direct link 'buttons' to these website are available at the end of this newsletter. Should you or your school leaders have any questions regarding DfE guidance, LA support or advice, please do not hesitate to contact your School Effectiveness Partner who will be able to support you.

Sending my very best wishes to you and your governing board in your work for a safe, successful and rewarding academic year 2020-2021.



Yours sincerely

Cllr Ray Gooding

Cabinet Member for Education Education – general updates and signposts

DFE Updates

- The DfE have announced targeted funding for Reception pupils to help schools boost early language skills. The investment is part of the National Tutoring Programme and every state funded school which has a Reception class will be invited to apply for this support, with priority given to schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The guidance regarding data collections that will be restarted or continue to be paused has been updated with 'School Workforce Census' being moved to 'Data collections that will continue'.
- The Protective Measures for Clubs and Activities guidance has been updated for the autumn term, making clear the position on group sizes and how providers can minimise the risk of children mixing outside their school bubbles, as well as additional content on music and performing arts, educational visits and shared resources.
- The DfE's information for parents regarding their use of clubs and activities has been updated to align with the above guidance changes.
- **Aerosol Generating Procedures** Further to the recent questionnaire to schools regarding the identification of children attending who required Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs), CCG's covering Essex schools met recently to discuss the level of support, training and PPE that is required. They are currently developing an 'advice to schools' leaflet so that schools are supported appropriately with children returning to school. This advice has now been issued and cleared by all the CCG's. We would encourage you to contact the relevant CCG regarding any pupils that this relates to for support with your risk assessment and preparations.
- **Plans for 2020/21 national curriculum assessments** Within the DfE full open guidance there is information regarding [assessments](#) for the next academic year. The intention is for the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile and all existing statutory key stage 1 and 2 assessments to return in 2020/21, following their usual timetable. This includes the:
 - end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 assessments (including tests and teacher assessment)
 - phonics screening check
 - year 4 multiplication tables check
 - statutory trialling
- **Phonics screening check for incoming year 2 pupils** Cancellation of the phonics screening check in June 2020 means incoming year 2 pupils did not take the check in year 1. This means that under the existing arrangements, all year 2 pupils would have been required to take the statutory check in June 2021.



The current DfE proposal is that (for 2020/21 only) schools will administer a [past version of the check](#) to year 2 pupils during the second half of the 2020 autumn term. Year 2 pupils who meet the expected standard in the autumn check will not be required to complete any further statutory assessments in phonics. Year 2 pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the autumn check will be expected to take the statutory check in June 2021. Further guidance will be published in September 2020; however, it is proposed that:

- schools will have flexibility to decide when they administer the check within the second half of the 2020 autumn term
- schools can choose which version of the check they use from the [past materials](#) already published on GOV.UK
- schools will be required to report their year 2 pupils' check scores to their local authority and local authorities will then submit this data to the DfE

- the data will only be used to determine which year 2 pupils have not met the expected standard in phonics and are expected to take the statutory check in June 2021 (alongside year 1 pupils)
- the data from the autumn 2020 check will not be added to Analyse School Performance, but schools should use the assessment outcomes to help inform their own teaching and support to pupils
- Incoming year 3 pupils, who were due to take the statutory check in June 2020 are not required to take the autumn check.

EYFS Reforms

The EYFS reforms early adopter year will be going ahead for primary and infant schools that choose to participate. All schools that had previously signed up to become early adopters were contacted on 6 July 2020 to confirm participation.

Schools that do not choose to be early adopters of the EYFS reforms, along with all other early years providers, must continue to follow the current [2017 EYFS framework](#) in the 2020/21 academic year. For further information on the EYFS early adopter year, please email EYFSReforms.EarlyAdopters@education.gov.uk.

Reception baseline assessment early adopter year

The statutory introduction of the reception baseline assessment (RBA) has been postponed until September 2021. Instead, schools have the flexibility to opt into the RBA early adopter year in 2020/21. For further information, please contact the RBA helpline on 0330 088 4171 or via email at receptionbaseline@nfer.ac.uk.

OfSTED update

The guidance for education providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection is available [here](#). There will be a phased return to inspection, starting with an interim period of visits during the autumn term. Full inspections will resume in January 2021. Ofsted are keeping the exact timing under review.



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