

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny

Date: 01/10/20

Title of report: Preparations undertaken for the reopening of Schools

Purpose of report: This report provides an overview about the re-opening of schools at the end of the first week of the Autumn term.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u> ?	Key Decision – N/A Private Report/Private Appendix – N/A
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	N/A
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Give name and date for Cabinet / Scrutiny reports Jo-Anne Sanders for Mel Meggs 22/09/20
Cabinet member <u>portfolio</u>	Cllr Carole Pattison – Lead Members for Schools, Aspiration and Communities

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Summary

This report provides an update for Children's Scrutiny about the work undertaken in preparation for re-opening schools for the Autumn term, and the planning undertaken with our school colleagues to enable a positive and safe return to education for our children, young people and their families.

2. Overview of activity

Dialogue with schools about autumn term opening has taken place during the summer holiday period and builds upon the work of the Education and Learning Partnership Board, and the working groups established in May 2020 that ran weekly to the end of the school term.

During the Summer holidays, the Council has continued to meet as part of our Business Continuity planning to prepare for the return of schools, keeping in focus the Department for Education guidance as and when this has been updated.

In addition, three focussed workshops have been run with council wide representation to consider the support schools, as well as families and children may need. There is a further workshop planned to pick up any emerging issues as term gets underway.

The considerations have included;

- Physical Space (including catering and cleaning)
- Welfare support (Free School Meals and Hardship) for eligible families
- Transport
- Inclusion
- Parental Confidence, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control advice, guidance and process.
- Digital/home/blended learning
- Responses to government guidance eg. face coverings, PPE, Risk Assessments

Working with our Emergency Planning colleagues, a scenario planning Business Continuity workshop took place (with a group of Heads and council staff) on prior to the start of term to work through and plan for a series of likely events.

In advance of term starting week commencing 7th September, schools were contacted by the Learning Service/HR Partners to check that plans were in place for a return for pupils, to offer support and to understand if there were any barriers to reopening.

Further contact was made during the first week of term and there was a high level of confidence that all schools were fully open for pupils by Monday 14th September (allowing for a range of usual transitioning arrangements that take place at the beginning of an academic year, including INSET days).

Weekly engagement with our representative group of Headteachers and Multi Academy Trust CEOs resumed prior to the beginning of term and feedback has been largely positive about readiness for re-opening and the opportunity to welcome children back.

Keen to support a positive return and build confidence we put in place a communication approach 'Back Together, Better Together' across Kirklees using digital and online

platforms. As an Education Partnership, we recognised that pupils would be returning to schools that may look and feel different to normal. Our approach has focused on reminding children, young people and families that we have excellent schools in Kirklees and that returning to school is a positive and special experience, especially for those who were not able to attend since March. Our aims are to support our family of schools in helping pupils and families adapt to the changes, to build their confidence and to promote good levels of attendance. This has involved promoting positive messages about returning to school as well as signposting children, young people and parents to useful online resources.

The reopening of all schools across Kirklees has been hugely positive for thousands of children and families, and overall attendance levels so far have been good, and our schools are feeding back to us that it is wonderful to have their pupils and staff back together after several months. That said, given the scale of the pandemic, many schools across the country will need to close 'bubbles' or ask certain people to self-isolate at some stage. This is already happening, including in Kirklees. There is advice and support, readily available to our schools from both a national and local level and where such actions are necessary this has been and will always be in line with national Covid-19 guidance.

The Council will continue to work in partnership with our schools as the academic year progresses.

Our schools do wonderful work in helping children and young people to enjoy the best start in life.

3. Information required to take a decision

N/A

4. Implications for the Council

4.1 Working with People

The approach that Kirklees, and our schools are taking is to work together for our children and young people and their families.

4.2 Working with Partners

The Education and Learning Partnership Board provides strategic system leadership. Representation is included from all phases and types of schools, Governors, MAT leaders, Trade Unions and Council Officers.

4.3 Place Based Working

Kirklees as a place is made up of different communities and the diversity of its communities is one of its key strengths. The Council's community response has been proactive in linking up with our schools as they re-open with support and engagement opportunities linked into the Kirklees Community Hubs.

4.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

Safe travel to school has been a key consideration in Government guidance and has been an important aspect of the planning for school re-opening.

4.5 Improving outcomes for children

As schools have re-opened, there is a key focus on outcomes for children and young people in terms of their educational, emotional and physical wellbeing and safety. It will be imperative to continue to collaborate and use every opportunity available for and consider our children's outcomes, alongside wider government guidance.

5. Officer recommendations and reasons

This report is for information and to provide an overview of activity. No decision is required.

6. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

N/A

7. Contact officer

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director for Learning and Early Support

8. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director for Learning and Early Support