

## Appendix 1: Schools Update Scrutiny July 2020

**At the June 2020 Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Meeting officers were asked to give an update on the following areas given the country has been in a significant period of lockdown due to COVID19:**

- Attendance levels
  - Support for those not attending
  - What we know about the impact on mental health and educational deficit experienced by pupils during lockdown.
1. The context: schools were technically closed but asked to stay open for specific cohorts (schools were asked to open for key worker children and vulnerable children) from 23<sup>rd</sup> March. In reality many stayed open throughout for small numbers of pupils (some key worker children and vulnerable pupils) and almost all offered some on line support alongside face to face teaching. Some compressed to a local hub so the offer was maintained but on different sites. At this stage families had the option to send their pupils in or not if they felt it not safe to do so.
  2. On June 01<sup>st</sup> Primary schools were given the option of opening to YR, Y1 and Y6. Many did - but to smaller groups (typically around half of each class or fewer). Some more opened on 08<sup>th</sup> and the remainder (including secondary schools) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The special schools stayed open on a demand led basis with occasional closures - usually due to staffing issues.
  3. Attendance has increased gradually but consistently.

Date	% of those phase of schools open
01 <sup>st</sup> June 2020	Specials - 100% Primary - 55% Secondary - closed but open to key worker and vulnerable pupils
08 <sup>th</sup> June	Specials - 100% Primary 60% Secondary – closed but open to key worker and vulnerable pupils
15 <sup>th</sup> June	Specials - 100% Primary - 100% Secondary 100% (but to Y10 or Y12 only as directed and to key worker and vulnerable pupils) Colleges were asked to open for Y12

22 <sup>nd</sup>	2m distancing relaxed and DFE announce they expect all schools to open fully from September 01 <sup>st</sup> - but no expectation for any summer offer.
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#### 4. Early Years:

In more normal times there are around 170 early years settings open. These are a blend of school run nurseries and much private provision. This has proved to a hugely challenging time for the sector. Initially many private settings were furloughed early in the lockdown period - this meant they were closed and staff could not engage with any work. The early years team spent a huge effort in trying to maintain provision where needed. This was successful and families who could not find suitable some local provision were few in number.

By June the number open was down to around 70 although this is growing gradually now. We merged some settings and technically opened two new settings with the regulatory work involved being managed with the help of Ofsted and DfE. This was a significant effort and helped maintain provision in key areas. Similarly the council helped fund a local out of school club where alternatives were limited.

As the system opens up the situation for the private settings is complex. They are having to open but for unknown numbers and in a complex world for safety. Some are actively considering permanent closure as their business model no longer works and they are deciding how to navigate the autumn term. We have provided business support for them via webinars and are considering how best to maintain capacity whilst the gradual economic opening up takes place. There is a cost for families in attending, it is not statutory and what level of demand will be evident in September is unknown. We are researching this.

#### 5. Attendance patterns throughout the pandemic?

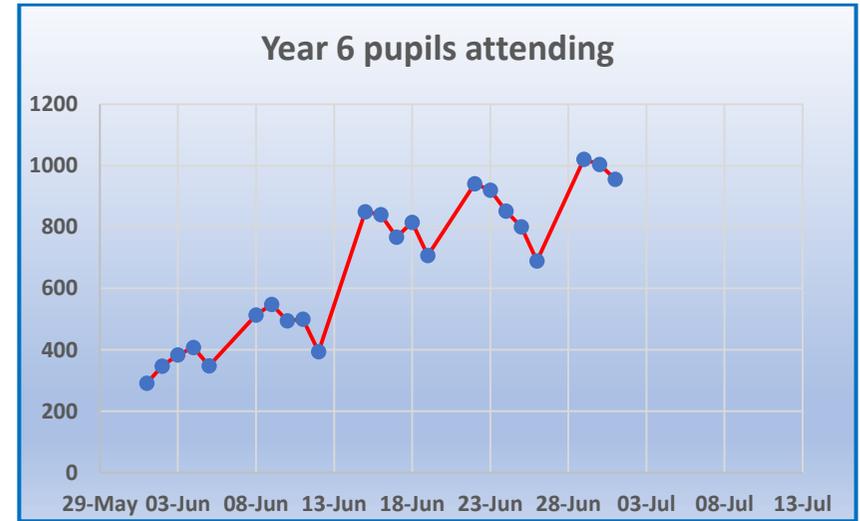
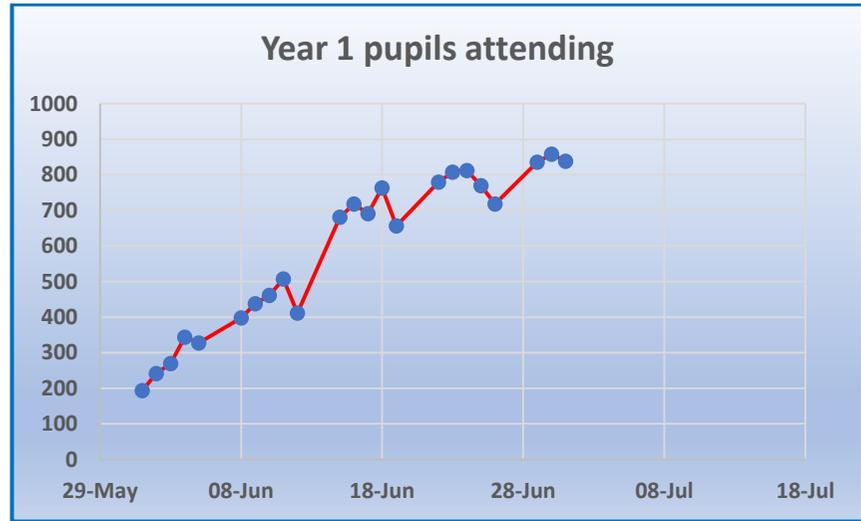
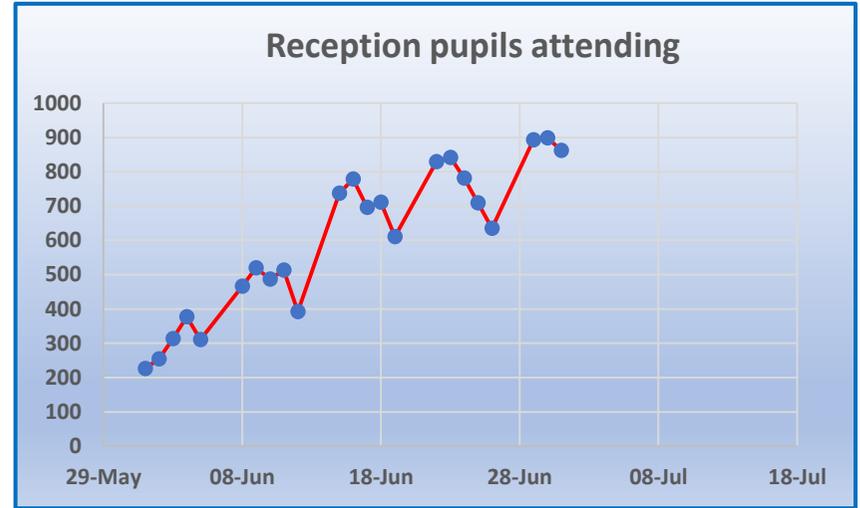
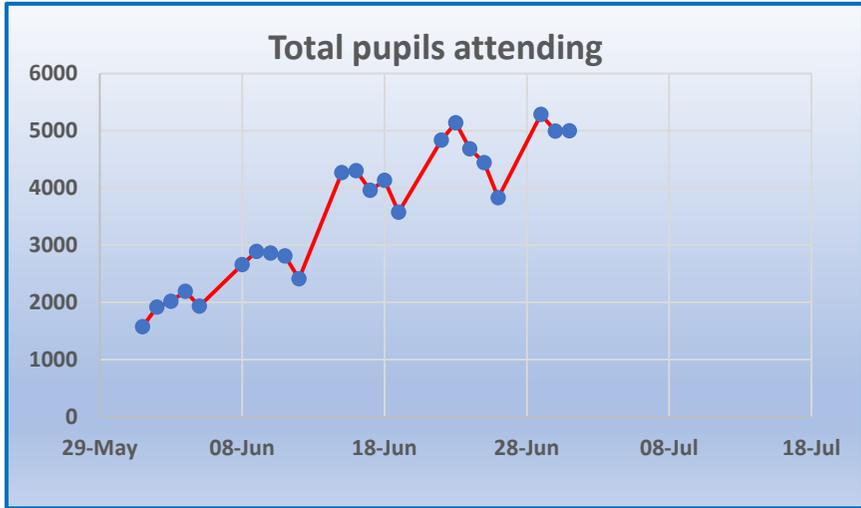
- Herefordshire has experienced a comparatively greater level of attendance of pupils than some other local authority areas in the West Midlands and against the national proportion of children attending school.
- Attendance for vulnerable pupils has increased and peaked around 20%. This has been above national levels throughout but still low.
- Friday has seen a consistently lower attendance rate than for the rest of the week.
- As at 22nd June we had just over 5200 pupils attending (from a usual total of around 23500). This is around 23% which is above national levels. We expect this to continue to climb as the economy opens more widely but we do not expect to get close to full attendance before the end of the summer term - this will be capped by distancing measures in secondary schools and colleges, bubbles in primary classrooms and family anxieties who we expect to wait until September.

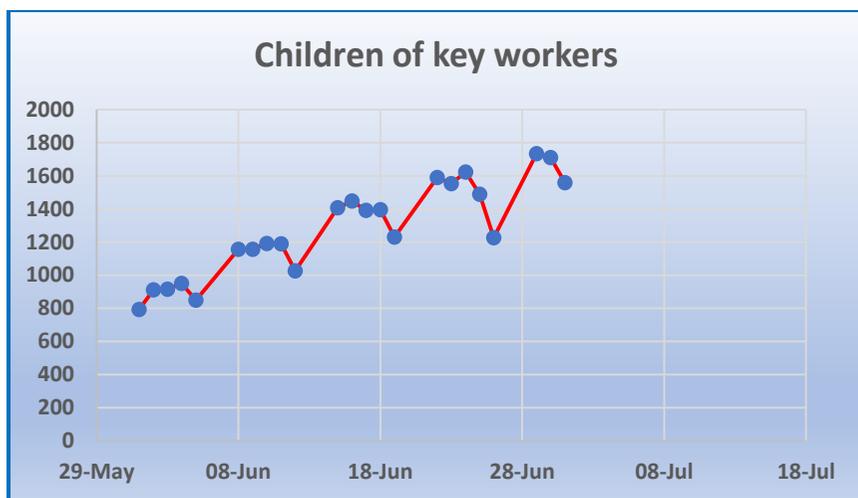
LA	Pupils attending establishment	% attending
Coventry	7056	12.3%
Herefordshire	5287	22.4%
Sandwell	6267	10.3%
Shropshire	7741	19.6%
Solihull	7400	18.5%
Stoke-on-Trent	6256	15.4%

On 01 July we also had some national attendance figures. These only go to 25 June but at that time the **proportion of children attending school was 15.6%** - significantly below Herefordshire at **22.4%**.

## Attendance in Herefordshire educational establishments since 1 June

	Date	Pupils attending establishment	Nursery pupils attending	Reception pupils attending	Year 1 pupils attending	Year 6 pupils attending	Year 10 pupils attending	Year 12 pupils attending	Children of key workers	Vulnerable children on an EHCP	Vulnerable children with a social worker	Other vul'nable children
Mon	01-Jun	1573	94	226	193	291			793	191	126	235
Tues	02-Jun	1917	106	254	241	347			911	134	118	178
Wed	03-Jun	2018	98	313	269	383			915	126	117	182
Thurs	04-Jun	2194	125	377	344	408			951	102	136	213
Fri	05-Jun	1931	120	311	327	348			849	66	115	200
Mon	08-Jun	2659	158	466	398	513			1157	83	134	245
Tues	09-Jun	2890	162	520	438	548			1157	211	168	357
Wed	10-Jun	2860	154	487	461	495			1191	220	189	341
Thurs	11-Jun	2813	174	513	507	500			1189	183	163	333
Fri	12-Jun	2413	146	392	411	394			1026	142	166	260
Mon	15-Jun	4267	216	737	681	850	196	169	1408	255	185	371
Tues	16-Jun	4300	208	779	718	841	183	103	1448	158	186	310
Wed	17-Jun	3959	190	696	691	767	187	32	1391	203	192	341
Thurs	18-Jun	4136	190	711	763	815	152	93	1395	160	181	320
Fri	19-Jun	3579	171	611	657	707	108	96	1230	172	183	370
Mon	22-Jun	4837	244	829	780	941	276	19	1590	212	203	317
Tues	23-Jun	5142	251	841	808	920	176	36	1553	196	186	345
Wed	24-Jun	4687	227	781	812	852	171	25	1623	181	190	351
Thurs	25-Jun	4442	223	709	770	801	255	30	1488	154	159	324
Fri	26-Jun	3830	191	635	718	690	139	38	1226	161	165	292
Mon	29-Jun	5287	279	893	836	1021	250	18	1733	201	191	341
Tues	30-Jun	4997	266	899	858	1004	226	32	1710	173	173	357
Wed	01-Jul	5001	225	862	838	956	224	42	1558	170	165	335





Preliminary data from other local authorities in the West Midlands shows the proportion of Herefordshire pupils in school exceeds those elsewhere in the region.

## 6. Support for those not attending

- We have two seconded HMI who have carried out a local survey of the support on offer for us. A summary of their report is attached - in essence this support has been a blend of online provision, home visits and contact via phone and / or social media. Practice has varied from school to school but has in some cases been innovative and successful. One of our special schools for example (Brookfield) has maintained weekly distancing visits with food parcels and a doorstep conversation with family and pupils. They now have almost 100% attendance. Others have maintained a healthy online curriculum. This whole process was new to schools and they should be congratulated in what they have done at short notice and in an unfamiliar world. This was done alongside opening and closing schools, adapting for safety, responding to national guidance, staying open for holiday periods, sorting out meal vouchers and offering closer contact with families. However, despite some exceptional practice provision has been variable and ultimately engagement is optional for pupils at home in some schools. Families have faced significant challenges in some cases - access to reliable internet access and equipment in particular. There is now a growing awareness that if blended learning is to stay - families need support in juggling expectations at home and support from schools in what is expected and how to home school. Engagement levels are more closely monitored in secondary schools and colleges than in primary (in general).

- The immediate support offer provided by the local authority once lockdown was imposed was an online curriculum support licence which meant that all schools had something they could use. The one selected was a tailored Key Stage 1 to 3 offer (ie across primary and secondary) which enabled schools to offer all subjects for every year group with the option for home study included. Some of our schools use this - others use their own or an alternative. Take up has been good but variable.
- Schools report an increased level of contact with families via social media and telephone and most have taken to making weekly or fortnightly calls - which includes speaking with the pupils. Anecdotally some have also reported that some pupils for whom actual attendance was difficult have responded well to the remote contacts. These contacts have all helped.
- Pupils have done well themselves during the lockdown and engaged with learning. Many have attended, found it to be a positive experience, worked within the guidance of schools and responded well to expectations. This must have been a very different experience for them. We have examples of virtual assemblies and choirs, homework being completed even more diligently than usual and some moving experiences of young children meeting and waving at their friends across the internet before settling to work. Most pupils at home have actively engaged with e-learning, and done their best to work through this. For those that would have taken public examinations this is a challenging time which has much uncertainty. GCSE cohorts for example, know with far less confidence what their grades will be and decisions about their futures will be made in a much more uncertain world. School leavers will face similar uncertainty - especially those for who leaving school to go to employment was the option - but in fact for all of them. Primary schools report that the absence of Key Stage 2 assessments has meant transition arrangements are more worrying for them.
- As lockdown continues however - and for many pupils it will be as long as six months - the support becomes more variable - although levels of online engagement have been maintained and we have well over 5000 pupils now attending, it is likely that for some pupils their mental well-being has suffered. The national survey (see attached) shows some data around this and we have no reason to believe that the situation in Herefordshire will be significantly different. Public Health have also conducted a local survey which echoes this.
- We have shared the supporting guidance on how to support pupils with schools several times over the lockdown. They have been well received. We are also aware that the longer the lockdown went on the harder families found it to maintain the initial enthusiasm.
- As schools prepare to open more normally we are expecting a rise in the need for mental health support on behalf of pupils. Schools have guidance already in readiness for this about what they could do. However, we also know that, as pupils have returned, their anxieties do quickly dissipate. This term has seen a 'welcome back approach' which pupils have enjoyed.
- Social Work Heads of Service have been contacting schools and then subsequently contacting families to ensure regular contact is maintained for no attendees. This closer contact has been mirrored right across Children and Families Directorate, including Early Years and for pupils with SEND. The work of our virtual school has been especially praised by the families. The level of family contact within the Early Help service has been consistently high (at around 550 contacts a week) and of high quality.

- Schools have been contacting the non-attende families weekly (usually via phone or virtually)

### **What we know about the impact on mental health and the educational deficit for pupils during lockdown?**

- This is an emerging picture rather than hard data (both nationally and locally). We do know that not all pupils have equal access to the online and digital support in place and as a consequence provision is variable. We also know that a few pupils will have engaged in a limited way with online offers (and not always by choice) and we also know that this provision is variable across the county in terms of how extensive the offer is. We do know however that locally this is a success story and schools and settings are to be congratulated on their efforts here. They commonly report that for a significant proportion of pupils, the on line offer has been welcomed by the pupils themselves. It is worthy of future research to establish which local cohorts this has worked for.
- The most explicit research on the potential deficit has been undertaken by Education Endowment Foundation. This is published and available on [educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- They suggest that the possible impact on the gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers could widen by as much as 36%. They also suggest that there will not be one single catch up strategy that will work - it will require many. They differentiate between 'recovering learning' and 'learning lost' - this is where gains could be recovered quickly or others where recovery is long term. The evidence is that if pupils miss the first term in an academic year they lose more than if they miss the final term of an academic year - in this case many will have missed both terms. Their recovery will be longer.
- With regard to online learning their evidence is that the quality of the learning is more important than the access to resources - in short - it is unlikely that providing access to digital resources without support will improve learning. This will require both on line tutors and catch up sessions for the 2020-21 academic year.
- There is some evidence that some cohorts of pupils have coped well with lockdown and have engaged with the virtual learning model better than expected and have expressed some satisfaction that they can work from home. This is anecdotal via the schools - we do not yet have hard data.
- Attached to this report is the local online report summary, the local mental health survey and the national mental well-being survey. An attachment is provided to each.
- Schools are reporting that pupils adapt well to the new normal and quickly assimilate to different routines.

**Young Minds survey** - the impact of COVID19 on children and young people's mental health: the results of a survey with parents and carers. This is a national survey and is not local - but we can assume that the findings would be similar. This survey was however conducted in April and May. The survey sample size was 1854 respondents.

Key findings include:

- 67% agreed that they were concerned about the long-term impact of the virus on mental health
- Amongst parents and carers who had children in receipt of mental health support 77% were concerned about the long-term impact
- 24% said they did not know where to go for support
- 29% said there was not enough support
- Only 4% said they were receiving the same level of support as pre COVID19
- 63% said their child was receiving support but remotely - this was welcomed
- 66% of parents and carers said they would welcome more support

**Respondents asked for:**

- ❖ Better communication with their school (eg a weekly call)
- ❖ Clarity around expectations and less pressure from schools
- ❖ Mental health advice from school
- ❖ Access to laptop or better internet connections
- ❖ Advice on transitions back to school
- ❖ Adding arts and well-being to their school curriculum
- ❖ Clarity around exams.

**Respondents expressed the following concerns:**

- ❖ Not having enough time to help
- ❖ Not feeling qualified
- ❖ Unrealistic demands from school
- ❖ Focussing on mental health
- ❖ Young people giving up studying as it won't affect their grades.

## What have we done in Herefordshire?

- We have provided free licences for online material to be available in the run up to lockdown - this was provided by Hamilton Education (costs for annual licence for all schools was £5000) - to ensure every school could offer something. In the event, although many did use Hamilton, a wide range of material was available - and at some point a national scheme was made available (The Oak Academy)
- We have sourced and distributed around 380 laptops and digital devices to be used by our most vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. These were provided at free to the council by DfE (although there were associated costs to the council of around £3900 to make them classroom ready).
- We have issued guidance on how best to set and respond to online learning. This was issued early but supplemented by national guidance later in lockdown. This included help to families. However, the response was variable to this and we are not clear to what extent it has actually helped.
- Schools have shared good practice with each other via on line tutorials and videos etc.
- We have supported schools in their communications with parents in how best to support children at home.
- To support the mental well-being of families during lockdown we have issued much guidance via our newsletters (they come out weekly - or occasionally more frequently than that) - this includes drop in visits by school teachers (distant door step visits, food parcels and gifts, etc). Some schools have ensured weekly contact with children they have concerns about. In one example, one school maintained weekly visits to homes and dropped parcels for vulnerable pupils - they have had one of the highest attendance rates since wider reopening took place on June 01<sup>st</sup>. (Brookfield)
- Kooth was launched during the pandemic in Herefordshire – this is an initiative which is an on line confidential counselling service. It is a highly regarded national service which was launched in Herefordshire during lockdown.

The following are a summary of some of the successful activity carried out by SEND and Early Help teams

- The SEND Team and Educational Psychologists (EPs) have adapted well to the lockdown and after initial concerns that the statutory assessment process would be greatly disrupted by the virus restrictions, it quickly became apparent that they were able to continue the process for the vast majority of cases. Those cases where there has been an unavoidable delay have been informed. Otherwise, performance to statutory timescales continues to be strong.
- The Brookfield School and HPRS (PRU) have had high numbers of pupils returning to school compared to the national picture for SEMH provision. This means many vulnerable learners were being seen on a very regular basis.

- Peripatetic staff (Specialist Teachers and EPs) have been conducting virtual work up until this point. They are now starting to make visits to schools and garden visits to families where this can be arranged safely.
- Early Help Family Support have continued to work with families through Covid-19 completing over 600 contacts on average each week, including working with families in their outside space or home if safe to do so.
- Children’s Centre Services have adapted their work to support families by producing videos of some of their evidence based programmes to use with families.
- Virtual Early Help Family Network Meetings have been taking place for the 8 areas in the county with very positive attendance.
- The Virtual school has also been supporting pupils with high needs. They have hosted 158 online reviews of education plans during lockdown, ensured all children in care have received a DFE or local laptop – in fact they had organised much of this immediately before the DFE offer. Attendance of LAC has improved from 10% at the start of lockdown to 46% now. Free on line material is available and The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller team has continued with site visits and contact.

### **What next - some discussion prompts?**

- We await the details of the national /catch up programme’ which appears to be based on providing tutors.
- There has been some refreshed Return to Ofsted guidance released on July 06<sup>th</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-plans-from-september-2020>
- To what extent should we take the opportunity to refresh the sustainability agenda within the models of education we provide - for example, outdoor education, travel plans.
- A new normal - should we be looking at extending the curriculum variety and offer by keeping the blended learning model and using the various offers being made (for example, primary school PE, post 16 learning support, access to blended learning).