

Scrutiny Briefing: The Council's Covid-19 response to support children and young people Hackney Learning Trust

Date of meeting: 15 June 2020
Title of report: The Council's Covid-19 response to support children and young people Hackney Learning Trust Update Report
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Brief: This report provides an update on Hackney Learning Trust's response to the Covid-19 situation

1. Background & Introduction

- 1.1. Since lockdown on 23 March 2020, schools & settings in Hackney have been open for identified vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Although variable day to day, in May 2020, HLT reported that 93 % of Hackney schools were opening with an average of 653 pupils attending and 34% of early years provision was open supporting 330 children.
- 1.2. Government guidance setting out [Actions for educational and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#) was issued on 11 May 2020. This guidance set out that from 1 June, schools and settings should welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6. From 15 June, secondary schools should offer some face to face contact with young people in years 10 and 12.
- 1.3. Activity to support this wider opening is detailed below.

2. Schools Opening & Attendance

- 2.1. 30 Primary schools (52%) have confirmed that they are opening to more year groups week beginning 1 June. The majority of schools are opening to one class only if they are opening this week. In total data we have collected tells us we have 3 nursery classes opened at some point this week, 13 Reception classes, 13 Year 1 classes and 9 Year 6 classes. This is 38 classes out of a possible 224 i.e. 17%.
- 2.2. A further 12 schools (72% in total) have indicated that they are opening to more pupils in the week beginning 8 June. The remaining schools are formulating plans to reopen for the week beginning 15 June. No schools have indicated that they will be opening to year groups other than Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. There has been no further government advice regarding this.
- 2.3. Numbers of vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers attending provisions have increased. 4% of the overall pupil number attended school on Monday 3rd June. This number is anticipated to increase as more classes open during the next week.
- 2.4. Secondary Schools are expected to widen provision for Year 10 and Year 12 pupils from the week beginning 15th June. School planning includes social distancing measures that allow for 25% of cohorts to attend at a time. Secondary headteachers' briefings will be held w/b 8th June.
- 2.5. All special schools continue to open. Although numbers attending are relatively low, we have seen a small increase since 1 June. HLT is working with special schools to determine optimum capacity whilst maintaining social distancing. This will need to be balanced against capacity to provide home to school transport given requirements for social distancing significantly reduces the number of children & young people who can be transported in any one vehicle. The SEND Travel Assistance Service are currently reviewing options to respond to this issue.

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3. Early Years Settings

- 3.1. Whilst 190 settings are working towards opening, or wider opening, 152 settings have opened this week (60 group settings, 41 nursery classes and 51 childminders). 1,003 children were accommodated, a significant increase since the start of lockdown.
- 3.2. 12 independent schools continue to work towards a phased return. The schools are taking measured steps, in order to properly plan for social distancing

4. Ongoing activity

- 4.1. **Pastoral support & home learning** - Schools and settings continue to provide pastoral support & care, including home learning programmes where required. In addition, HLT and Children & Families Service continue to work together to support the most vulnerable children & young people attend school where this is safe to do so and ensure contact between the child or young person and school is maintained. Schools have also started to plan for the Autumn Term where it is expected that home learning will be required to continue. Access to technology to support this will be important and work is underway to determine where gaps exist and how to respond to this.
- 4.2. **Risk Assessments** - To support government requirements for schools & settings to undertake a risk assessment prior to wider opening from 1 June, a [Hackney COVID-19 risk assessment](#) framework was developed in collaboration with HLT, Public Health and the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team. Council officers continue to work with schools & settings to support completion and submission of their risk assessments. The risk assessment identifies required adjustments to ensure the safety and well-being of staff including social distancing and limiting contact to small 'pods' or clusters. These are also being shared with school staff. As of midday 5th June, 42 risk assessments had been received. Health and Safety review these and give feedback to schools.
- 4.3. **Engagement** - HLT senior managers and Deputy Mayor held a series of meetings with headteachers, chairs of governors and setting / centre managers prior to the half term break to support preparations for wider reopening at the start of June. A [schools restart briefing document](#) was shared following these meetings responding to concerns raised. In addition, the Director of Education is working closely with school & setting union representatives on a weekly basis. Further meetings with school leaders are planned for the second half of term to review provision and look ahead to September.
- 4.4. **Personal Protective Equipment** - Government guidance states that the majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. As such, PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases (e.g., for intimate care needs & where a child or young person becomes ill). Notwithstanding this, HLT have worked closely with Public Health to agree a local solution to PPE requirements in special schools and early years settings. Furthermore, in recognition of concerns raised by schools and settings, where they cannot access PPE from their own suppliers, it has been agreed that they can order supplies from the Council's PPE hub. This arrangement ensures access to required PPE supplies is always readily available.
- 4.5. **Test and Tracing, guidance for schools** - HLT, in liaison with Public Health, have provided 2 briefing documents for schools; one providing local information about the pandemic, test & trace and contact tracing and a second setting out required actions in a number of scenarios where a member of staff or child in school is either symptomatic or tested positive for covid-19. It is hoped that these documents will provide school leaders with information and the confidence to inform parents / carers and staff members who may be anxious about wider opening.