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Introduction

There are things to celebrate and note in this bulletin and although I am sure you will ponder every word, I would like to emphasise Mike Sewell's note of thanks to our finance teams in schools and centrally. We had unmitigated praise from the auditors and the effectiveness of our systems and teams is something that we are proud of. Well done SBMs and Finance Team. You will also see that North Somerset Schools have an opportunity to draw funding in for Academic Mentors. The underperformance in the county that triggers this opportunity is not in our schools, but the finance is available to us. Please ensure that you have understood what you can draw down.

Headteachers (and by extension a great many others in leadership and governance) have been the most extraordinary civic leaders in this rolling pandemic. I thought this again yesterday as Richard Riordan at Portishead Primary dealt with our first Omicron case and battled with confused and confusing advice from the public health bodies. I am very aware of the cumulative strain that leading in a pandemic is putting us under. The end of term is coming not a second too soon and I really do urge everyone to come away from your emails and look for time to recover physically, mentally and spiritually. Thank you for your work, guidance and leadership. I hope that everyone can find the glad tidings of the season in their time with family and friends.

Merry Christmas,

Gary

Attendance advice - increases in term time holiday requests

- The Department for Education has made it clear that students need to be back in school after months of missed on site education. The regulations have therefore returned to the pre-pandemic rules.
- Anything over four days unauthorised should attract a recommendation for a Fixed Penalty.
- Parents reporting needing time out as a family after pandemic (say for skiing holiday) is not an acceptable reason to be out of school - they should do this in school holidays.
- Not seeing grandparents, whilst sad, is not a good reason to be out of school - they could travel in the school holidays.
- That a family state that they cannot afford to travel in school holidays is not a good reason to be out of school in term time.

Anomalies that might meet the criteria for exception:

- Parents getting married (significant family event) combining with holiday. We can authorise the day of the wedding and, if overseas, a day travel either side but the rest unauthorised and if those days exceed 4 then that should attract a FP request. We would need proof of function and schools are expected to dig a little and test what the parents are saying.
- Grandparent terminally ill - last time to see them - tricky but in this instance school should use discretion; dependant on length some of it could be authorised and some not (say 5 days auth and 5 not if two weeks requested - would be unlikely to attract a FP but the school would need to be satisfied it is genuine.
- Armed Forces - not a grey area. Holiday authorised.
- Family requesting holiday before chemo (or other circumstances relating to terminal illness) for first degree relative (parent/sibling) - holiday authorised.
- NHS/Keyworkers - technically not exempt but schools could get proof from employers in writing (and then followed with a call to the letter writer) saying this was the only time they could take holiday due to say hospital pressures. We are sorry to report that some letters have been forged.

- Fire/police - school's discretion - again with proof. Likely to be authorised.

Shana Roberts (Attendance Officer at Gordano School) has confirmed that she is happy to offer advice smroberts@gordanoschool.org.uk. As a school with more than 2,000 pupils, Gordano are applying our policy every day.

Thank you to all Finance Staff

The Trustees recently met with our External Auditors to hear feedback from this year's audit. We received a very positive report and particular emphasis was placed on the significant improvements that have been made in our financial processes, both throughout the year and at the year end. The Trustees recognise that this improvement has come about through the collective hard work and dedication of finance staff right across the Trust. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, to thank you for all of your efforts and to share with you our pride in what you have achieved. We hope that you can enjoy a well-deserved break over the Christmas period.

Thank you,

Mike Sewell, Trustee and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Annual Planner - Key items for Terms 1 and 2

The Annual Planner is available to help us all to be aware of, and plan for, key activities during the year. Some of the key pieces of work for schools in Terms 3 and 4 are:

Respond to consultation on the following updated policies:

4th to 28th January	19th January to 15th February
Teacher Appraisal policy	Core Services Charge for 2022-23
Support Staff Appraisal policy	Scheme of Delegation for 2022-23

- Undertake Y6 2019 SATs suite week beginning 10th January
- Respond to request to analyse significant variance in actual to projected revenue outturn for 2020-21 (to be returned by 14th January)
- Raise any concerns with the M&E and condition surveys to Hub Estates Leads by 14th January
- Complete Spring School Census 20th January and submit by 16th February. Please ensure that summary report is signed and dated by the Headteacher and send a copy to LSPfinance@lsp.org.uk
- Share Teacher Assessment with Governors and upload onto Insight for EYFS, PSC, KS1, Y1, Y3, Y4, Y5, Y6 (SATs), and KS4 (current attainment grades) by 31st January
- Update Self Evaluation section on Behaviour and Attitudes and forward to DOE and Governors by 31st January
- Review Website Compliance Return to Trust by 31 January
- Pupil progress meetings and target setting mid year review week beginning 7th February
- Spreadsheet for Headteachers to indicate any incremental progression for support staff sent out by 1st February and due to be returned by 4th March.
- Monitor H&S compliance from Every and outcomes and actions from H&S visits in line with LGB dates
- AGM 16th February
- Review Risk Register for school to be returned to central team by 11th March for review by A&R Cttee

Applying for additional SCA funding

Given the condition issues across our school estate, only significant condition issues will be addressed through the 5-year SCA programme. Whilst it is really important that we continue to prioritise these significant condition issues, there are likely to be other projects that could have a huge impact on the outcomes or wellbeing of our children and young people, or staff, that are not likely to be identified for funding for a considerable number of years.

Each year we now set aside a small proportion of our SCA funding for these more developmental projects. The amount of funding for this purpose will be determined annually and will depend on the funding available and the cost of addressing the most serious condition issues in our school estate. The funding available in the 2021-22 financial year is £50,000.

SCA funding can only be used to address building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency or health and safety issues and therefore any additional projects must also meet these criteria.

Rather than create a bureaucratic process that requires significant work for both the schools and the Central Team we will utilise Estates Development Plans that you may already have in place, or can develop between now and the application point. Schools will be able to apply for this funding for projects between £2.5k and £30k in a Primary School and £15k to £50k in a Secondary School.

We will need to know the following information:

- Description of the project
- Estimated cost
- Impact on outcomes or wellbeing and for what group e.g. pupils, staff, community
- Proposed timescales
- Whether any other funding sources are available and what they are

If all of this information is already available in your Estates Development Plan, then you will only need to provide this plan to apply for funding and a breakdown of the planned use of your devolved capital. If the information above is not in your Estates Development Plan, then it will need to be provided in addition. Estates Development Plans need to have been approved by your local governing body (LGB) before they can be used to support this application.

A [proforma](#) that you could use as an Estates Development Plan is available if you do not already have one and a [proforma](#) to demonstrate the planned use of you devolved capital is also available.

Applications for this funding need to be submitted by 29th April 2022.



Reading Fluency Intervention

Please click [here](#) for details of the reading fluency intervention as detailed in the HT Briefing and click [here](#) to download the agreement form.

National Tutoring Programme

A reminder that there is a recording of the very important HT briefing about how to access this very significant funding on Foldr ([LSP Primary Headteachers/Trust Wide/HT SI Briefings 2021-22](#)).

I have now signed the MOU for the Trust and Jane Higgins from NTP will be uploading the details of all LSP schools to the system.

North Somerset Schools are able to employ Academic mentors and receive almost full funding for this and you should make this a priority.

Keep up with news on this at:

<https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/events/>

Here is a [link](#) to the other key document from the briefing.

Sharon

Supporting Anxious Children in Your Schools

The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health organisation are running a free online event, entitled:

Anxiety; Cues, Plumes and Support for Young People in School -Ask the Expert

“It will offer insights into the latest evidence-based, together with practical advice to help you help your pupils and your own children”

This webinar event (27th Jan) can be booked at [Anxiety; Cues, Clues & Support for Young People in School - Ask the Expert - ACAMH](#)

Introducing Four Threads to Support Anxious Children

This short CPD or coaching session has been written by our Lead Teacher for SEND, Andy Baker and can be commissioned by schools. It uses the same framework as the webinar above based on the work of Prof Cathy Cresswell. Resources freely available from the Internet linked to each of the threads (‘my body’s worry system; shifting attention techniques; being curious like a scientist; getting to my ‘one-day-I-will’ goal’).

For more information, contact Andy Baker abaker@lsp.org.uk

RUH YOUNG PEOPLES CLIMATE ART EXHIBITION

The RUH Sustainability Team, in collaboration with FACE, the Schools Climate Network and Art at the Heart RUH organisations, is hosting a young peoples COP26 art exhibition.

To take part in the exhibition, create a thought-provoking piece of art in any medium, including digital, to show what a healthy planet would look like if you were in charge!

It's a chance for you to make your voice heard, and to inspire the many staff and visitors to the hospital to protect our planet.

Artwork should be:

- On A4 or A3 paper, with your name, age and school or club on the back (not the front).
- Emailed as photo to ruh-tr.sustainabilityteam@nhs.net or post original artwork to the address below or deliver to RUH Atrium Reception by 21st January 2022.
- Photos will be shown on social media and original artworks will be selected for display at the RUH exhibition in the New Year!
- All framed works will be available for purchase, all donations will support the RUH Artsparks children's ward charity projects.

Thank You!



art at the *heart* of the RUH

Funds donated to 'Artsparks' projects on the RUH Children's Ward

Your artwork could inspire people to take action!

COP 26 Art, Sustainability Team
E9, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS
Foundation Trust
Combe Park
Bath, BA1 3NG

Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19

From Tuesday 14 December, a new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 is being introduced (including until the end of this term). All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 - whether Omicron or not - should take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days instead of self-isolating. Daily testing by close contacts will help to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 will help protect education settings by reducing transmission and will also help keep pupils in face-to-face education.

Once notified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, all eligible staff, pupils and students should take an LFD each day for 7 days and report the results through the [Online Reporting System](#) and to their school. If they test negative, they can continue to attend school. Outside of school, they should continue to follow the advice set out in the [Sunday 12 December press release](#). This approach should also be adopted over the winter break and on return in January.

If they test positive, they should self-isolate and [order a PCR test](#) to confirm the result. If the PCR is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days. If the PCR test is negative, they no longer need to self-isolate but should continue to carry out the remainder of the daily tests, and only need to isolate if it is positive.

All staff and secondary aged pupils and students should have access to a box of 7 LFD tests from their school. If you requires additional test kits sooner than they would be available through the standard ordering process, or will run out of test kits imminently, you can contact 119 to request an emergency replenishment. For primary aged children [LFD test kits are available through the usual routes](#) (community test sites, local pharmacies or online).

Children under five years old do not need to take part in daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 and do not need to isolate.

Anyone over the age of 18 years and 6 months who is not vaccinated, must isolate in line with government guidelines if they are a close contact of a positive case.

For students with SEND who struggle to or are unable to self-swab daily for 7 days, schools should work with students and their families to agree an appropriate testing route, such as assisted swabbing. Information on further support measures will be provided.

Finally, it is important to continue regular twice weekly, at-home testing for all education and childcare workforce and all students of secondary age and above.

A flowchart is available [here](#) for this new approach.

At 3.00pm today we received further guidance from the DfE which says 'From today, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 to 18 years and 6 months identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, are strongly advised to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result'. It does not, however, say if self isolation is required if they do not take up the advice to take daily LFDs. We are urgently following this up and will update you by email as soon as we have received clarification.

We have also been informed that nothing has changed in respect of national guidance on contact tracing in schools, Test and Trace continue to lead this and there is no expectation of schools to support with it routinely. In an outbreak situation schools may be asked to work with public health to do this but this will be in exceptional circumstances only. However, this does not appear to be working effectively and is not being applied consistently across the country. Again, we will update you again as we receive further clarification.

FINANCE UPDATES

Budget Monitoring

Thank you again to School Business Managers, and any other staff involved, for producing your first budget monitoring report for the 2020-21 financial year. The Central Team have now checked your submissions for reasonableness and have collated the information for the Board of Trustees meeting on 21st December. The outcome of our checks can be found on Foldr or by using this [link](#). Please enter your LA and DfE number to find the information for your school. Please be aware that we do not have sufficient information to determine whether your projections are completely accurate or not. Checks have been carried out for reasonableness and information has been provided to indicate any areas that may need further investigation to ensure that your projections are accurate.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Central Team.

Outcome of revenue outturn position at the end of the 2020-21 financial year and analysis required

The audit and the Annual Accounts completion process is now complete and your final revenue and capital balances are available in both a new Income and Expenditure Scenario and a Revised Budget Forecast in Orovía.

In total our revenue balances at the end of the 2020-21 financial year are over £3.2m. This is over £1m higher than was estimated when schools last formally submitted their projections to the Board of Trustees in April, an increase of approximately 33%. We are aware that these balances include unspent earmarked funds of £282k (including Covid Catch up funding and PE & Sports Premium, etc) and this will be part of the variance.

However, as we did last year, we are asking those schools with the largest variances (i.e. schools where the estimated revenue outturn position varies to that submitted in April by more than £20,000 or 3% of their annual funding, whichever is the lower) to review their final revenue outturn against their April monitor. We are excluding earmarked funds from the variance calculations. We have prepared the downloads to share with these schools to help with this process.

The purpose of this review will be to:

- Ensure that there is an understanding at school, LGB and Trust level of why any significant variation between earlier projections and the actual outturn have occurred.
- Identify any changes in practices required at an individual school level, or at Trust level, to our processes and procedures and for this to inform our investigation into alternative budget planning and monitoring software.

- Identify and resolve any training issues.

If this applies to your school, you will be contacted this week and asked to complete the review, using the template provided, by Friday 14 January in order for an analysis to be reported to the Finance Committee on Tuesday 25 January.

FOCUS ON GOVERNANCE

Governance Update

SOURCE: THE KEY:

- Only 8% of pupils have started catch-up tuition. Heads saying the scheme is too complex for schools (Tes)
- Ofsted Inspections cancelled w/c 13/12 so schools can prepare for Omicron (Schools Week). Secondary schools will not be inspected T3 week 1 to allow pupil testing. Only Safeguarding concerns will override this.
- Legal Action against MSI provider SIMS considered by 100 schools (Tes)
- Children as young as 7 are being bombarded with harmful online sexual material (The Guardian).
- School Leadership supply “on the brink” as headship aspiration plummets (School Week).
- MPs’ want mental health support teams extended to every school in 6 years (Schools Week).

SOURCE: NGA:

- Ofsted Annual Report 20-21 released: [2020-21 annual report](#)
Amanda Spielman: “schools once again need to become places where children can enjoy a rounded experience”.
Report highlights many areas of education monitored throughout the year and systematic improvements to be taken forward.
- DfE announce delayed review into SEND will be published Q1 2022.
- Opportunity to have your say in review of NGA’s 20/21 Questions.
- NGA Learning Link: New suite of modules for Clerks launched. Starts with “What does the Governance Professional Do?” along with an introduction to the Clerking Programme. 7 further modules will be launched early in the New Year.

SOURCE: DfE:

- National Tutoring Programme: Academic Mentors: now welcoming applications from schools where PP is more than 30%, regardless of location.
- Education Recovery: Early Years: Opportunity to be involved in Phase 2 of Early Years Professional Development Programme. As well as early language and maths, Phase 2 will equip practitioners with the skills they need to provide high quality support and teaching on personal, social and emotional development; to children most at risk of being left behind.
Targeted at 51 LA’s, to find out more visit Education Development Trust’s website; register by 17/12/21.