



BRISTOL

LEARNING CITY

LETTER BY EMAIL
To all Headteachers

Reply to Alison Hurley
Telephone 0117 9224682
E-mail Alison.hurley@bristol.gov.uk
Our ref
Date 24th March 2020

Dear Colleagues

Re: Covid-19

Following on from this morning's email, this week's bulletin attempts to pull together all of the advice and guidance that is available for schools and settings, along with a response to the common themes from our conversations with each of you. If you have not yet spoken to one of my colleagues, from Education and Skills, they will keep trying tomorrow. However, I am aware that some of your school phones are not being answered, due to staff shortages, so they may struggle to make contact.

The information below is by no means a definitive list and I am sure we will need to add to this over the coming days/weeks, as national guidance and local arrangements change. Nor does the information seek to direct you to change your approach, if you already have an adequate response in place. As there is a significant amount of information, I will follow today's bulletin with more updates later in the week. These will specifically focus on SEND, Children's Social Care and parental support.

What has been evident, through our discussions with each of you, is that your local response, for the community you know best, has been well thought out and highly appropriate. Each and every school and setting's decision making has put the child or young person and family at the forefront.

Please convey my continued thanks to all your staff for all their efforts.

Best wishes

Alison

Alison Hurley
Director – Education and Skills

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Collaborative/Cluster Approaches

Central government continue to recognise the vital role that schools are playing and will continue to play in the national strategy to combat the spread of COVID-19. The government message clearly remains that parents and carers are asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. The focus groups for all schools need to be vulnerable children and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Alongside identifying the above responsibilities for schools, the government has also stated that Local Authorities need to work closely with all schools and education settings to go further still so that we can try to collectively address the challenges we all face. With this in mind, BCC is starting to think about developing a clear rationale that could form the strong and stable base for a collaborative approach that would allow/enable groups of schools and education settings to work together to continue to offer safe and continued provision for the identified groups.

The reality for all of us remains that any development needs to be agreed and acted on as safely as possible, but also swiftly, because of the rapidly developing situation and to ease the pressure that we recognise individual settings are facing in order to remain open to their identified groups. We also know that some groups of schools across the city are already planning a coordinated response and want to make sure we're in a position to support in any way we can and also capitalise on the experience that exists in these groups already to aid other groups to work in a similar way.

The guiding principles and practicalities that we have identified so far are listed below but we realise that these need to be flexible and responsive to local circumstances as things develop and change.

- The LA cannot and would not direct schools to work in any specific group or collaboration of schools, but we recognise the potential power of doing so
- That groups of schools would need to self-identify based on locality and proximity to each other in order to maximize shared leadership capability, staffing, resources and access to local sites for local families
- That that the size of these potential collaborative groups of schools is going to be dependent on many different local circumstances but group size of 4-8 could be a guide
- Considering working in locality-based groups might well mean that there are existing relationships between schools; and that heads, principals and staff teams know and work with one another currently and have a degree of understanding of each other's contexts and communities
- Groups of schools will be able to respond to changing circumstances swiftly and with confidence based on their pooling of staff teams, resources and leadership, including ensuring adequate provision across the city during school holidays for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.
- The LA would be able to communicate with collaborative groups of schools in order to receive data and intelligence on things like registration and attendance, staffing levels and capacity to continue daily operations as circumstances shift day to day; and to then plan support with groups in ways that would be useful for each group and specifically in relation to safeguarding and placement/capacity for the identified groups of pupils (for example, if schools need to close at short notice in response to local situations)

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We realise that we can only do this with the support of schools collectively and the above represents our early thinking on this. We would like to gather responses from headteachers, principals, executive leaders and CEOs of academies as well as multi-academy trusts, governing bodies and trust boards as to how this approach might work. We understand schools and MATs may already have a similar approach in place which can be incorporated into any plans and would welcome any information on how this is being implemented and any learning from the process. Please contact Richard Hanks richard.hanks@bristol.gov.uk or Laurence Pitt laurence.pitt@bristol.gov.uk with your feedback to inform a city-wide strategic approach.

School Holidays

Bristol City Council is taking initial steps to support schools and settings, either individually or in clusters, to ensure there is adequate provision and staffing cover during school holiday periods for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. As the level of demand on local health services is increased, we know that health and care workers will require on-going support with childcare provision – including wraparound provision in term time, school holidays and bank holidays.

We are carrying out an audit of our managed tutors and teaching assistants to identify those who have relevant qualifications, experience and enhanced DBS checks who can be redeployed to cover classroom based activities. We are also working with the Council's Community Development Team to identify people who have come forward as volunteers with relevant qualifications/experience and DBS checks that could be utilised to support holiday provision.

To inform this process, schools and settings are asked let us know, by **Wednesday 1st April**, where they would like to access staff or volunteer cover support over the Easter holiday by emailing: Karen.bloug@bristol.gov.uk

Early Years

We recognise the critical role our Early Years providers are playing in responding to the needs of key worker families and vulnerable children at this time. In spite of the many business issues, facing our nurseries and childminders, providers are demonstrating unwavering commitment and are working collectively to find solutions to ensure that provision is available where needed.

The Early Years team is currently supporting providers with a wide range of enquiries relating to identified priority groups, staffing levels, funding and health and safety/infection control . These questions have been compiled and shared with the DfE which has now published a central list of Q&A to support providers [here](#)

At a local level, the Early Years team is working in close partnership with the Lead Teacher teams to maintain daily contact with our private, voluntary and independent providers, responding to queries on a 1-1 basis. Please ensure that you keep in touch with us and alert us to any concerns relating to your capacity to stay open as this may require placement support for priority group children.

Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families has also written to all early years and childcare providers outlining the Government's support for the sector. You can read her letter [here](#).

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Please find below updated contact information for the LA Early Years team. The Bristol Education Centre (BEC) is now closed, but Early Years team members will continue to provide virtual support, either via e-mail or phone.

Enquiry type	Key contacts	Contact details
General Enquiries (All enquiries relating to Safeguarding, SEND and Food Provision/Distribution will be directed to the most relevant person who will respond to you)	Deborah Brown, Free Entitlement Development Officer	eyclaims@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 07827 348719
	Dawn Butler, EY Inclusion Manager	dawn.butler@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 07827 306287
	Nicola Theobald, EY Improvement Officer	nicola.theobald@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 07827 992760
Specific Childminder-related enquiries	Sharon McDonald	sharon.mcdonald@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 07825 106678
Specific Maintained Nursery School-related enquiries	Nicola Theobald	nicola.theobald@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 07827 992760

Free School Meals

Key Workers/Vulnerable Pupil Provision Update

A reduced catering provision continues to be delivered to Schools who remain open but this resource requirement is gradually reducing, as parents are adhering to the government's new guidance to stay at home.

FSM Provision Update

This week Chartwells have set up a production/distribution hub at Knowle Park Primary School and have been busy packing circa 4000 5 day hampers which have either been delivered or collected by schools for their FSM pupils. Provision for pupils with special dietary requirements is now a priority with the use of the food vouchers considered the most appropriate approach.

The delivery of FSM food hampers to families has been a significant challenge given the short window of opportunity to get the FSM offer mobilised but we are very grateful to BAM FM colleagues and A David who have kindly provided volunteer drivers to help deliver these packages to the schools in the contract over the last two days. The FSM food hampers can delivered in this way next week, but following the public address by Boris Johnson last night, there are a number of concerns as to whether this approach aligns with the guidance to reduce unnecessary travel and increase social distancing.

Voucher Schemes

We are now considering how a voucher scheme approach may be put in place for schools as a replacement for the FSM hamper which will potentially reduce travel across the city and support staff and families in maintaining social distancing requirements.

Sodexo Engage can offer a managed service (information sent under separate cover for consideration) which would mean that other than key workers and vulnerable children, all FSM pupils, including pupils with special dietary requirements, who currently have no provision, could be sent a £15 weekly voucher which could be redeemed at Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrisons, M&S or

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Waitrose. Schools will need to be aware there are additional costs for a managed service. Other LAs, MATs, and individual schools have taken up this option already.

In-house catering schools may also wish to join such a scheme going forwards and we will make contact with each school to establish their need and whether they would like to be included within a LA provision.

Safeguarding in Education

There have been a number of updates sent to DSLs and Safeguarding colleagues. These have reflected some practical steps colleagues could take in relation to what colleagues could be doing in relation to:

- KBSP Updates – multi-agency updates around their response to Covid 19.
- Collation of 'Out of Office' contacts for DSLs, Safeguarding staff and Designated Teachers for children in care.
- Basis Precautions; home visits, contact ideas,
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people.
- Where to get advice and support.
- Sharing of resources in one central point.

The team are looking to put these in one document. When completed this will be in put in a folder 'Coronavirus (Covid 19)' under [guidance and procedures](#) on our webpage.

Your practice around supporting vulnerable students has to be considered regardless to whether your setting is open or closed as a setting. There are a couple of key points you need to consider:

Routinely reviewing your vulnerable students list on a regular basis

Whilst the government has issued [guidance on 'who' is vulnerable](#) (those who have a social worker), a request is that you are flexible about who else might be on the edge of receiving social care support (eligible for early help under s.18 of [KCSIE 2019](#). P6 +7). We have asked that you RAG rate these.

Your plan of action for vulnerable students

Please ensure that you have taken proportionate responses to supporting and monitoring the safety and wellbeing of these students. Even if students are not able to/unwilling to attend your setting - there are still actions you can take in relation to 'checking in' and 'monitoring' students. Please check on [guidance already issued](#), and/or liaise with the [Safeguarding in Education Team](#) if you wish to talk your plans through.

Safeguarding (police) notifications

You will continue to receive these from Avon and Somerset police. It is vital that you consider updating your vulnerable students list in response to these. Please do be aware that you can contact Families in Focus about advice around individual cases and access to Domestic Abuse advocates for victims. There will be further guidance issued from the KBSP in relation to what you can do to support victims who are more vulnerable during self-isolation.

Safeguarding Continuity plans

It is possible that DSLs/Deputies may become incapacitated with either the need to ill health, self-isolation or caring for those who may need it. Please can you consider ensuring that your 'continuity plans' are reviewed and shared with colleagues in your setting. In the interim we ask that you:

- Consider making DSL cover arrangements with neighbouring schools/ other academies in your trust/ central trust leads.
- Ensure that colleagues are aware off the locality Families in Focus numbers as well as the Safeguarding in Education Team.
- Ensure that you consider reviewing who has access to 'Safeguarding files'.

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- **Covid 19 – Safeguarding in Education advice surgeries:** We are aware that this is a difficult time for colleagues. We are looking to develop ways to proactively support you with your continuity plans and providing support for those who already maybe taking on additional responsibilities. We will be offering ‘virtual surgeries’ that you can sign up to twice week with other colleagues (max 10 participants). This will offer an opportunity to get advice and guidance from the Safeguarding in Education team but also your peers and colleagues. Please [click here](#) to access sign up to these surgeries. N.b, if your matter is urgent, do not wait and pick up the phone to liaise with a [School Safeguarding Advisor](#).

s.175 Audit

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, we appreciate that this has impacted negatively on your work. We have decided to push back the deadline to the **end of Term 5** – the new deadline will be **Friday 22nd May 2020**.

If you have mislaid the correspondence in relation to this please see the folder ‘s.175 Audit 2019-20’ in the [Guidance and Procedures](#) link on the Safeguarding in Education webpage.

Under taking virtual learning safely:

The NSPCC has provided some useful guidance around safe practice when undertaking remote teaching. Please [click here](#) to access.

Education Welfare

Vulnerable Group and Key Worker List for LA

On Thursday 19th March, Laurence Pitt circulated an email, requesting a spreadsheet return for your setting listing your key worker and vulnerable group cohort. If your setting is still to make the return, please can you do so as soon as possible, by emailing the spreadsheet to education.welfare@bristol.gov.uk The spreadsheet template is attached.

Attendance Registers:

From Monday 23rd March, until schools reopen for education to all pupils, schools do not need to take an attendance register. For administrative purposes code # (planned whole or partial closure) should be used for all pupils. If any attendance registers were pre-populated with any other codes for 23rd March onwards, those codes will need amending to the # code instead. If you are unclear how to do this please contact your Management Information System (MIS) provider for further assistance.

DfE Daily Form:

The DfE are asking all educational settings (not including childcare) to complete a short daily form to notify the Department for Education about their status regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) - [short form notifying the Department for Education](#)

The form will ask those running institutions, to confirm whether the setting is operating and, if so, provide information about numbers of pupils and staff attending. It must be submitted by noon of each weekday. This will allow for a record of attendance for safeguarding purposes, to track capacity in the system including which schools are open and where, and enable the department to feed into wider tracking of the impact of the virus to support scientific advice.

We understand some settings are experiencing issues with the DfE form. Understandably this is something that is beyond Bristol City Councils control. If your setting is unable to upload the data, into the form, then we suggest you keep a copy of the spreadsheet locally and contact the DfE for

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further support. If your setting has any other questions about the form then please also contact the DfE for further support – tel 0800 046 8687 or email DfEcoronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk.

You can access the template spreadsheet by following the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

Attendance Enforcement Action:

All attendance enforcement action has been suspended with immediate effect until further notice. This is a nationwide approach. This includes penalty notice action, prosecutions and School Attendance Order action. New cases will not be taken forward and any cases from 16th March are being withdrawn. This approach is also being applied to prosecutions for non-attendance. If your school has cases affected then the EWS will contact your setting directly to confirm the individual cases. If school or parents have any questions about this then they can contact the EWS on 0117 3521438 or email education.welfare@bristol.gov.uk

Children Missing Education (CME) and Pupil Tracking:

CME and Pupil Tracking processes remain open although home visits have been suspended and where possible, communication with parents will be via alternative methods. Schools can continue to make referrals, in the usual way, via our online forms by ensuring all forms including 'Exit from School' and Children Missing Education procedures are completed as soon as possible in accordance with Bristol City Council CME [guidance](#). Any queries contact the Education Welfare Service on tel: 0117 352 1438 or email at childrenmissingeducation@bristol.gov.uk

Elective Home Education (EHE):

EHE processes remain open although home visits have been suspended and where possible, communication with parents will be via alternative methods.

Schools can continue to make referrals in the usual way by ensuring all forms including 'Exit from School' and Children Missing Education procedures are completed as soon as possible in accordance with Bristol City Council CME [guidance](#).

Where settings have them, please include parental email details in the EHE request as this will assist us with contacting families remotely.

Any queries contact the Education Welfare Service on tel: 0117 352 1438 or email at ehe@bristol.gov.uk.

Home-to-School Transport

The Home to School Travel service is working with schools and parents, on a daily basis, to respond to a fast changing picture of travel needs. Where possible, children are being kept with the drivers and routes that they know, but we are now also attempting to keep children and staff safe through social distancing, which means single passenger routes and the use of different vehicles at times.

Many of our escorts are now self-isolating, which unfortunately means changes to escort arrangements, for some children, at short notice.

We are now requesting for those vulnerable children, who are still attending school, that it will be safer for them to travel with a parent/carer from their own household. Where parents are critical

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workers and are not able to accompany their child, we would like to know this as early as possible so that we can try to make safe alternative arrangements.

We will work with you, to the best of our ability, to keep travel arrangements as safe as possible for children in Bristol. Please let us know of any changes in circumstance or need, as soon as you can, so that we can work together.

Best wishes from Terri, Jacqui and the team

The travel team can be contacted on 0117 9036333

Pupil Medication

If you haven't already done so, please can schools and settings return named medication, back to pupil's parents/carers, e.g. inhalers and epi-pens, for those children are not attending.

If the child will be attending the same school, then the medication should stay on the premises, however if the child will be moving to an alternative provider, please advise the parent/carer to take the medicine to the new location.

This is to reduce medication waste and ensure pupils don't run out of essential medication.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hygiene Products

There is a growing concern, from some schools and settings, over the lack of availability of key equipment as supply chains become overwhelmed with requests. I am liaising with BCC's procurement team to see if there is any way to support you with this and I will update you in the next couple of days.

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