

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 17 JULY 2020

COVID-19 UPDATE

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to:
 - a) the wider reopening of Worcestershire settings and schools from 1 June 2020; and
 - b) the work being undertaken to support education settings and schools with wider re-opening of provision during the summer term and planning for September 2020.

Background

2. At its meeting on 16 June, the Scrutiny Panel requested an update on the work being carried out to support Education settings and schools during the Covid19 period.

June wider re-opening of provision

3. In Worcestershire there are 260 private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings, 352 childminders, 23 academy nursery classes, 44 governor led nurseries, 29 maintained nursery classes, one free school nursery class and one nursery school. In total there are 710 Early Years settings. 553 of these providers (78%) are registered with WCC to offer Nursery Education Funding to eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds. There are on average 10,000 2,3 and 4-years olds funded each term.
4. As at 6 July, 411 Early Years settings and school nurseries are currently open (based on updates provided by the settings to WCF).
5. There were 202 Nursery, First, Primary and Middle Schools in Worcestershire that were affected by the wider reopening for year groups Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from the 1st June 2020. This includes:
 - a. 94 Local Authority Maintained schools (Community and Voluntary Controlled);
 - b. 21 Voluntary Aided; and
 - c. 87 Academies.
6. All the 202 schools are open. Government guidance has been clear that vulnerable children, children of critical workers and then identified year groups of children should continue to be prioritised.

7. There were 33 Secondary, High and All-through schools in Worcestershire affected by the wider reopening of Years 10 and 11 from Monday 15 June. This includes:
- 6 Local Authority Maintained schools (Foundation, Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided); and
 - 27 Academies.
8. Of the 33 Secondary, High and All-through Schools in Worcestershire affected by the wider reopening of Years 10 and 12 from Monday 15 June, all schools are open.
9. There were 9 Special Schools in Worcestershire affected by wider reopening from Monday 15 June. This includes:
- 5 Local Authority Maintained schools (Community and Voluntary Controlled); and
 - 4 Academies
10. All 9 special schools have extended their opening to more pupils.
11. All Local Authority maintained schools provided the Local Authority with a copy of their school level Risk Assessment prior to wider re-opening plans were implemented. All were reviewed by Specialist Teams (Public Health, Health and Safety and Human Resources) to provide advice and assistance where needed to support the school's plans.
12. This preparation and further planning for September is supported through the work of the Education Incident Planning Group of head teacher representatives from across Worcestershire along with other key partners. This group currently meets twice weekly with specialist task groups in place for early years, special education provision and alternative provision. In addition, WCF officers meet with DfE and Ofsted representatives weekly to monitor progress and provide feedback.

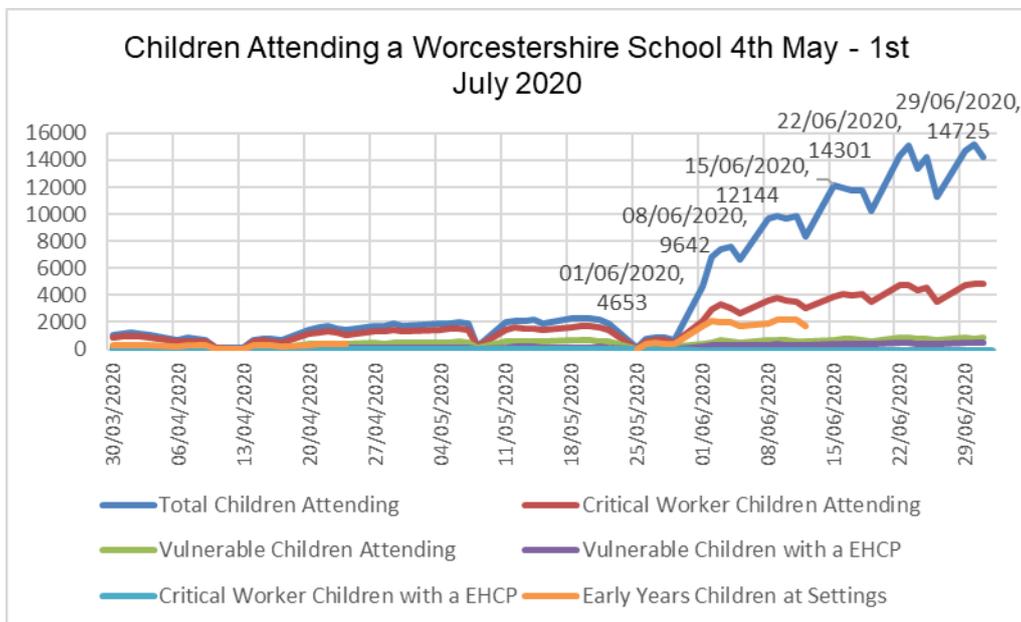
Attendance reporting

13. Attendance of children in pre-reception year is non-statutory. Therefore, attendance reporting is non-statutory. Of the Early Years Education and Childcare Providers that have reported to WCF that they are open, approximately three quarters of these have provided attendance data to WCF. Based on this information the following details the number of pre-school children attending w/c 02.07.2020:

	Key worker	Vulnerable	Other	Totals
Attendance 02.07.2020				
PVI	950	68	1,345	2,360
School based	300	54	510	864
Childminder	100	3	14	117
Totals	1,350	125	1,866	3,341

14. Attendance returns made by schools to the DfE are summarised below. Schools have experienced a steady increase in attendance since wider reopening began. On 29 June 2020, 14,725 pupils were in schools, representing 18.3% of the pupil population of Worcestershire.

15. On Monday 29 June, 41% of reception children had returned to school, 36% of year 1 pupils and 45% of year 6 pupils. This is an increase from the week previous which saw 40%, 34% and 45% attending in respective year groups on Monday 22 June.



16. The following provides a comparison between National and Local attendance of the priority year groups:

	June 18th		June 25th	
	Worcs	National	Worcs	National
Total Attendance	14.6%	12.2%	17.7%	15.6%
Year 6 Attendance	39%	34%	44%	41%
Year 1 Attendance	33%	26%	35%	34%
Reception Attendance	33%	29%	36%	36%
Secondary schools open to Yr 10/12	63%	60%	83%	74%
Yr 10 and Yr 12 Attendance	11%	10%	14%	13%

Managing Sufficiency Requirements

17. WCF have been informed by six Early Years settings and four childminders of their intention to cease providing early education and childcare from the end of July. Three of these in the Wyre Forest District have not reopened at all this term. Sustainability support has been provided to each of the settings and sufficiency analysis shows there are enough places for children in this area for the Autumn term. The Early Years Team will continue to monitor sufficiency throughout the year. Parents are being directly supported by the closing provision, WCF Early Years team and Family Information Services to identify and access alternative provision. WCC have supported several settings that have stayed open to provide care for keyworker

and vulnerable children throughout lockdown with sustainability funding. However, the full extent of the early years sector's financial issues will not be known until the autumn term. This may affect the sufficiency of childcare in certain areas of Worcestershire. The Early Years Funding and Improvement Team are in close contact with the sector to provide information, advice and assistance to settings.

18. Most schools have been able to meet the demand from families in affected year groups, however a key issue to schools opening more widely under current Government guidelines is related to onsite accommodation. Guidance indicates schools should be considering use of storage and other space onsite to create additional space for pupils. It has been advised that the use of other buildings (e.g. village halls) or temporary accommodation should not be considered.

Preventative measures and infection control

19. Public Health colleagues have been fully supporting education providers through the school level Risk Assessments and with local preventative measures and infection control guidance. Sector specific guidance was produced for early years providers, mainstream and special schools (Appendix 1). Public Health have more recently published the Standard Operating Procedures for the management of cases and local outbreaks in education settings including early years and childcare settings, schools or Post 16 provision (Appendix 2).

Planning for wider reopening from September 2020

20. Government guidance has now been issued on the plan to return all children and young people, in all year groups, to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

21. It is not anticipated that any significant adaptations to school sites will be required nor should schools require any external accommodation such as community centres / village halls because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use. However, utilisation of space, management of groupings and movement around sites are key considerations for planning. WCC colleagues are working with education representatives to understand challenges and identify practical solutions.

22. To minimise storage requirements in school buildings and release key teaching space to support more pupils back to school WCC are providing schools with onsite additional storage where this supports a sustained full re-opening. As at 3 July 2020, 136 schools had confirmed their requirements for storage provision.

23. 10 schools were identified as a priority sample with potential capacity and space challenges to supporting all pupils back to school. These schools were contacted on 2 July 2020, initial feedback is suggesting that accommodation constraints can be managed under the new preventative measures guidance. The results of these initial conversations will inform the next step requirements to supporting schools in September.

24. While bubbles will be expanded to allow full pupil attendance, schools will still be expected to follow safety measures and maintain distancing where possible, particularly for older pupils where larger bubbles (up to whole year groups) will be

required to deliver the full curriculum. Therefore, the requirement to continue to store some furniture will remain. The provision of storage containers on school sites is currently planned to continue until the end of 2020.

25. The guidance has been clear that schools are required to ensure they have undertaken Risk Assessments for the full return of pupils and that processes are in place to ensure public health guidance can be followed. WCF and WCC specialist teams will undertake further assurance work using school risk assessments in advance of September opening.

26. Since the COVID19 Pandemic was declared WCF have been keeping all education providers, parents, carers and students up to date with the latest information via bulletins and uploading the information onto the website. Work is underway to improve the information for educational settings and providers available online.

27. The School Improvement Team have developed a Recovering the Curriculum Support Guide for Local Authority Maintained schools (Appendix 3). This guide provides schools with key principles to plan and deliver a curriculum which focuses on what is necessary in the short term to:

- i. Ensure pupils/students and staff are safe and feel safe
- ii. Support and promote mental health and wellbeing of pupils/students and staff
- iii. Engage and motivate pupils/students to learn and re-engage with parents and the wider community
- iv. Identify significant gaps and provide learning sequences and opportunities which address them
- v. Prioritise the curriculum content which is most important for pupils/students

Technology support for children and schools during coronavirus

28. On 19 June, the DfE approved all additional devices requested, therefore 1157 devices (laptops / tablets) and 379 4G wireless routers are available for children with a social worker and care leavers; 111 devices and 72 4G wireless routers are available for disadvantaged children in Year 10 in Local Authority maintained schools. Academy Schools placed their own orders with the DfE for devices for disadvantaged Year 10 children.

29. An e-safety application has been installed on all devices being distributed to vulnerable children. This application monitors and alerts social workers to any unsafe usage. Content filtering has been applied for all laptops.

30. Further direction from the DfE means that children who are no longer looked after by a local authority because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order and are open to a social worker beyond their final hearing are also eligible. We are working with Adoption Central England to review the devices that will be needed. As of 2 July, there are 20 children and young people with a requirement for devices.

Catch up Funding

31. Given the messaging from the government that there is no expectation that schools will remain open over the summer holidays, childcare for children will be provided through the usual provision of community activities and summer clubs / holiday carers. Tuition and other out-of-school activities will be able to open over the summer, with safety measures in place (as described in the updated DfE guidance published on 30 June). For nurseries, childminders, and other early years providers, restrictions on group sizes will be lifted from 20 July, increasing capacity from the start of the summer holiday.

32. The government confirmed £650 million catch-up funding that will be paid to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. The detail regarding the distribution and spending of this fund is yet to be received.

33. Whilst headteachers will decide how the money is spent, maintained schools will receive direct advice and guidance from the School Improvement Team, aligned with the recommendations published by the Education Endowment Foundation regarding effective interventions. In addition, WCF School Improvement Team will be actively involved with maintained schools in their engagement with the National Tutoring Programme, which is expected to deliver tuition to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, accelerating their academic progress and preventing the gap between them and their peers widening. The School Improvement Team are also developing a programme of continued professional development to support all Worcestershire schools in understanding and implementing the recommendations of the Education Endowment Foundation.

Purpose of the Meeting

34. The Panel is asked to:
- consider and comment on the updates provided by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and the Director of Children's Services; and
 - determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - [Public Health guidance for early years providers, mainstream and special schools](#)

Appendix 2 - [Standard Operating Procedures for the management of cases and local outbreaks in education settings including early years and childcare settings, schools or Post 16 provision](#)

Appendix 3 - Recovering the Curriculum guide for Local Authority Maintained schools

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on [16 June 2020](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website.](#)