



EDUCATION ACCESS SERVICE NEWSLETTER



Issue 1, Autumn term 2020



Over the years, the resourcefulness of schools has never ceased to amaze me, and this has been brought into sharp focus over the past few months. Who could ever have imagined this time last year what the new academic year would bring?!

It is a testament to everyone involved in the education and safeguarding of children in Shropshire, that September 2020 saw children return to school in high numbers. I believe that this is largely due to the strong, trusting and mutually respectful relationships that you have with children and families and is absolutely nothing to do with the threat of fines!

I know that all the children I have seen who have returned to school have looked extremely happy to be back, their enthusiasm and exuberance is a joy to see! On behalf of my team, I would like to send our very best wishes to staff, pupils and their families for a safe, happy and productive term. Please remember that we are here to assist and support you, so please do get in touch at any point that you need us.

Take care and look after yourselves.

Chris Kerry, EAS Manager

Pupil Attendance

The first week in September saw a cautious opening of school doors, with staggered starts for lots of year groups as we entered this strange new world of face masks, hand gels and bubbles. In a surprising number of Shropshire schools, attendance has been at the levels one would expect at this time of year, with some even having 100%!

The average attendance rate across the county has been consistently over 90%.

Register Codes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

From 1 September 2020, schools should complete registers using the codes used prior to the outbreak of Covid-19. In addition, the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be used in the following circumstances:

- **Schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak.**
- **Code X - pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'**.

Examples:

1. **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19).** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
2. **Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19).** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works#people-who-have-had-close-contact-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus>
3. **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine.** *As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.*
4. **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only.**
5. **Local lockdown.** *If rates of the disease rise locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Schools should follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.*

Elective Home Education (EHE)

<https://www.shropshirelg.net/media/593034/Elective-Home-Education-Guidance-2017.pdf>

As expected, we have seen a substantial increase in parents de-registering their children for elective home education (EHE). A few feel their child has benefited from learning at home during lockdown but the majority have indicated that this will be a short term solution in response to anxieties around Covid. If you pick up on any intention to take this route, please contact your EWO or email educationaccessservice@shropshire.gov.uk at the earliest opportunity, as there will be potential implications for both the child and schools.

If parents ask your advice, please make sure that they are aware that:

- ◇ Their child(ren) will be removed from your school's roll (a lot of parents don't realise this) and a place is not guaranteed with you, if and when they choose to return.
- ◇ Parents will not be entitled to any financial or practical assistance to provide a suitable education but will need to ensure that their child is making progress in line with their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational need they may have.
- ◇ Parents will have to fund all educational materials and resources themselves.
- ◇ If children are in KS4, parents will need to arrange for the children to sit exams if they choose to and parents will have to meet entrance costs themselves. Re-admitting children in Y11 could be particularly problematic.
- ◇ Parents will be required to provide appropriate levels of supervision for their child.

Schools are advised to keep the pupil on roll until a member of the EAS has had a conversation with parents. Code C should be used and, if de-registration proceeds, you will be advised to removed them from the date that you received written notification from parents.

As at 09.09.2020

EHE new de-registrations	South	Central	North	Independent	Moving into area EHE or no previous school	Yr group Total
Y11	0	3	1	0	0	4
Y10	2	0	1	2	0	5
Y9	3	1	0	1	0	5
Y8	2	0	0	0	2	4
Y7	2	2	2	0	1	7
Y6	3	1	0	0	1	5
Y5	0	5	1	0	0	6
Y4	5	2	1	0	0	8
Y3	1	2	0	1	0	4
Y2	1	3	0	1	0	5
Y1	3	5	2	0	3	13
R	1	5	0	0	0	6
Total:	23	29	8	5	7	72

Part time attendance

Schools are rightly taking an empathetic approach to the concerns of parents and we have been asked whether remote learning or a phased reintegration can take place. The government guidance is clear on this and it is only appropriate for a child to stay at home and access remote learning if **currently** advised to do so by a clinician, even if previously they, or family members, were on a shielding list. However, in terms of supporting children to return, it would seem sensible for schools to take a pragmatic approach and consider the circumstances of each individual child and family as you usually would. We do not want parents to feel that they have no choice other than to de-register their child. Please refer to <http://www.shropshirelg.net/services/education-access-service-and-inclusion->

SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING

Our School safeguarding drop-in sessions have been running since 12th May 2020 and were developed as an action from the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership's response to Covid 19.

Sessions are held via Teams, every Wednesday 1.00-2.00 pm. Caroline Ewels (Safeguarding Officer EIS) and I chair these meetings on a rotational basis. The event is hosted by the University of Chester, who are also on hand during the meeting to support with the technical side of things. (I am thankfully now getting to grips with the hands up, chat box and screen sharing) As we return to the "new normal", sessions from October 1st will be held on alternate Wednesdays, but please contact me anytime if you have a safeguarding query—we are here to help!

Initially, the aim of the group was to support schools and Early Years settings with queries specifically related to safeguarding. As the group developed, it became evident that recurring themes around mental health and wellbeing grew to be more prevalent, so the group has evolved over the weeks to cover a wider range of issues. You are more than welcome to observe the session and there is absolutely no pressure for you to contribute.

The drop ins are the Shropshire Council version of "Question time" - a panel of professionals who have kindly committed their time are on hand to answer any queries from schools and early years delegates on a wide range of issues. Our professional panel consists of:

Fiona Purslow (Safeguarding Officer Early Years)

Jeanette Hill (Operations Manager, COMPASS and Exploitation & Missing Lead, Children's Social Care)

Julie Duncan (Early Help)

Naomi O'Hanlon (Public Health Children and Young People's team)

Bal Kaur Nhal/Amy Jones (MPFT)

Lin Harper/Kirsten Ellmore (Public Health School Nurse service)

Garry Dean (SEND Team)

Poppy Chandler (Principal Educational Psychologist)

Karen Flynn (Operation Encompass & Domestic Abuse Triage)

Jo Smith (Education Access Service)

The feedback so far has been extremely positive. Schools have reported they have found it invaluable to have a wealth of expertise in one place at the same time. Professionals have also expressed that the networking and information sharing between agencies and schools has been beneficial to inform practise and develop agency collaboration. The event is listed in the University of Chester catalogue. You can book directly or:

contact CPD@UCS (Tel: 01743 297 168 or email: cpd@chester.ac.uk). When contacting UCS please let them know delegate name, school/ provider setting, email address and date of drop in session. Joining instructions, and a Microsoft Teams delegate help guide, will be emailed direct to the known attendee 48 hours prior to the date of the drop-in.

Please do join us if you can!

Jane Parsons

INCLUSION SERVICE UPDATE

Since I joined the Inclusion Team at the end of September 2019, we have had a roller-coaster ride! Jane was with us for a couple of weeks until her big operation and then Sam C and I ran around the county like a pair of headless chickens until Ami arrived in November 2019 to make three. Its fair to say, that had quite a job on our hands!

If we look at the data on permanent exclusions, we had 82 in total in the academic year 2017/2018. In 2018/2019 we had 95 (of those 3 were withdrawn and 4 were reinstated) and in 2019/2020 to lock down we had 44 (of which 1 was reinstated and 3 withdrawn). At the end of the Autumn Term for each year we were at 31, 35 and 28 respectively. Its hard to say for sure, but I do think that the development of relationships with the schools and the team have started to make an impact as we strive to get the best outcomes for our children.

During lockdown, like most of us I guess, we have had some adjusting to do. We do our jobs because we are motivated to help young people and not being around young people and colleagues can be difficult. That said, we have remained motivated and completed some amazing work together!

We have continued with casework throughout and before the end of the academic year, we completed virtual Pupil Planning Meetings and other professionals meetings, enjoying some very useful partnership working both within the LA and with external agencies.

The Specialist Placement Panel and Fair Access Panel have taken place on a monthly basis and have proven to be very successful, with places for most cases found. FAP has been particularly effective and despite the schools not being 'open to all', we have brokered some fabulous packages for those either moving directly to school following exclusions or from TMBSS. There are schools worthy of particular note and they know who they are.

During the summer holidays, our Inclusion Caseworkers, Ami and Sam have been working on creating a document which will be useful for Governors to refer to when considering exclusions. They've also put together a directory of Alternative Provisions. Jane has put together a spreadsheet for us all to help with identifying those students who appear at MARAC and Ami and I have worked with Jane Randall, looking at the Drugs/ Substance policies in schools.

I cant complete our little update without mentioning the work of Vanessa Gascon-Diaz around elective home education (EHE), children missing education (CME) and SEN placements. Vanessa is tenacious in using her powers of persuasion to try and engage some of our most challenging service users. She has achieved great success with some of our most complex families, using her skills and experience to bring about positive outcomes for our young people. This has continued to be true throughout lockdown, with one particular case springing to mind, which has now been passed over to our colleagues in Telford and Wrekin after Vanessa tracked her down!

We are very much looking forward to working with you again this year. We do not underestimate the challenges we will face as pupils return to school and routines and boundaries are reinstated. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if there is anything we can do to assist you with Inclusion matters. It is better to involve us at the first sign of any issues emerging, than at the point a child is excluded.

Take care

Annie Williams (Inclusion Officer)

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

Operation Encompass is the reporting to schools, before the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has been involved in or exposed to domestic abuse. Police will share information with the school's DSL through the Educational Representative either via secure email or phone call. The information will contain the child's details, the incident time and location and the police incident reference number. By knowing that the child has had this experience, the school is in a better position to be supportive and understanding of the child's needs and possible behaviours. This knowledge will inform the school's response to any presenting behaviour. The DSL will share this information on a need to know basis e.g. the form teacher.

In July 203 OE alerts were sent to schools and 179 in August.

For more information please visit the website below:

<http://www.operationencompass.org>

Karen Flynn, Domestic Abuse Education Co-ordinator.



PARENT HELP LINE

As you are aware Shropshire Council supplied a parent help line to support parents and carers with anxieties or queries about returning to school in the Autumn Term.

We are delighted to share that this was a huge success. The Education Access Team were able to support many parents and carers resulting in their anxieties becoming alleviated or queries answered.

In some instances, the operator deemed it necessary to inform the Education Welfare Officer and/or school of the situation as the family may require ongoing support throughout the Autumn Term. If this has happened you will have received an email containing the details of the phone call.

If you require any more information regarding the parent help line please get in touch with your school's Education Welfare Officer who will be happy to assist.

Returning to School

Following the significant disruption in education due to Covid 19, school attendance will again be compulsory from September 2020. We are aware this may raise some anxieties or questions - therefore we have implemented a support service for parents, carers and pupils to try to ensure a successful return to school.

Support will be available from:
17th August until 2nd September 2020
Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

For help, support, guidance and advice, contact us:
03456789008

Shropshire Council

MEET THE TEAM



Vanessa GasconDiaz

I am an Engagement Officer and part of the Education Access Service. I work with the families who are most difficult to engage and who may have complex needs. My role involves working to place children missing education (CME), being in contact with families who home educate their children (EHE) but are reluctant to engage with services. My work includes issuing School Attendance Orders when there is no evidence that the child is receiving a suitable education. I cover all of Shropshire and work alongside schools and families.

Lockdown has been very difficult, professionally and personally. I have had to adapt quickly to a different type of working, so that we, as a service can continue to care for Shropshire children and are able to support other agencies and professionals.

I joined the Education Access Service as an Education Welfare Officer twelve months ago and this past year has been fantastic. I have been given the opportunity to gain new skills and use my prior knowledge and experience of working with vulnerable children and young people to improve attendance and ensure children are safe and well. I look forward to working just as hard in this new academic year to achieve the best results possible!

My current patch covers the North of the county. The last few months have been a difficult time for all but I am amazed at the support that my schools have continued to offer. There have been tough days for us all recently but we have managed to pull together as a team and provide essential care and support to our Shropshire children. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my schools for their amazing work, and to let them know how appreciated they all are.



Molly Allman and her (very cute) nephew

THANK YOU



All members of the Education Access Service team would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continuing support. The past few months have certainly challenged us all. However, during times such as these, the hard work and commitment you demonstrated for the children of Shropshire is so evident in the multi-agency working that has taken place.

We are very much looking forward to working with you in the coming year and beyond.