**Guidance for Barnet schools on keeping open and working with other schools to support vulnerable and key worker children**

We are very grateful, and would like to thank, all schools that have managed to stay open to provide places for vulnerable children, where parents have chosen to send their child to school, and for the children of key workers where there is no-one to look after the child or children at home. Thanks also to those schools that have no pupils attending but have indicated they will open if there is a demand for places for eligible pupils.

We also appreciate the difficult decision that many schools have had to take to close, if only temporarily, because their staffing situation is such that they feel they cannot keep the school open safely.

Over the last two weeks we have had discussions with many headteachers about whether to develop ‘hub schools’ and what we should do if a school is closed. We have come to the conclusion that the best solution is almost invariably for pupils to attend their own school, even if the numbers are low, though we accept that, when the numbers get extremely low, there has to be an assessment of the balance of benefits and risks for both staff and pupils in keeping the school open.

The joint union guidance released today supports this view:

*“The large majority of schools have already put in place plans that are working well for them and their communities. Where this is the case, we do not expect local authorities to override these decisions. Given the high level of disruption and anxiety, it will generally be the case that* ***those pupils attending this reduced provision offer will be better off in their own schools with the staff they already know well.”***

As this week has progressed, some schools have found it increasingly difficult to remain open. In addition, more parents/carers of eligible pupils than originally anticipated have followed the government advice and decided to keep their children at home or made alternative arrangements for childcare rather than sending them into school.

This has meant that some schools have had no demand for any provision from parents/carers. Headteachers have therefore informed us that they are closing, but, in further discussions with a number of schools, which are able to support eligible pupils, we have agreed to treat them as open.

**Zero Register Schools**

We now refer to these schools as ***“Zero Register Schools”*** or ‘open if required to support vulnerable and key worker children’ i.e. they would be available to open but there is no demand currently.

These schools need to keep communications open with parents/carers in case the situation changes and the school needs to make provision. ***This means, that if there is no-one on site, there should be a telephone number or email address (preferably both) that parents can use in case they meet the criteria and require a place.***

**Closed and Closing Schools**

Some schools may be closed due to advice from Public Health England. Clearly the school will remain closed until deemed safe to re-open, following PHE advice.

Other schools may have to close because there is not the staffing capacity to remain open safely.

In this case we have asked headteachers to contact their Learning Network Inspector or Neil Marlow to inform them of this.

If you propose to close due to a staffing shortage or you have already closed for that reason, your LNI, (Neil for secondary schools) will contact you to ask the following questions. You do not have to fill this table in – the LNI is happy to check these facts through a phone call, but if you would prefer to fill in this table and email it to your LNI, please feel free to do so.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Answers** |
| 1. How many pupils currently need a place because their parent is a key worker and they need childcare in order to work? |  |
| 1. How many vulnerable pupils currently need a place? |  |
| 1. Have you linked with another school to ensure any pupils needing a school place are catered for? If so, which school? |  |
| 1. How many of your staff are accompanying children if using a partner school? |  |
| 1. If you have found provision for your eligible pupils at another school, have you communicated all the relevant information about those pupils? |  |
| 1. What measures have you put in place for eligible parents to contact you should their situation change and they need a school place? |  |
| 1. How many staff do you currently have that are available for work? |  |
| 1. How many staff will be available in the near future because they are currently having to self-isolate (due to symptoms in the household) but will be able to return to work once their self- isolation period is over? |  |
| 1. Any further information you would like to share. |  |

We are also asking schools to inform us if they have capacity to take on additional pupils from another school. We will be advising headteachers to contact those schools that have additional capacity.

Note: Contact with other schools must be from a senior leader from the school, not the individual parent/carer.

**Schools with capacity to take additional pupils (Host schools)**

We recommend the following in respect of host schools being asked to take a pupil from the school where the pupil is on roll (the ‘sending school’):

1. The sending school must have given all the relevant information to the host school about the pupils they are taking including:

* Name, date of birth, UPN and year group
* Parent/carers name (including first name), address and 2 contacts with up to date telephone numbers
* Parent/carer key worker status
* Needs of the child e.g. EHCP, CP, CiN, LAC
* Name of Lead professional e.g. name and contact details of the Social Worker, SENCO, key worker etc
* Name and contact details of Designated Safeguarding Lead from the school
* Current IEP and Behaviour Plan
* Risk assessments
* Name and contact for the child’s GP
* Any significant medical need and allergies
* Pattern of attendance – nursery – e.g. morning/afternoon
* For children with Special Needs and /or in Early Years, ensure that the host school will have a clear understanding of how to support the child in the ‘things I need help with’ section of the form

1. Ideally the sending school’s DSL/SENCo should have a conversation with the host schools DSL/SENCo for vulnerable pupils and send a risk assessment where appropriate.
2. The sending school must provide at least one member of staff to add capacity to the host school and resources to support the pupils.
3. The host school will not accept requests for places directly from parents/carers and will refuse entry to a pupil who turns up without prior notification.
4. Pupils from the sending school(s) will be in a different teaching space from pupils from the host school and will use resources provided by the sending school (including laptop if required).
5. The maximum number of pupils in any teaching space at any one time needs to be determined by the size of the room/space (having a base that is 2m from the next base).
6. All pupils in the host school will come under the policies and procedures of the host school.
7. Lunch times, break times and the movement of pupils around the school will be staggered to reduce large groups of children gathering together and to ensure social distancing
8. The host school will ideally have a qualified first aider and Designated Safeguarding Lead on site. A host school may decide to have a nominated first aid and safeguarding lead on site but would need remote support from a qualified first aider and the DSL by phone. every day. We have gathered a list of DSLs and First Aiders who are available for additional support remotely if required*.*

**Additional support to** **Schools with capacity to take additional pupils**

1. There will be a named Learning Network Inspector for each of these host schools for leaders to contact for advice and support.
2. These schools will be prioritised for the delivery of cleaning materials and the use of cleaning contractors to clean the school daily.
3. When the government announces an end to this period of school closure and schools are instructed to re-open, the host school will receive a deep clean before returning to normal operation, funded by the government.
4. We will circulate separate safeguarding guidance for host schools.

**Expectations on school staff**

As the guidance from government stated: *“Those who work in and with our schools rightly take their place next to our NHS staff and other critical workers as central to our efforts in battling this virus*…..*During this difficult time, we are asking you to go further still so that we can collectively address the challenges we face. You are vital to the country’s response to this crisis, and we offer our full support and gratitude during this difficult time. As this crisis progresses, we will aim to provide you with as much certainty and flexibility as possible and will do all we can to support the vital service you are providing.”*

In the joint union guidance this morning it was advised:

“Which staff should be in school - Colleagues who are healthy and not in a high-risk vulnerable group can be called upon to be in school”

Education staff are classified as critical workers and as such should access provision for their children in schools, if they require supervision of their own child/ren.

**Staff travelling to work**

School staff are necessary workers and therefore are permitted to travel on public transport. Social distancing guidance should be followed where possible. In the event that a member of staff cannot travel to work safely, then the school may look to other forms of transport for that member of staff e.g. taxi.

It is expected that any costs associated with this essential work can be reimbursed from the government *“We know that education and childcare settings may face additional costs as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). We will put in place a new process that allows us to reimburse schools for exceptional costs that they face as a result.” (DfE guidance 24th March 2020)*

**Insurance**

The host school’s policy should cover these pupils and staff as ‘visitors to the school site’ so they would be covered. Host schools should check their own policies if they are unsure if they are appropriately covered. The existing policies of schools who are sending children to host schools may also need to be checked.

**Questions**

If you have any questions about this guidance or wish to discuss issues that arise, please contact your LNI in the first instance. Secondary Schools should contact Neil Marlow. Special Schools should contact Helen Phelan and we are aware that separate, very specific issues apply to Special Schools. Nursery Schools should contact Helen Cheung.

Thank you once again for doing your best to support vulnerable and key worker children and their families whether they are attending school or not, as well as all the work you are doing to provide support to all other pupils with their well-being and learning during the current pandemic.

Ian Harrison

Education and Skills Director

27 March 2020