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**Spring
2021**

Chairs Briefing



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Department for Education (DfE) News

Covid-19 Updates

Updated DfE Guidance: 2nd February 2021

The DfE's Covid-19 guidance was updated at the start of February to reflect the impact of the second national lockdown; this updated guidance can be accessed in full **here**. The DfE has also updated its guidance for special schools and other specialist settings which can be accessed in full **here**

It should be noted that:

- During this period of national lockdown, schools, alternative provision, special schools, colleges and wraparound childcare should allow only vulnerable pupils (which can include children who have difficulty in engaging with remote education) and the children of critical workers to attend.
- The DfE recognises that the characteristics of the cohorts in special schools and alternative provision will mean these settings continue to offer face to face provision for all pupils, where appropriate.
- Early years provision should continue to remain open and should continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours. This includes early years registered nurseries, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites. Only vulnerable children and children of critical workers should attend on-site reception classes.
- All other pupils and students should not attend and should learn remotely, currently this is until March 8th.
- At present, the DfE has stated that all stakeholders will receive two weeks' notice prior to the wider reopening of schools.
- School leaders, including Governors and Trustees, will need to review and amend, where appropriate, both the school's risk assessment and the safeguarding policy to ensure both remain fit for purpose and reflective of the current restricted opening of schools.
- [When teaching pupils remotely, the DfE has stated that it expects schools to:](#)
 - set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects; and
 - provide teaching that is equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. This will include both recorded or live direct teaching time and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently, and will be as a minimum:
 - Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children;
 - Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day; and
 - Key Stages 3 and 4: 5 hours a day.
- If parents feel their children's school is not providing remote education of a suitable quantity and quality, they are encouraged by the DfE, in the first instance, raise their concerns with the teacher or headteacher and, if the concerns are not resolved, to report the matter to Ofsted. Interestingly, since the DfE have encouraged this approach, Ofsted has been swamped by parents supportive rather than critical of their school's remote education provision.
- The DfE has asked that schools publish information about their remote education provision on their websites by the 25th January 2021, although this is not a mandatory requirement.

- For pupils with SEND, the requirement for schools to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place. Schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education alongside their peers.
- The DfE advise against educational visits at this time. This advice will be kept under review.

Any wider reopening after the half-term is likely to be targeted at pupils in Years 11 and 13. Watch this space!

Covid-19 Catch-Up Premium

There are concerns that the £350M National Tutoring Programme, part of the Government's overall £1Bn Covid-19 Catch-Up Premium for schools, may now fall behind schedule as providers have been told delivery milestones can be "re-forecast". This is despite approved tuition partners being expected to have contingency plans in place in the event that face-to-face tutoring is disrupted.

It is also understood that the DfE intends to extend its National Tutoring Programme for a further two years. Launched in November 2020, the £350M scheme is due to run until 2022. However, subject to the outcome of future spending reviews, a further two years of the National Tutoring Programme are said to be planned. At this stage it is not known whether the further two-year commitment includes the 2021-22 academic year or means two more years after that. The DfE has so far refused to comment.

The NTP has enrolled 90,000 students in two months, just over a third of the 250,000 promised catch-up under the programme. It is understood that the Government is aiming to nearly double the number of children who receive tuition under its catch-up scheme next year, with the DfE aiming to provide 15 hours of subsidised tutoring to about 450,000 disadvantaged pupils, up from 250,000 this year. The DfE also hopes that 2,000 academic mentors will provide tutoring in the most disadvantaged schools by the end of next year, 500 more than this year.

Watch this space!

Devices to support remote learning

Following its pledge in December 2020 to provide 1M devices for schools and colleges to distribute to those pupils in need, January 2021 saw the DfE pledge to provide an additional 300,000 laptops and tablets to assist poorer pupils with their remote learning. The DfE confirmed that primary schools have now been invited to apply for the scheme; previously, the scheme was only open to secondary schools. The additional 300,000 devices will allow secondary schools and colleges to apply for top-ups to their original allocations, as well as primary schools.

Poorer pupils struggling the most in the current lockdown: A Sutton Trust Report

New research from the Sutton Trust, the impact of the second period of school closures on the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils is likely to be significant.

The key points include:

- There has been a big increase in the intensity of online teaching from the beginning of the first lockdown, with almost a quarter (23%) of primary pupils now doing more than five hours of learning a day, up from 11% at the end of March 2020. For secondary students, it has increased from 19% to 45%. However, big socio-economic gaps remain: 40% of children in middle class homes are learning for over 5 hours a day, compared to just 26% of those in working class households.
- There have also been changes in how remote teaching is taking place. 54% of teachers are now using online live lessons, compared to just 4% in March 2020. However, the gap between the independent and state sectors has widened, with 86% of teachers in private schools now using online live lessons, compared to 50% in state schools.
- While 87% of high-income households report having sufficient devices for online learning, just 59% of the poorest households say the same. Polling recently published by the Sutton Trust found that just 5% of teachers in state schools said that all their pupils had access to a device, compared to 54% in private schools.
- These barriers to learning are reflected in the quality of work that teachers are receiving back from their pupils. 55% of teachers at the least affluent state schools reported a lower standard of work than expected, compared to 41% at the most affluent state schools and 30% at private schools.
- Parents on lower incomes are more likely than those on higher incomes to be finding the second lockdown more difficult than the first (28% vs 15%).

Physical Attendance during the lockdown

The latest attendance data from the DfE highlights that there are around five times more pupils attending state primary and secondary schools than during the first national lockdown. As of the 13th of January, attendance was at 21% in primary schools and 5% at secondary schools. The DfE said that on average between March and May 2020, attendance was 4% in primary schools and 1% in secondary schools. As of the 13th of January 2021:

- Pupil attendance in special schools more than tripled from 8% on average during the first lockdown to 30%.
- Key worker children represented 72% of all pupils attending, around 709,000 children. Whilst anecdotes have been received of schools insisting on both parents being key workers to qualify, the current DfE guidance states that children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required (this includes parents who may be working from home). The guidance highlights that it is important that on-site provision is provided for the children of critical workers and there is no limit to the numbers of such pupils who may attend and schools should not limit attendance of these groups.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan, who the DfE has said should still attend, fell to 36%, down from 75% on 16th December.
- Around 43% of pupils with a social worker were also in attendance, representing a decrease from 76% on 16th December.

Concerns have also been raised about how many children it is safe to have in schools during this point in the pandemic. Governing Boards should be looking carefully at the numbers of pupils physically attending during the current lockdown and how this aligns with the school's latest Risk Assessment.

The attendance data also includes school staff attendance for the first time since schools returned in September. As of the 28th of January 2021:

- c. 39% of teachers and school leaders were working on-site in open settings; levels were higher in primary schools, at 58%, and lower at 37% in secondary schools.
- Teacher attendance at special schools, where around 58% of staff were working on-site.
- 52% of teaching assistants were working on-site in open settings.

Pupil Engagement and Motivation: An Ofsted Report

A new report from Ofsted has found that pupils' engagement and motivation remains a significant challenge for schools providing remote education, despite schools having made strides in their remote learning offers since the first national lockdown in March 2020. Nearly half of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey said that keeping their child focused on studying was a top concern, along with motivation and having enough contact with teachers. This was echoed by school leaders, with many working hard to increase pupils' engagement and to find better ways for pupils and teachers to interact.

The key points include:

- A large proportion of schools in England feel that they are doing well at mitigating children's learning loss through remote education. Three fifths of teachers surveyed said they were confident they were providing a high-quality remote education when this was needed. However, schools are at different stages of development, and there is wide variability in the remote learning on offer.
- When developing remote education, most leaders said they focused on making sure pupils were learning what they needed to, rather than focusing on the technology. Several heads said that they expected teachers – with a little adaptation if needed – to deliver lessons as they would in person, modelling answers, questioning pupils and giving feedback as normal.
- Many school leaders do not see remote education as a barrier to curriculum delivery and believe learning opportunities, levels of pupil engagement and expectations should be the same regardless.
- Parents and schools are concerned about children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their engagement with remote education. Nearly two thirds of parents of a child with SEND said they had been disengaged with remote learning, compared with almost 40% of parents of children without additional needs. While some special schools have adapted their remote education to support SEND pupils, such as supplying assisted reading technology, more work needs to be done to engage children with SEND.
- Leaders who participated in the research did not always regard remote provision as an entirely temporary measure. The report highlights the potential benefits of remote learning in the long term, such as providing teaching for snow days or extended periods of illness or absence, to minimise learning loss.

Free School Meal Vouchers

The DfE has announced that schools can now order vouchers for their pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Vouchers are worth £15 a week per child and schools can order gift cards for supermarkets on behalf of parents and carers. The scheme is run by Edenred, who also ran the scheme between March and August 2020. In addition to the national scheme, schools can continue providing free meals to eligible pupils via lunch parcels, through their catering suppliers or via locally arranged solutions. This might include vouchers for a local shop or supermarket not currently included in the national scheme.

During February half term, vulnerable families will continue to receive meals and other essentials through the £170M Covid Winter Grant Scheme. As was the case over Christmas, it will fund support through local authorities – this might include vouchers, meal parcels or holiday clubs.

The DfE will reimburse costs for locally arranged vouchers up to £15 and provide £3.50 on top of a school's regular funding for those providing parcels. Costs can be claimed back to the 4th of January, when schools commenced providing support.

Exams/Assessments this Summer

Secondary Assessment

Following the closure of schools to most pupils in January 2021, the DfE has made the decision to cancel all GCSE and A/AS Level examinations planned for summer 2021. Rather than rely on the controversial algorithm developed, and abandoned, in 2020, the DfE are proposing to again use teacher assessments to award subject grades in 2021. However, the DfE/Ofqual are not proposing to ask teachers what grade a student might have received if they had been able to take their exams, which is what teachers were asked to do in 2020.

A two-week consultation jointly launched by Ofqual and the DfE which closed on Friday 29th January. The document setting out their joint proposals can be accessed in full **here**

The key proposals include:

- A proposed timeline with
 - students continuing with their education during this academic year;
 - students being assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June;
 - teachers submitting grades to the exam boards by mid-June;
 - external quality assurance by the exam boards would be ongoing throughout June;
 - results being issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July; and
 - student appeals submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges.
- To help teachers make objective decisions it is proposed that exam boards should provide guidance and training, and make available a set of papers, which teachers use with their students as part of their assessment.
- It is proposed that where it is part of the qualification's existing specification, teachers will continue to assess any non-exam assessment that a student has undertaken in a subject.

- It is proposed that teachers should draw on a range of broader evidence of a student's work in making their final assessment.
- Students who are studying independently (for example, those who are home educated) must also be given an opportunity to demonstrate the standard at which they can perform. Views are being sought on whether those students who are entered as private candidates for qualifications should be assessed using the papers provided or whether they should take exams in their more typical form and, if the latter, when their exams should take place.
- All students should be able to appeal their grade.

Primary Assessment

As was also the case in 2020, all Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments, as well as the Year 1 Phonics Check and the Year 4 multiplication check, will not take place in summer 2021. The DfE is strongly encouraging schools to continue to use assessment during the summer term to inform their teaching, to enable them to give information to parents on their child's attainment in their annual report and to support transition to secondary school, using past test papers if they wish.

Performance tables for the 2020/21 academic year will again not be published by the DfE; this decision was made prior to its decision to cancel all exams and assessments in summer 2021.

Testing within Schools -2nd February 2021

School Staff

Following the launch of rapid asymptomatic coronavirus testing in secondary schools and colleges on the 4th January, staff in primary, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools are also being offered the opportunity to take part in regular asymptomatic testing. From the 18th January such settings should have started to receive deliveries of home testing kits to offer to all their staff. Staff will be asked to take their test kits home and carry out the test twice a week with the lateral flow device (LFD) test providing a result in c.30 minutes. Staff must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed as well as sharing their result with their school or nursery to help with contact tracing.

Testing is not mandatory for staff and staff do not need to provide proof of a negative test result to attend school or nursery in person, although participation in testing is strongly encouraged.

Staff with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate as well as arrange a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the LFD result.

Pupils

The rollout of daily Covid contact testing in schools has been paused amid fears over higher rates of transmission from the new variant of the disease as well as widespread concern over the accuracy of these tests.

Governor Visits into School

The DfE guidance continues to state that schools are able to use volunteers to support the school's work although numbers visiting the school should be limited, where possible. Although previously reference was made to consideration being given to the timing of volunteers' visits and

whether these can be conducted outside of core school hours, practically, this consideration should continue, and it is recommended that Board and Committee meetings are held remotely.

Chairs should be mindful of board members' personal situations, having open conversations about how they wish to join meetings. No governor or trustee should feel pressurised into attending a meeting on school premises.

Formal School Visits

It is recommended that:

- Physical Governor visits into school are **not** undertaken in the spring term.
- The only two **exceptions** to this may be visits by the Safeguarding Governor and the Health and Safety Governor as certain aspects of their strategic work (such as inspecting the Single Central Record) may not be undertaken as effectively through a virtual meeting.
- Where physical attendance is a necessity, this will need to be agreed with both the Head and the in-school link representative prior to the visit. The visiting Governor will need to ensure that all the health and safety protocol in place at the school is followed and, where possible, the meeting time limited.
- Governors are strongly encouraged to continue making contact with their in-school link representative virtually through the spring term.
- Formal visit reports should continue to be completed to identify the strategic areas raised and discussed; visit findings should continue to be an item for discussion on the relevant Board/Committee agenda.

Safeguarding

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021-Consultation closes 4th March 2021](#)

At the end of last term, the DfE launched a consultation on updating its KCSiE statutory guidance for September 2021. The consultation closes on the 4th March.

As well as KCSiE, the DfE is also seeking revisions to its advice on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges.

The consultation document sets out the majority of the changes to KCSiE that the DfE began to consult on back in February 2020; due to the pandemic, this consultation was withdrawn at the end of March 2020. Some of the key changes proposed include:

- Part One of KCSiE sets out what all staff need to know, what they need to look out for and where they should report their concerns. There is an argument that the current detail in Part One is excessive for those staff who do not regularly work directly with children, such as caterers and cleaners, to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities and in fact obscures the basic safeguarding message. Thus the DfE is proposing a shortened version of this Part One guidance with Governing Boards given the freedom to choose this shortened version, for those staff not regularly working directly with children, where they think it will provide a better basis for them to promote the welfare and safeguard children.
- Additional content on child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and serious violence is proposed to be included in Part One and Annex B of KCSiE to better help schools and colleges understand how to identify children at risk from these harms.

- It is proposed that a significant amount of the online content in Annex C of KCSiE 2020 is now moved to Part Two of the draft guidance. This proposed change will give online safety the prominence it deserves in the main body of the guidance; whilst new burdens or processes are not introduced, it does make clear that the management of online safety sits alongside, and should be considered with, broader safeguarding requirements and the whole school/college safeguarding approach.
- Part Three of the guidance (Safer Recruitment) will be restructured as the DfE believes that currently Part Three potentially overly focuses on DBS checking, as part of the safer recruitment process, and does not place enough emphasis on encouraging schools/colleges to have in place an ongoing culture of vigilance. The DfE is keen to emphasise that no changes to the statutory requirements placed on schools and colleges have been proposed.
- Part Four of the guidance (allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers) has been restructured so that schools/colleges better understand:
 - the Local Authority arrangements for managing allegations, including the contact details of the local authority designated officer (LADO); and
 - how to manage allegations that do not meet the LADO threshold.

Interestingly, in the name of expanding the DfE’s evidence base, a number of questions have been included in the consultation (Section 7) looking at the safeguarding training of both the Safeguarding Governor (KCSiE currently advises all schools and colleges to have a senior Board level safeguarding lead) and the rest of the Governing Board. The expansion of the evidence base, it is argued, would help the DfE understand what training is currently being undertaken by Governing Boards and whether mandated safeguarding training would be helpful. The full consultation document can be accessed [here](#)

A review of your current arrangements is recommended:

- Does your school have a safeguarding governor?
- Have they had safeguarding training?
If yes, what format did the training take?
Face to face / Online / Blended
- To what extent has the training assisted them to fulfil their role and helped them hold others to account?
- What safeguarding training, if any, have other members of the board had?

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

The KCSiE 2020 guidance has been updated in January 2021 to reflect some legal changes, following the UK’s exit from the European Union, including guidance on checking the past conduct of individuals who have lived or worked overseas. The changes can be found in annex H.

Updated Complaints Guidance for Maintained Schools

Mid-January saw the DfE update its complaints guidance for maintained schools. The updated guidance makes no material amendments to the previous guidance other than in its introductory paragraph. This now states that whilst the DfE acknowledges the pressures caused by Covid-19 might affect schools' usual complaint processes and timescales, schools *should* (best practice rather than a legal/statutory requirement) still consider complaints, particularly those relating to the provision of remote education. With parents being actively encouraged to make formal complaints about the quality of remote education provided during this lockdown period, including to Ofsted, Boards should be updated on the number of complaints received, how they are progressing and where formal Governor Panels may be required to be convened.

Resource Management Webinars

The DfE has provided funding for webinars to help schools, trusts to plan for the future and ensure long term financial sustainability. Focusing on resource management and integrated curriculum and financial planning, delegates will receive “the knowledge and tools they need to quantify areas of inefficiency, diagnose the causes and ensure effective use of resources”.

These webinars will be delivered by Entrust Support Services until March 2021; full details of the training and how to book can be found on the [Entrust School Resource Management portal](#).

School Admission Appeals

Temporary regulatory changes were made to the way admission authorities carried out admission appeals; these changes came into effect on the 24th April 2020 and were expected to remain in place until the end of January 2021. Subject to parliamentary procedure, these amendments will now remain in place until 30th September 2021. The new regulations:

- disapply the requirement that appeals panels must be held in person and instead give flexibility for panel hearings to take place either in person, by telephone, video conference or through a paper-based appeal where all parties can make representations in writing;
- relax the rules with regard to what happens if one of the three panel members withdraws (temporarily or permanently) to make it permissible for the panel to continue with and conclude the appeal as a panel of 2; and
- amend the deadlines relating to appeals for the time that the new regulations are in force.

The new regulations provide more flexibility for admission authorities to set new or revised deadlines for submitting an appeal, ensuring that appellants will be given:

- at least 28 calendar days' written notice of a new appeal deadline; and
- at least 14 calendar days' written notice of an appeal hearing (although appellants can waive their right to this).

Clerking duties for admission appeals, however, are not being relaxed.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

After initially insisting that the EYFSP would still be going ahead in 2021, after being cancelled in 2020, the DfE has now confirmed that it will not be mandatory this year, subject to the completion of due parliamentary processes. Schools will instead be asked to use their “best endeavours” to carry out the assessment, which is how pupils’ development and learning is assessed in Reception.

The DfE has clarified that those schools that do decide that they are able to complete the EYFSP this year and provide the information to parents and Year 1 teachers, will not be subject to statutory external moderation. There will also be no requirement to submit data to local authorities or to confirm whether they have completed it to the DfE.

Staffing and Employment Advice for Schools

In order to provide consistency in the information available to all schools in support of their handling of staffing and employment matters, the DfE’s statutory “Guidance on Managing Staff Employment in Schools” has now been withdrawn. Instead, the DfE expects employers in all schools to make use of its new non-statutory guidance, “Staffing and Employment Advice for all Schools”, and the sources of help it identifies, when carrying out staffing and employment duties.

The non-statutory guidance covers issues such as: staff appointments, including those of heads and deputy heads; safer recruitment; transfer of undertakings (protection of employment) (TUPE); and staff management.

Careers Provision in Schools

In a recently published white paper, the Government is proposing that schools will face “tougher formal action” if they don’t comply with the Baker clause to let colleges, apprenticeship providers and University Technical Colleges talk to pupils about potential study routes. It also requires schools to have a plan to arrange visits at “important transition points” in the school year.

The white paper includes a new minimum requirement “about who is to be given access to which pupils and when”. Government-funded careers support for schools will also be made conditional on schools’ compliance with the Baker Clause.

The Government has also committed to lowering the age range of the existing duty on schools to provide independent careers guidance, requiring schools to offer this support from year 7. Currently, it only has to be offered from year 8 onwards.

The Government will also ask Ofsted to undertake a thematic review to provide an up-to-date assessment of careers guidance in schools and college, providing recommendations to improve practice, where appropriate.

The white paper acknowledges that at present the careers landscape is “confusing”, with “no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information”. As a result, the National Careers Service website will be updated to become that single source of “government-assured careers information”.

Schools Financial Value Standard for Maintained Schools (SFVS)

No announcement has been made by the DfE postponing the submission of the 2020/21 Schools Financial Value Standard. Thus, Governing Boards of maintained schools should still be working towards the submission deadline set by their Local Authority (the latest will be 31st March 2021). As a reminder, if operating using a committee structure, the SFVS will need to be discussed and ratified by the Full Governing Board prior to submission to the LA. Boards will also need to ensure that sufficient time has been allowed for the review and discussion of the data dashboard before submission of the SFVS.

Academy Updates

Financial Return Submission Dates

As a reminder, all Academy Trusts must submit their audited financial statements for the year ended 31st August 2020 to the ESFA by 31st January 2021, along with the Trust's internal scrutiny annual report and management letter from the auditors. Before submission, these documents will need to have been reviewed and approved by the full Trust Board. As a result of the ESFA submission delay for the financial statements

- These can now be uploaded onto Trusts' websites by 28th February 2021; and
- The Accounts Return can now be submitted by 23rd February 2021 (original submission date of 19th January).

Despite the delays in submitting the financial statements to the ESFA, Trusts will still need to file their accounts with Companies House by 31st May 2021.

The Land and Buildings Collection Tool is now open and will now need to be submitted online by Academy Trusts by 28th January 2021 (the initial submission deadline was 17th December 2020).

As a reminder, the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool will now need to be submitted annually by Trusts in March rather than November, allowing better alignment with Trusts' budgetary cycle. Due to the impact of the pandemic, this year the submission date has been extended by a further month to the 15th of April 2021. The SRMSAT will be updated to include:

- a revised set of questions in the checklist;
- updated guidance for the effective completion of the checklist questions; and
- improved RAG ratings in the dashboard, to reflect the latest data and the recent pay award and pensions contribution changes.

The on-line form will be available in February and the checklist will need to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees (with this review minuted) prior to submission to the ESFA.

Risk Protection Arrangement

The DfE has confirmed that the RPA deduction from the General Annual Grant will be £19 per pupil from 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022 (up from £18 per pupil in previous years).

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Weekly update from the ESFA.

Ofsted

Routine Inspections

With the new national lockdown in place, Ofsted will commence its planned monitoring programme from 25th January onwards and all inspection activity will be carried out remotely until March 8th at the earliest.

Key points to be aware of with respect to these inspections include:

- Before the February half term, remote monitoring inspections will usually last for 2 days and involve 2 HMI. Ofsted's position on this after the February half-term will be reviewed and confirmed before the half term break.
- Schools will be given up to 48 hours' notice of all monitoring inspections.
- Inspectors will focus on what leaders are doing to provide education to all pupils in the current circumstances, whether this be for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers in school or those pupils being educated remotely at home.
- Inspectors will not expect schools to have updated their self-evaluation or improvement/action plans.
- Monitoring inspections will focus on the school's work towards improving and will not result in an inspection grade or a change to an existing inspection grade.
- All monitoring inspections will focus on:
 - discussing with school leaders and those responsible for governance the actions being taken to provide education in the current circumstances;
 - how effectively leaders are adapting the existing curriculum to meet current challenges; inspectors will discuss with leaders what they had achieved by the start of the pandemic, where they are currently with curriculum planning and how they are getting back on track; this includes discussing whether any actions have been reasonably delayed or altered by COVID-19 restrictions;
 - how effectively leaders are providing education remotely;
 - how effectively leaders are providing education for vulnerable pupils and for other pupils attending school on site; and
 - leaders' plans to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, whether they are in school or being educated at home.
- Inspectors will look at whether leaders' actions are effective in providing education during the current circumstances. To do this, they will need to understand the school's existing curriculum and how this is being reviewed or amended to provide education both in school and remotely.
- Inspectors will not evaluate leaders' actions during the spring and summer terms 2020. They will be interested, however, in how the pandemic has affected the school, especially in terms of leaders' curriculum thinking.
- In arriving at a final judgement, inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders' actions are helping or hindering the provision of education to all pupils at the current time.
- The lead inspector will make a single overarching judgement. This will be either of the following:
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances; or

- Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.
- A report will be written and published following Ofsted's visit.

The detailed monitoring inspection guidance for maintained schools and academies can be accessed [here](#)

During this lockdown period, Ofsted will continue to have the power to inspect a school, regardless of its current Ofsted grading, in response to any significant concerns, including those relating to safeguarding and remote education. The DfE's latest guidance stated that if parents felt their children's school was not providing remote education of a suitable quantity and quality, they should, in the first instance, raise their concerns with the teacher/headteacher and, if the concerns are not resolved, to report the matter to Ofsted, which may prompt an inspection visit. Governing Boards will need to monitor whether there has been a rise in the number of formal parental complaints being raised in the Spring Term, linked to this issue, and the number that are being required to be heard by a formal Governor Panel.

Remote Education: Findings from Ofsted's Interim Visits

Ofsted has published guidance on what it believes has worked well with respect to the provision of remote education, primarily based on findings from its monitoring visits to schools and colleges in the Autumn 2020 Term. Key points include:

- The remote education curriculum needs to be aligned to the classroom curriculum as much as possible. Just like the classroom curriculum, it needs to be carefully sequenced and ensures that pupils obtain the building blocks they need to move on to the next step. Curricular goals should be made as explicit remotely as they would be in the classroom.
- When using digital remote education, the platform used shouldn't be too complicated to use. Just as 'all-singing, all-dancing' lessons are not needed in the classroom, remote education often benefits from a straightforward and easy-to-use interface.
- Feedback and assessment are still as important as in the classroom. It can be harder to deliver immediate feedback to pupils remotely than in the classroom, but teachers have found some clever ways to do this, including through chatroom discussions and 1-to-1 interaction tools.
- Peer interaction can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes and this can be undertaken through, for example, chat groups or video-linking functions. They will also help pupils maintain their social skills.
- Currently a hot discussion point, some parents believe that a live lesson is the 'gold standard' of remote education which Ofsted argues isn't necessarily the case. Live lessons have a lot of advantages including making curriculum alignment easier and can keep pupils' attention. But there are also some specific difficulties in doing live lessons - it can be hard to build in interaction and flexibility. This means that giving feedback can actually be less effective than when recorded lesson segments are used followed by interactive chats, or tasks and feedback.

Other News

Abuse during Lockdown

As part of a new campaign, '[Something's Not Right](#)', which aims to build children's awareness of the support services available to them and encourage disclosure of abuse to a trusted adult.

The charity, NSPCC, has reported that contacts to its helpline about the impact of domestic abuse on children have increased by 32% since the start of the lockdown, to an average of one an hour. In turn, 58% of the calls made have led to referrals or a referral update to the Local Authority. In some of these cases, fears about the virus were exploited to withhold access to children, cut off contact to family and friends, and monitor movement under the pretext of keeping them safe from the virus.

Actions for chairs and their governing boards

- Reminder of the strategic and operational roles, especially during the current situation
- Chairs of governors should keep in agreed regular(virtual) contact with their headteacher(s)
- Consider safeguarding and health and safety issues
- Consider wellbeing of headteacher(s) and staff
- Keep the governing board informed between meetings of any updates
- Provide a chairs summary update before governing board meetings
- Report any decisions taken under chair's action since the last meeting, which should be minuted and ratified by the board
- Ensuring board members are able to comment and ask questions
- The board should scrutinise remote education strategy ongoing, in line with government recommendations
- Carry out all 'visits' remotely

Notes