APSE Briefing: Preparing for the wider opening of primary schools - Planning guide for primary schools

To all APSE members in England and for information to Wales, Scotland and Northern

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Key issues

- Following announcements by the Prime Minister on Sunday 10 May as to a route map out of lockdown, a series of measures have now been announced including the wider opening of primary schools.
- The government published guidance on 14 May 2020 for schools in England to advise on the steps required for the first phase of opening primary schools for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children.

Ireland

1.   Introduction

Following the Prime Ministers announcement of the roadmap toward recovery, the government published a 'Planning guide for primary schools' on 14 May 2020 to help school leaders and trusts to prepare and decide on arrangements required for children returning to school.

The government state that the guide is intended to provide a step-by-step approach for those responsible for extending the opening of schools to include all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from week commencing 1 June 2020 and cover the first phase of wider opening.

It is stated that it is the government's ambition that all primary school children will be able to go back to school before the summer if it is feasible and further advice and guidance will be produced as and when required.

This briefing provides an overview of the guidance. It should be noted that the guidance is only applicable to England and that the Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh Governments have not announced their intentions to extend the wider opening of schools at the current time.

2. The guidance

This is a link to the full guidance document which contains various links to associated guidance to support the wider opening of primary schools.

[Preparing for the wider opening of primary schools](#)

The document contains 12 sections which can be summarised as follows: -

Preparing the site - This section of the guidance details the steps to be taken to prepare the site for a larger number of pupils and staff and focuses on:-

- Health and safety check for the building
- Cleaning and hygiene –the document refers to the previously published guidance on cleaning in non-health care settings.
- Movement around the school
- Site examination

Reviewing staff for availability in school – This part of the guidance advises that schools conduct an audit of the whole staff to ascertain who will be available to be in school from week commencing 1 June. It also sets out details regarding clinical vulnerable individuals etc. and advises on what needs to be considered when working out staff ratios.

Familiarisation with the maximum safe group size – The guidance acknowledges that primary school children cannot be expected to remain two meters apart. Therefore, this aspect of the guidance sets out measures to be taken to ascertain the maximum safe group size.

Creating and staffing temporary teaching groups – This section outlines the steps and assumptions that are required to staff the school effectively during this phase of opening. In addition, the guidance states that schools should prepare to resume taking and attendance register for reporting to the Department for Education.

Practical steps to reduce risk - The guidance advises that there are steps and measures required to be put in place to reduce the risk and this part of the document outlines the steps that schools should take to put these measures in place.

External support for SEND and Behavioural issues – The documents recommends that Head teachers need to liaise with local authorities and other service providers to ascertain what services are available and how these will be delivered.

Changes to culture for staff and pupils – This section focuses on the considerations to be given when updating behaviour policy, rules and routines that will need to be communicated to pupils, parents and carers. In addition, there is advice provided on taking books home; drop off and pick up routines and visitors.

Communicating with staff – The details in this part of the document provides information regarding what communication is required and how this should be undertaken with staff.

Communicating with parents – This section of the guidance advises on how to communicate with parents and reports that the DfE will be publishing a model letter for schools to use to communicate with parents.

Managing pupil, staff wellbeing and mental health - The guidance recognises that for some pupils and staff, support will be required to assist them in adjusting to re-starting back at school. The section provides details of things to consider and aspects of support that the school may wish to consider providing.

Planning what to teach and how to teach it –This section outlines the priorities that should be considered when delivering teaching in the first phase of schools opening as it is acknowledged that it will not be possible to teach to the standard curriculum.

Remote education during wider opening – The guidance comments that as staff are required to come back into the classroom, this will reduce schools abilities to produce online learning content. Therefore, this section provides details of how schools can support pupils accessing online learning from home.

The final part of the document is a series of Frequently Asked Questions which includes advice for schools on breakfast clubs and wrap-around provision.

APSE COMMENT

Clearly, it is the responsibility of the leadership of the school or academy to put in place the requirements for the safe opening of the wider school. However, local authorities are supporting schools in various ways including providing cleaning and catering services. Therefore, councils will be playing an active role in consulting with the leadership teams to develop strategies for delivering their services effectively and facilitating the wider opening of schools.

Further support

The APSE COVID-19 support hub was set up to ensure quick information is available on frontline services to our member councils. You can access the hub using [this link.](#)

APSE has also introduced new services to support our members including a rapid response network query service, dedicated WhatsApp groups, dedicated COVID-19 briefings and online forums for remobilisation of council services. To access these services please enter your details using [this link.](#)

If your council is not a member of APSE you can enquire about joining using [this link.](#)

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