

## **Number 5. Governance Update issued Friday 3 April 2020**

*We are sending this email to both clerks and chairs as we are aware that many clerks only work during term time, so may not be available currently to forward this update to the board. As you are aware we do not normally contact boards during holiday periods, but a great many schools are open through the Easter period.*

### **Contacting the Governance Consultancy Team**

Members of the Governance Team have all been enabled to work remotely, our email and telephone helplines are available as normal:

[LDP-GovernorsServiceClerks@babcockinternational.com](mailto:LDP-GovernorsServiceClerks@babcockinternational.com)

[LDP-GovernorsService@babcockinternational.com](mailto:LDP-GovernorsService@babcockinternational.com)

Telephone 01392 287314

## **Safeguarding Appendix for School Child Protection/Safeguarding policies**

Thank you to colleagues in the Safeguarding team at Babcock who have prepared a model appendix document for all schools to append to their Child Protection policies. This covers a range of issues around safeguarding and escalation during the Covid-19 period. The appendix has been discussed today at the schools' reference group conference call and will be circulated to schools on Monday.

## **Play Equipment: Advice from Health and Safety**

Keeping pupils safe during the partial school closure (those schools that remain open for vulnerable and key worker children) is a priority. Government guidance states that some schools will have children of various age groups attending together. Therefore it is important that schools follow HS43 (Playground Safety) arrangements, particularly:

- Play equipment must be designed with the age group of the end user in mind. This is of particular importance when the equipment is used by different age groups
- Children must be supervised at all times whilst using outdoor play equipment. Supervising staff should ensure that the numbers of children using any piece of equipment are controlled at all times
- Daily Visual Inspection; this inspection is required on a daily or pre-use of equipment basis and could be undertaken by supervising staff or caretaking staff.

At this time, it is important that we try and reduce serious accidents involving fractures and the need to call out an ambulance to reduce the burden on the NHS.

## **Early Years and childcare settings**

The Department for Education (DfE) has published [guidance for Ofsted-registered childcare settings](#) for children of all ages, including childminders, nurseries and wraparound childcare and clubs (before- and after- school and holiday care). The expectation is that settings will remain open to provide provision for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. The guidance explains that childcare settings should work with DCC regarding the provision needed locally to support the needs identified. The guidance sets out that if settings are experiencing high demand for places or severe staff shortages, local authorities will coordinate support from other settings in the area. Settings are expected to be flexible and work together where required.

## **Insurance cover for maintained schools**

Devon County Council's (DCC) insurers have agreed to indemnify children attending Devon maintained schools from non DCC establishments, provided all necessary risk assessments etc. are in place (for example, this could include your school providing childcare for a child who would normally attend a non-DCC nursery provision). QBE have agreed that if schools are acting in line with DCC processes and DCC have accepted that schools can cluster (which they have) then for the children in DCC schools, regardless of their age, or the school they usually attend, DCC's Public Liability policy will cover them.

## **Insurance cover for academy schools**

We understand academy insurance companies are mostly honouring the same agreement, but academy schools are advised to check with their own insurance company. Details of the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) are [available here](#).

## **Advice on First Aider requirements**

Please find attached advice on First Aid requirements for schools including those taking Early Years children and how to adapt cover during Covid-19.

## **Finances – maintained schools**

The information below has been provided by the DCC Finance Team to clarify arrangements regarding the financial year end.

### **Payment of invoices**

Maintained schools should be aware that the local authority has reduced its payment turnaround from 20 days to 5 days.

### **School Budget Planning 2020/21**

Under the current Devon Scheme of Financing Schools it states:

*“Each school must submit a plan, approved by the full governing body or a committee of the governing body, to the Authority by 1 May showing its intentions for expenditure and income in the current financial year and the next two years together with the assumptions underpinning the budget plan.”*

On reviewing the statement from the DfE sent out earlier this week we are proposing to extend the deadline by a month.

We would encourage maintained schools, where at all possible, to continue to the deadline of 1 May 2020, however you have until the 31 May to return your 3-year budget plans. In order to complete the budgets and meet the revised deadline 31 May 2020 please consider distributing the budget to governing boards online and obtain approval of the budget through the alternative methods suggested below. We would also advise that you follow up decisions with a confirmation email.

The following is an extract from [School governance update March 2020](#)

- *The department therefore advises against governing bodies meeting in person, and to instead adopt alternative arrangements, for example by using video or teleconferencing applications. These may include but are not limited to: Skype, Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Please remember that all parties will need to agree to these arrangements.*
- *Boards can agree to hold meetings via telephone or video-conferencing without having to meet first. The chair or clerk/governance professional can contact*

*governors directly to agree to alternative meeting arrangements during this lockdown period.*

- *The department urges governing boards to be pragmatic in what they cover in meetings during this time, and to be proportionate in the decisions that they are planning to take. We expect governors to focus on urgent, time-bound decisions. We understand that you are likely to want to defer non-urgent decisions/agenda items until future meetings.*

Any school that is finding it difficult to meet the revised deadline please notify [Finance Schools – mailbox](#) explaining the reason for the delay and possible date it will be uploaded to HCSS Budgeting. If you wish to discuss this with someone please contact any of the following who will try to assist in the matter Warren Smart (01392 382454); Karlien Bond (01392 380710); Adrian Fox (01392 383269).

### **Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)**

Thank you from Devon Audit Partnership to the Schools and Federations who have already submitted their 2019/20 SFVS self-assessments. However, there still around 40 Schools and Federations who have yet to submit their SFVS self-assessments to the Partnership.

We appreciate this may be difficult under the current circumstances, however if you are one of these Schools or Federations, please read the following additional guidance on submitting the self-assessment.

- 1) If you have completed the self-assessment and it has not yet been signed yet we are happy to accept it in that state
- 2) If you have held a virtual meeting and the self-assessment has been agreed we are happy to accept the form and receive an email from the Chair confirming that there is agreement for the submission
- 3) If you are a federation with multiple budgets we advise that you complete the checklist on one school along with the dashboard and submit only dashboards for the remaining schools within the federation
- 4) If you are federation with a single budget you can include the outcomes for the lead school rather than trying to include all the outcomes for the member schools.

Please ensure that you submit a copy of the self-assessment to the [School Financial Value Standard – Mailbox](#) by 31 May 2020.

Kind regards  
The Governance Consultancy Team