

For General Release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 15 September 2020
SUBJECT:	Education Quality and Standards
LEAD OFFICER:	Robert Henderson – Executive Director, Children, Families and Education Shelley Davies – Interim Director, Education and Youth Engagement Michael McKeaveney – Interim Head of Education Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022 The recommendations in this report are in line with the new operating model – ‘getting the basics right for residents’ and will contribute to the delivery of the following key priority / outcome: ‘Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and young people in Croydon are safe, healthy and happy, and aspire to be the best they can be• Every child and young person can access high quality education and youth facilities• Ensure there are high quality school places for Croydon’s increasing numbers of children and young people Education and Learning: working in partnership with all Croydon schools to deliver the very best for all our young people. Working with schools to ensure that resources are targeted at those social groups that currently under-perform in school exam attainment.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT There are no financial considerations with this report.	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key executive decision.	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Note this report, and the work that has gone in to support schools re-opening.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 This report details and summerises the plans for school re-opening in the London Borough of Croydon in Septeber 2020. In particular it will address work undertaken to to prepare schools to re-open safely, an update on how the discontinuation of Free School Transport has been managed and will outline any other key challenges.

2.2 Borough Context

2.3 No Croydon schools closed during the National Lockdown phase of the Covid Pandemic through the use of hubs and locality planning.

2.4 Education Directorate Officers & Advisers have worked closely with school leaders, Governors, Professional Associations and Trade Unions in planning for September.

2.5 All schools are on track to open on September 1st 2020.

2.6 A multi-agency approach has been undertaken to provide support for schools and other educational settings on Covid Safety.

2.7 A multi-agency approach has been undertaken to provide for schools and other educational settings on non-covid safeguarding and recovery.

2.8 Schools plans have been approved by Governing Bodies and submitted to the education Directorate.

2.9 Significant concerns, for example, around transport have been escalated to the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC)

3. SUPPORTING SCHOOLS TO RE-OPEN IN SEPTEMBER 2020

3.1 Walking Alongside Schools

3.2 Throughout the Covid-19 Lockdown phase of the pandemic, the Education Directorate has supported schools not by issuing instruction or edict but by supporting our school leaders from an organisational, strategic and pastoral starting point. In preparation for September re-opening this has continued.

3.3 In July 2020, towards the end of the Summer Term, weekly contact with headteachers from School Effectiveness Partners took place. This was to feedback on anxieties of school leadership teams around re-opening. These focussed around child and adult Covid Safety and routines that could be established. This intelligence was then discussed at a weekly Officers' & Advisers' meeting where support plans were devised and enacted.

3.4 A toolkit for transition to September was published in July and was based on the Government Guidance that was published at the time. This toolkit was produced by the Learning Access team in the Education Directorate and included a checklist of activities, risk assessment guidance and also set out the offer of support that the Directorate could provide over the coming months. Headteachers were briefed on this throughout July in virtual Locality Meetings.

3.5 Chairs of Governors were briefed by the Interim Head of Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on July 16th and concerns from Governors noted. It was agreed that all Governing Bodies would approve the re-opening plans of their schools. Summaries of these plans were then submitted to the Education Directorate. Table 1 summarises the main themes in these plans.

Table 1

Issue Raised	Mitigation
Start times of schools may have to be staggered to prevent mass gatherings at gates and potential for Covid spread.	This is in the Government Guidance and is permitted.
Removal of Free Travel may mean that pupils cannot attend school	Schools suggested using Pupil Premium Grant for vulnerable families.
Pupils may not be able to attend school on time due to public transport restrictions.	LBC will liaise with RSC on this issue.
PPE for staff	Within government guidance published at the time. LBC agreed to purchase and distribute a PPE starter kit for schools for close proximity encounters.
Pupil Bubbles	Government Guidance set outlines for bubble sizes. School should mitigate as far as possible in their risk assessments how these will be managed, such as zoning schools, pupil bases and so on.
Deep cleaning	Schools may contextually close early to ensure deep cleaning is in place.
Wraparound care	Schools to liaise as far as possible with parents to outline the resources they have in place.
Attendance to school	All pupils are expected to return to school. Schools should work on a case by case support plan before referring to LBC for Penalty Notice issue.
Staff Safety	School leaders should consider re-deployment of staff at risk within the school and liaise with appropriate trade unions and professional associations
Catch-up	The Recovery Curriculum plan is being led by the headteacher of All Saints CE School. This will cover Pupil wellbeing, black lives matter, catch up.
How should the school deal with potential outbreaks	PHE will issue guidance on steps to take should there be a local lockdown or what to do when there are suspected and then confirmed cases within the school setting. PHE consultants will also be on hand to support staff training in September.
Safeguarding disclosures	Safeguarding training at the beginning of term will highlight the possible increase in safeguarding disclosures. School Effectiveness Partners and Officers from the LA will be on hand to support.

3.6 Throughout the planning for September, there were consultative groups that involved headteachers, and through them parents, and Professional Associations and Trade Unions.

3.7 Clear communication was highlighted between schools and parents to be re-enforced by Comms and media from the LA. An example of this was including all steps in the Local Offer webpage.

3.8 The Education Directorate also agreed to continue the family support programme for vulnerable families (including those with no recourse to public funds) led by the Pupil Wellbeing team in the Education Directorate.

3.9 Review of all school summary re-opening plans and challenge where appropriate (only one school at the time of writing has had this conversation with the Standards Team and the team are satisfied with the approach that has been taken).

3.10 Officers and Advisers from the Education Directorate have been on hand over the Summer closure to answer any concerns or anxieties. These were then relayed to the RSC as part of their wider consultation agenda.

3.11 Transport for London Guidance was shared with schools. More detail on this can be seen in the transport section. Schools agreed to monitor the impact of this and feedback to the Education Directorate as appropriate.

3.12 Update on re-opening from School Leaders on 1st September and areas for monitoring

<p>1. Schools have welcomed the centralised supply of PPE starter Packs. School risk assessments and opening plans have been signed off by Governing Bodies. Professional Associations and Trade Unions have worked closely in a constructive and supportive way throughout the Covid period to date through regular contact with the Interim Head of Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.</p>
<p>2. June wider provisioning, where education was extended from Key Worker and Vulnerable children was in many ways a trial run for September allowing schools to focus on their routines and rituals for pupils returning.</p>
<p>3. Schools are applying Central Government guidance in their own Context, as suggested by the Guidance. That means that schools will phase the return of pupils to ensure compliance with Covid-19 Secure practices. Schools will also be staggering opening times and end times for pupils to ensure safety of pupils and staff. Some secondary schools are basing pupils in one room (except for specialist lessons) where teachers will move to pupils.</p>
<p>4. Local Authority Officers and Advisers will return to the regular contact with headteachers with a scheduled return to school visit by the LA in October.</p>
<p>5. Public Health Consultants have been working with schools on Covid-19 safety training. Schools have welcomed this.</p>

6. The curriculum recovery plan, which has a focus on catch-up, closure, trauma work, Black Lives Matter and Mental Health awareness has been led by the Headteacher of All Saints CE school.
7. Additional project funding (the Trailblazer project and Young Londoner funding and the Social Worker in Schools Plan) has been stepped up to support pupils and staff returning to school. DSL training and safeguarding training has been prioritised in schools for any disclosures that will come post-lockdown.
8. Schools are acutely aware that the Pandemic is not over, just that the country has stepped into a different phase of response. In continuing 'Walking Alongside' our schools and school leaders the LA will maintain the social capital built on during the first phase of lockdown.
9. Pupils in all groups (CLA, Ethnicity, Gender PPG) will be included in any future analyses.
10. Schools have in place detailed remote learning plans should local lockdowns be initiated.

4.1 TfL proposed suspension of free travel for under 18s

4.2 Local authorities continue to have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible children of compulsory school age, including children who attend their nearest suitable and whose special educational needs and disabilities mean they are unable to walk there.

4.3 Transport for London (TfL) has proposed the suspension of free travel for under 18s which has been in place since 2006.

4.4 Ongoing discussions are taking with TfL regarding the proposed suspension of free travel for under 18s. TfL is working with the Department for Transport to finalise the process for the required changes so that it is in place by the October half term, however it is recognised that this deadline is still challenging and the situation is constantly changing.

4.5 London Councils has been coordinating borough input into the ongoing discussions between TfL and Government about how and when the proposal could be implemented

4.6 Discussion has taken place with the Regional Schools' Commissioner's office, who have liaised with the DfT and TfL. Schools have also had sight of this. The consensus conclusion is that careful monitoring will have to take place when this steps into operation.

4.7 In response to the discontinuation of free school travel, the majority of schools have taken the decision to divert monies from the pupil premium grant to pupils of families in receipt of this to pay for travel to school. TfL issued the following guidance:

4.8 <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/schools-and-young-people/travel-guidance-for->

[schools?cid=reopeningeducation](#)

4.9 TfL have set up a dedicated webpage for education which will be regularly updated at: <https://tfl.gov.uk/reopeningeducation> . This webpage has some useful resources to help local authorities and schools plan return safely and sustainably.

4.10 From 1 September TfL are planning to:

- Add over 230 extra buses to the network to bolster some of the busiest low-frequency routes for schoolchildren to travel on, including adding more vehicles to our existing school bus services
- In addition, designate some existing regular buses as School Services, which would be prioritised for school travel and would operate at full seated capacity, as is permitted by Government guidelines for school bus services.

Pupils who are delayed in getting to school regularly through this plan

4.11 Safeguarding of children and young people on these services from commuters who feel it is their 'right' to board to get to work. This has been fed to the RSC to liaise with the appropriate bodies.

4.12 These have been shared with Croydon JAG, Town and District Centres and other relevant working groups. All will feed in to the education team should any issues arise.

Social distancing guidance / managing capacity and demand on public transport

4.13 With the return of all year groups to schools this September, it is likely that when these trips are added back onto the transport network, the demand for some modes will outstrip supply due to the requirements of social distancing requirements.

4.14 The application of social distancing measures to public transport has caused a significant reduction in effective capacity, which provides a challenge in routinely transporting children to and from schools. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, buses and trains are currently only able to carry around half their usual number of passengers.

4.15 Croydon is liaising with key stakeholders, such as TfL, schools and parents/carers regarding local transport provision to ensure compliance with social distancing guidance and its responsibilities in supporting pupils to travel to and from school safely. As part of the return to school TfL are closely monitoring the bus network, and looking to intervene where they can with our suggestions and adjust services as far as possible to ensure they reflect new and changing travel patterns.

4.16 Schools start and finish times have been staggered to help social distancing and help take the pressure off at peak travel times. In addition, sustainable travel options, such as walking, cycling are being encouraged to help free up more space on public transport for others

4.17 The government has now published new guidance for local councils and families regarding children and young people travelling to school. To make sure that there is enough space on the public transport network for people travelling to work and higher education, school pupils who previously used the public transport network are being asked to find a

different way to get to school if possible.

4.18 Croydon will be surveying parents/carers to find out their travel plans for their child/ren's return to school. This will also help identify which public transport routes will be the busiest in September.

5.1 PLANNING FOR ADDITIONAL SPIKES IN NEED (NON-COVID)

5.2 A task and finish group consisting of key officers and advisers. The possible spikes and support are below in Table 2.

Table 2.

Spikes set against recent dips
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional Behavioural need – separation anxiety; reaching out and reassure; Elective Home Education (continuing with home learning)• Educational Health & Care Plan – pent up demand not anticipated, though spike in holidays usual – can SENCOs evidence? Deferred to autumn term?• Assessment places – will pupils secure EHCP? Size of cohort?• Not in Education Employment or Training – 6th form/colleges – will people go? Will college cases be viable?• Post-lockdown safeguarding risks – teenage pregnancy, drugs• Unhealthy lifestyles – food, exercise, obesity• Post-lockdown trauma – raising awareness; bereavement; mental health; Domestic Abuse;• Educational Psychology assessments – creative ways of assessing, unlikely to be in school soon, remote consultations• Exclusions – unofficial exclusions; re-establishing routine an issue; re-teaching routines; alternatives;• Impact of missed work - School refusal; catch up anxiety; behaviour• A key flowchart of action and guidance documents should there be any suspected or confirmed cases of Covid in educational settings has been published to schools in July.• All headteachers briefed by Public Health Consultants and the Director of Public Health.

6.1 SWOT ANALYSIS

6.2 Table 3 shows the SWOT analysis.

Table 3

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June wider opening acted as a shakedown of issues. • Planning and contingencies of school leadership have ensured schools will open. • LA links to communities, schools and wider stakeholders has allowed issues to be resolved quickly. • Supportive working from trade unions and professional associations • Flexibility of Mental Health resourcing. • The LA ‘Walking Alongside’ schools agenda through the pandemic. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent and late guidance from central government has hindered effective publication of plans from schools. • Miscommunication or misrepresentation from media on expectations of schools re-opening.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focussed opportunity to further the Trauma Informed work around Croydon Schools. • Greater collaboration between types of school. • A focus on the social skills of pupils and their mental health. • Renewed focus on the secondary academic year 2020 to ensure destinations are maintained. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in parental complaints to schools over deep cleaning closures or wraparound care not taking place. The guidance is clear that schools should operate contextually in this area and may not be able to resource this. Parents should be made aware of this. • Press/ social media coverage of any outbreaks in schools that are unconfirmed. • Reduced central LA resourcing to carry out preventative work rather than statutory work. • Additional resources to combat Covid may lead more schools into financial risk. There is a DfE Emergency fund but this may not cover all expenditure.

Croydon Council

7.1 CONSULTATION

There are no needs for consultation arising from this report.

8.1 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

8.2 This item will be discussed on the 7th September 2020

9.1 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

There are no direct financial considerations or risks associated with this report.
To Be Approved by Lisa Taylor – Director of Finance, Investment and Risk.

10.1 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Head of XXXXX comments on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance that xxxxxx

To Be Approved by Sean Murphy - Director of Law and Governance

11.1 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

There are no direct Human Resources considerations arising from this report for Council employees. Should there be a future need to make any changes within the schools workforce, as a result of School Improvement Plan, then this would be handled by the relevant schools' governing body in accordance with their HR policy and procedures.

To Be Approved by Nadine Maloney - Head of HR

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

As the quality of Croydon's schools continues to improve there is a positive impact for all pupil groups, including the most disadvantaged. Schools continue to be challenged to set demanding targets for the achievement of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant and are expected to demonstrate the impact this funding has to close the gap between these pupils and their peers.

The work, commissioned through Octavo, of the inclusion team supports achievement amongst the most vulnerable groups of pupils, including white working class boys and girls, those with English as an Additional Language, traveller children and asylum

seekers / those newly arrived to the country. The evidence shows that whilst there is still a gap between white working class children, children of Caribbean heritage and white / Caribbean dual heritage children and their peers the gap is narrowing. The team is focusing on closing the gap for Black Caribbean and Pupil Premium pupils in the borough at KS2.

Children Looked After by the Local Authority make good progress from often low starting points. Whilst attainment for this cohort of pupils appears low this includes the very large number of young people recently arrived from overseas. Funding for the Virtual School for Children Looked After will continue to provide support, guidance and challenge for this group of learners and their schools in order to continue the upward trajectory in the progress they make.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

15. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

This report is for information and there are no recommendations other than to note its contents. The report has been included on the agenda for the next relevant scrutiny committee.

16. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not relevant.

CONTACT OFFICER: Shelley Davies, Director of Education and Youth Engagement.(Interim)
Michael McKeaveney – Head of Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion (Interim)

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: None