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Education Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you've had a good weekend.

Last week the Education Committee proposed a range of measures to reverse the worrying trend of children's absence from school. In its new report the cross-party Committee explores how growing demand for mental health services and special educational needs (SEND) support, as well as cost-of-living pressures and other issues, have compounded a problem that worsened following the covid lockdowns but remains present. [Read the full report \(PDF\)](#)

Also published last week is a new report titled '[Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis](#)' which attempts to address the question of why attendance is in crisis by listening to families, parents and carers. It is worth a read if you have not seen already for thinking and re-thinking approaches and how we communicate with our families and children.

We have started a fresh approach to working with you to support children who cannot attend school. Previously referred to as Section 19 cases, we now have the Children who Cannot Attend School (CCAS) Panel. I am chairing this panel initially on a weekly basis to review the existing cohort and identify actions for new cases. We are working as quickly as we can and involving other agencies and partners as necessary. Once we have finalised terms of reference/operation and referral protocols we will be sending out further communication and this term our website is being developed to reflect guidance, process and resources for schools.

Wishing you all the best for the week ahead.

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Latest education news and updates

School leavers - reminder to schools

As a statutory requirement all schools are expected to advise WCF of in-year leavers and choose an appropriate reason for de-rolling via the Childrens Services Portal. These notifications also need to include children who leave the school during the summer holidays due to changing schools, moving away/leaving the country, moving into the Independent sector, or where parents have chosen to Electively Home Educate (EHE).

The Children's Commissioner has recently contacted all local authorities to undertake an exercise in confirming children's destinations who were at a school in the January 2022 census but not in the January 2023 census. Whilst providing the data for this response, it has become evident that Worcestershire children who have a change of circumstances during the summer holidays are the most likely not to be notified to us and as such, we are asking that if a school is aware of a child that has moved away/left the country, changed schools, entered the independent sector, or left to EHE during the recent (and future) summer holidays, a portal leaving notification is completed as soon as possible. Please do not send notifications for children transitioning between phases unless the child is no longer transitioning to their expected/allocated school due to the reasons above.

School attendance

Attendance Support Helpline

The Education Engagement Team operate a telephone helpline service to assist with any attendance or CME enquiries. The helpline is open daily, during term time between 9am - 12.30pm and 1pm - 4.30pm and can provide attendance casework advice, advisory guidance and support, as well as relevant signposting.

The attendance helpline number is 01905 844 440.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence

To support schools considering the use of penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence in term time we have recorded a short presentation: [Unauthorised Leave of absence - YouTube](#)

The presentation outlines the requirements upon schools before requesting the LA considers the issue of a penalty notice and provides clear guidance of the evidence required. It is imperative schools meet all required legal standards to avoid requests being returned with no further action.

Effective Governance to Support School Attendance - Training

We are pleased to offer a new attendance training course for governors this term:

Course number: 10429

Session code: 83956

Course title: Effective Governance to Support School Attendance

Course date: Tuesday 28th November 2023, 6-8pm

Venue: County Hall – Kidderminster Room

Course Description: This training course explores the role of governors in ensuring schools are meeting their statutory duties relative to attendance. As schools are required to deliver the expectations within DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance, this course will enable governors to provide support and challenge to drive improvement. The course aims to assist governors to:

- Champion and support the promotion of attendance through policy and ethos
- Ensure attendance expectations and statutory duties are met
- Review data, challenge trends and support leaders to focus on strategies towards improvement
- Ensure staff receive adequate training and access to good practice guidance

Course fee: £68pp with Governor Services SLA / £95pp without a Governor Services SLA

Places will be limited. Bookings for this training course should be made in the usual way, via your clerk to governors via the CPD website.

For any enquiries please contact: governorservices@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Attendance Poster Design Competition

Thank you to all schools and settings who promoted and took part in the attendance poster design competition. We have received an overwhelming amount of fantastic poster designs and amazing slogans, of a very high standard. We look forward to announcing the winners next week.

Edenred Portal access will be available for the October Half Term Holiday

During the October Half Term holiday, eligible students will receive free school meals through the voucher system provided by Edenred. Edenred is the council's contracted provider to issue free school meal vouchers for the school holidays, and no other platforms are authorised to issue them. Starting from the October Half Term holiday, the council will implement a new policy regarding the expiry date of free school meal vouchers to ensure efficient budget management. All vouchers issued from October onwards will have a validity period of **one month** from the date of the order. Schools are instructed to issue vouchers only for the corresponding holiday period.

Schools will have access to the Edenred portal from **Monday 16th October 2023** until **Friday 10th November 2023**. This will allow a window for placing orders for the October Half Term holiday. Vouchers cannot exceed **£15** per eligible FSM pupil for the whole period.

Vouchers are not available for nursery age children or 6th form students, and vouchers must not be ordered to replace term time meals.

You must use the WCC ordering site with your existing WCC account (22463), the login page can be accessed here: [Edenred Online Ordering](#)

Please ensure you have the correct recipient email address and that parent/carers are notified they will be in receipt of a voucher to ensure they are expecting it and do not leave vouchers to expire.

To help monitor the vouchers issued under this scheme please can you ensure you include the URN or UKPRN for the school when placing the order.

No voucher which has previously been ordered and expired can be re-issued by schools. For any queries regarding the re-issuing of vouchers, email FSMHolidayVouchers@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

It is important to remind schools that as eligibility is linked to FSM status there maybe families who although have FSM status their circumstances have changed. This is a finite pot of government funding and with the government protection on FSM status, regardless of circumstance change, there are families that may no longer require the vouchers. Please ensure that vouchers are issued to those children and families who require the support and who are receiving FSM.

Below are lots of helpful links and guides to answer common questions and issues:

- Forgotten password – please reset your password using [password reset](#)
- Forgotten email address – contact FSMHolidayVouchers@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk and we will advise of the email address your account is set up with.
- Edenred [user guide](#) – including supermarket details and how to order.
- Order “pending” – you will need to agree to the terms and conditions and confirm your order for it to be processed.
- Order “held” – we will ensure any held orders are released.

- “Ordering window is closed” – please check you are logged into the correct portal. The DfE portal is closed, but the WCC portal is open.
- Redeem eCodes – Visit the Edenred [redeem eCodes webpage](#). Please note, we are unable to control which supermarkets you can redeem vouchers at.
- Once a voucher has been redeemed by a parent/carer, we are unable to assist with errors with the eCode itself. Queries will need to be directed either to the supermarket or Edenred. Please advise the parent/carer to check all the supporting information on their voucher email before raising a query.
- Parent/carer FAQ’s can be found here: [Parent Carer FAQs](#)

The [user guide](#) will answer many of your common questions and should be your first point of call for any queries. If after reading the user guide and links, you still need assistance then please contact FSMHolidayVouchers@worschildrenfirst.org.uk where we will be happy to help you.

Please be aware however that you will not receive an instant response as this inbox is one of many that are manned by our team. The fastest way therefore to resolve your issues will always be to read the guides and links in the majority of cases.

[Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme](#) at the County Council is available to signpost families to other local sources of support.

For support around the cost of living please signpost parents/carers to our [Cost of living support](#) webpage.

Latest news from settings

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust bids a fond farewell to Kate Brunt

After an illustrious career and nearly 40 years of dedicated service to education, we say a fond farewell to Kate Brunt, Chief Executive Officer at The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, who retired on Wednesday 20th September.



Throughout her years of leadership, Kate has exemplified an unwavering commitment to educational excellence and improving pupil outcomes for all. From her beginnings as a secondary school teacher to her time managing 9 pupil referral units in Worcestershire, Kate has positively impacted the lives of so many children and families.

Kate has an ethos of 'always learning' and is a school improvement partner for several MATs/SATs across the country. She is an Ofsted Inspector and has been a member of the West Midland's Advisory Board and the Department for Education's Headteacher Reference Group and is also a coach/mentor on the DfE's Trust to Trust Development programme.

In recognition of her distinguished career as a National Leader of Education and for the significant contribution she has made to education, Kate was recently awarded an Honorary University Fellowship by The University of Worcester.

We wish Kate all the best in this new chapter of her life.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust welcomes a new CEO



The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is pleased to announce the appointment of Matt Meckin as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Matt brings over 20 years of experience in education to the role and a proven track record of leadership and school improvement.

Perryfields Primary PRU wins IQM National Inclusion Champion Award



Perryfields Primary PRU in Worcester are one of eight schools securing the title of IQM National Inclusion Champion in the inaugural year of the award.

Each of the winning schools demonstrated excellence when it comes to inclusive practice. They have created welcoming schools where diversity is cherished and celebrated and have shown they are willing to work with other schools to spread the powerful message of inclusion across the UK.

Joe McCann, CEO of IQM extended his congratulations to each of the winners. He explained, "These eight schools exemplify everything IQM stands for. We are looking forward to working with each of you over the next 12 months to help share and promote inclusivity in schools all over the country."

This award was open to schools which hold IQM Flagship status.

[Find out more about the IQM Inclusive School Award](#)

If your school is interested in obtaining the IQM Inclusive School Award or you wish to talk to a member of the IQM team, please call 028 7127 7857 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm) or email: admin@iqmaward.com for further details.

Want more information on the IQM Award? [Click here to request your free IQM information pack](#)

Latest SEND news and updates

Dyslexia Awareness Week - 2nd to 8th October 2023

Dyslexia Awareness Week is taking place from 2nd to 8th October 2023. The theme this year is **Uniquely You** and the focus is on celebrating individuals with dyslexia from all walks of life.

Having dyslexia can be a challenging experience but it also brings with it many strengths and qualities that make dyslexic learners unique in many ways that are not always recognised. For further information visit the British Dyslexia Association website: [Dyslexia Awareness Week - British Dyslexia Association \(bdadyslexia.org.uk\)](https://bdadyslexia.org.uk) where you can find further information and resources to help you to introduce this topic in school. There are activities, posters and some Top Tips that can be shared with parents and carers.

Locally, the Hereford and Worcester Dyslexia Association can provide support to young people and their families. They run weekly workshops in Hereford, Worcester and Bromsgrove and also give advice and provide resources on their website: [Welcome to Hereford and Worcester Dyslexia Association - Hereford & Worcester Dyslexia Association \(hwda.org.uk\)](https://hwda.org.uk). You may also like to follow them on Facebook [HWDA | Facebook](#).

If you think a pupil in your school may have dyslexia, please contact the Learning Support Team for advice. They are able to assess pupils and give a formal identification of dyslexia where appropriate. The process and the paperwork to gather information can be found on their website at: [Learning Support Team | Worcestershire County Council](#). Please speak to them so that they can ensure that all pupils are receiving the correct support to meet their individual needs as they undertake a process of assessment. They are also able to talk to groups of parents from a school or cluster of schools if they are concerned about dyslexia.

If you have success stories to share, or if your school organises something special to promote Uniquely You, please share it with them via email at: LST@worcechildrenfirst.org.uk so that they can put it on the website for others to be inspired!

Latest health news and updates

Flu Vaccination Programme for school employees

Please read carefully and take immediate action

We are pleased to confirm our WCC Employee Flu Vaccination Programme is now accessible to all school employees including those working in maintained schools and academies. For those working in maintained schools and academies, who do not have a WCC or WCF ID number, you will need to bring a headed letter or payslip as proof of eligibility as well as providing the name of the organisation you work for when booking your vaccine.

We want to ensure you have access to a free flu vaccine to support your health and wellbeing.

NHS – Free Flu Vaccination

If you are eligible for a [free flu vaccination](#) via the NHS, please contact your GP or a pharmacy offering the service and ensure you receive your vaccination.

If you are not eligible for a flu vaccination via the NHS, please use our employee route and book a slot. We want to ensure you have had a vaccination.

Access to local community pharmacies from an approved list

You can [call one of our participating local community pharmacies](#) and book an appointment directly with them.

You will need your: Date of birth, Personal Reference (Payroll) Number (if a WCC/WCF employee) and GP Details. You will need identification when you attend which shows who you work for, this could be an ID Badge or a Payslip (electronic)

If you have any questions, please speak to your line manager who can assist in the first instance. If you still have a problem, please email HRAdvice&Guidance@worcestershire.gov.uk

Free Youth Suicide Prevention Conference - 11th October 2023

Please download from [Google Drive](#) details of a free youth suicide prevention conference for education leaders to be held on 11th October at Aston Villa Football Club.

The event (9am – 2.30pm) includes presentations on whole community approaches, a school's lived experience, measuring pupil wellbeing, clinical approaches to suicide prevention, school to school support plus workshop sessions.

Global Handwashing Day - Sunday 15th October

Global Handwashing Day takes place on Sunday 15th October this year. It's an annual day dedicated to promoting proper hand hygiene as an easy, effective, and affordable way to prevent diseases and save lives.

Recent years have reiterated how important good hand hygiene is to prevent the spread of infection, but it's important that this is maintained so that the people around us continue to be protected against infectious diseases. This is especially important as we go into winter months when illnesses like flu and norovirus are often circulating.

Although hand sanitisers are available, they are not effective against all germs. The most effective way to wash hands is with soap and water and then dry them thoroughly.

Public Health in Worcestershire have developed resources for schools and nurseries which includes a toolkit and posters to support education settings to promote good hand hygiene with children and young people. There are also some really great resources including lesson plans and activity sheets via the [e-bug](#) resources.

The toolkits for schools and nurseries can be accessed via the link below:

<https://bit.ly/WorcsEYandSchoolsResources>

For more information on Global Handwashing Day please visit [Global Handwashing Day - The Global Handwashing Partnership](#)

Immunisations and Vaccinations for Children in Worcestershire

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire would like to request your support in sharing a [Childhood Immunisation poster](#) with parent and carers.

The poster provides the contact number for the local vaccination team in Worcestershire for parents/carers where their child may have missed a school-aged vaccination, where they want to access flu vaccination for their child and for parents/carers of children with SEND who might not be attending school and therefore may have missed a school-aged vaccination.

Please display and share the [poster](#) where appropriate.

The Solihull Approach - Understanding your child's feelings

For parents or carers, who find themselves wanting to understand their child, and child's feelings, the FREE '[Understanding your child's feelings' course](#) can help.

This short course provides an introduction into understanding your child, their feelings and how to nurture their emotional development.

Parents can access this course for FREE by visiting [In Our Place website](#) and using the access code PARENTSROCK

MindSafe - Mental Wellbeing Platform for Pupils

Last academic year, we shared with you an offer of free access to the MindSafe mental wellbeing platform for pupils at your school.

MindSafe is a multi-award winning, safe and secure platform that can enable schools to provide the necessary resources and support to help pupils manage their mental health. Here are some of the tools it offers:

- Daily Mood Diary
- Journal
- Talk Feature
- Access to Help
- Discover It links to local services
- Qualified counsellor phone support
- Personalised Reports and more!

See how it works [here](#).

This extra layer of mental wellbeing support is still available to schools this year and we hope that you will consider this offer and take advantage of the opportunity.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Charlotte from MindSafe at charlotte@mind-safe.com.

You can also book to speak to the MindSafe team [here](#) or register your school to participate via the following link: <https://mind-safe.com/Register>.

Latest Government updates

Reminder to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance

[On 5 September, the Chief Medical Officer and leading health professionals wrote to schools to provide a clinical and public health perspective on mild illnesses and school attendance.](#)

The letter includes useful information for schools to pass onto parents including when it is appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with a mild illness.

The Department for Education is [encouraging schools to share the NHS 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance with parents and carers in their area which has further information.](#)

Teachers: claim back your student loan repayments

The window to apply to claim back student loan repayments is now open and eligible biology, chemistry, physics, computing and languages teachers

[Teachers: claim back your student loan repayments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Early-career payments for teachers

The window to apply for early career payments is now open and eligible chemistry, languages, mathematics and physics teachers can now apply for early-career payments.

[Early-career payments for teachers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Levelling up premium payments for teachers

The window to apply to claim a levelling up payment is now open for eligible chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers.

The 'List of eligible and non-eligible schools for levelling up premium payment' in the 'School eligibility and payment amount' section and the 'higher education classification of subjects (HECoS) code' file in the 'Qualification' section have also been updated.

[Levelling up premium payments for teachers](#)

Latest funding news

Funding for UK Schools to Organise Events During British Science Week 2024

Celebrating its 30th year, British Science Week (BSW) is an annual programme of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) events and activities. The funding is for activities and events taking place between 8 and 17 March 2024.

Applications are now open for the BSW Kick-Start Fund for Schools which aims to widen access to events and activities and help the learning and development of children through science and engineering-based activities. The following grants are available:

- Kick Start Grant - A grant of £300 for a school to run an activity during British Science Week.
- Kick Start Youth Grant - A grant of £150 for students aged 10-19 at a school to organise and deliver an activity during British Science Week.
- Kick Start More Grant - A grant of £700 for a school to host a science event or activity that involves their students and the local community. The community can include families/carers, members of local community groups, local businesses and the local press.
- Combined Kick Start Grant and Youth Grant - A grant of £450 for a school to run an activity during British Science Week and an additional activity organised and delivered by students aged 10-19.

Schools can now apply for both a Kick Start Grant and a Kick Start Youth Grant at the same time.

There are no restrictions on the activities or events that can be run using the funding and the grants can be used to cover costs such as CREST Award entry fees, consumables, small equipment, field trips, speakers, presenters, and outreach shows. State-funded, non-selective schools or colleges in the UK can apply.

To be eligible, schools must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Over 30% of pupils eligible for pupil premium or equivalent.
- Over 30% of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Be a small school based in a remote and rural location.

The deadline for applications is 6 November 2023 (23:59).

Apply now at [Kick Start Grants - British Science Week](#)

Latest training news and conferences

Subscribe to our emails

Keep up to date on the latest conferences, courses and events by joining our mailing list, in 3 easy steps:

1. Visit <https://newzapp.co.uk/clients/forms/wcf/>
2. Enter your details
3. Select your preferred categories

Once successfully signed up you will begin to receive marketing emails relevant to your interests on the latest education services, news, conferences, training and offers direct to your inbox.

Worcestershire Virtual School Training directory now available

Worcestershire Virtual School is dedicated to ensuring that all education settings within Worcestershire are Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Settings (TIAAS). TIAAS improves academic outcomes, attendance, and wellbeing. The Training team are supporting Worcestershire Virtual School with their TIAAS pathway in the following ways:

- A Virtual School training directory is now available on [our website \(opens in new window\)](#) that details all the Introduction, Level 1, 2 and 3 training available. This will be regularly updated.
- The Introduction and all Level 1 training are available to book directly via [CPD \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Any requests for the Introduction or Level 1 that have been previously made to Virtual School will be shared to the training team directly.
- All Level 2 and 3 course requests are still to go through to the Virtual School

Introduction to TiAAS

An opportunity to understand TiAAS (Trauma Informed Attachment Aware settings) within Worcestershire. We will be exploring how the ARC pathway can support schools and settings to gain formal, national recognition of your practice from Bronze, Silver, Gold through to Hub centre of excellence. The session will include:

- What does TiAAS mean to my setting?
- What is expected from me?
- What support can I get?
- This session will be led by Worcester Virtual School and WCF: Educational Psychology Team

Cost: Free to attend

- 13 November 2023, 3.30pm to 4.30pm, virtual delivery, course code 10428 / 83925
- Book via [CPD \(opens in new window\)](#) using your school CPD Leader login details

Adaptive Teaching - What, Why and How?

This is a practical, 2-part course designed for SENCos/Inclusion Leaders/Senior Leaders and will be delivered in a 'train the trainer' style. This will enable leaders to work with colleagues back in school to further enhance inclusive practice in the classroom.

Aims:

- To develop a secure understanding of adaptive teaching and what this looks like in practice.
- To understand how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn and how best to overcome these.
- To know when and how to adapt appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively.

Cost: £100 + VAT

- 20 November and 04 December 2023, 9am to 12pm, Worcester, course code: SCH 10405 / 83746
- Book via [CPD \(opens in new window\)](#) using your school CPD Leader login details

Autism training

The Autism training for October 2023 to July 2024 is now available for schools to book and includes several NEW and FREE courses for this academic year. If you would like to find out more either visit [CPD \(opens in new window\)](#) or download the [Schools Training Directory from our Training Website \(opens in new window\)](#)

- An introduction to Emotional Regulation for Autistic Learners
- Autism and Puberty
- Autism with Demand Avoidance caused by Anxiety
- Girls and Autism
- How to make scripts to help in social situations
- Masking and autism – **NEW AND FREE**
- Primary Schools: Creating an autism-friendly classroom - **Free**
- Secondary Schools: Creating an autism-friendly classroom - **Free**
- Understanding and Supporting Sensory Processing Differences in the Classroom - **NEW AND FREE**
- Using visual tools to reflect on social situations.

Other local news and events

Early Help in Worcestershire

Early Help in Worcestershire recognise how important it is that families know where to go and get help and support. The Family Hub can help you find the most appropriate support and information for the challenges family life can bring.

For more information about Early Help in Worcestershire, please visit:

<https://worcestershire.gov.uk/familyhub>

They have also created a booklet to help families find out about the help and support available in the county for children and young people aged 0-18 years old. This booklet will help you and families find the most appropriate support.

[Download Early Help in Worcestershire - Support for Families](#)

Careers and Apprenticeships Roadshows October 2023

A reminder that The Careers and Apprenticeship Roadshows returns this week on **Thursday 5th October at Sixways Stadium, Worcester.**

The Careers and Apprenticeship Roadshow is an opportunity for young people aged 15 to 24 who want to find out more about their education and career options and gather information about their next steps including Sixth Form, Further Education Colleges, T Levels, Apprenticeships and University. Each roadshow will provide young people with the opportunity to:

- Gather advice and information from our team of qualified career advisers
- Explore all of the career pathways available, from sixth form to further education colleges, T Levels, traineeships apprenticeships and university courses
- Meet with local employers to find out more about their industry and the opportunities available in your local area
- Find out about future careers events and the support that is available across Worcestershire

There will be a second roadshow at **HOW College in Redditch on Tuesday 17th October** for those that can't make Worcester on Thursday 5th October.

Both roadshow events will be from **4pm - 8pm.**

Arena Flowers Infinite Garden - Reminder

A reminder that Arena Flowers are looking to create an inspiring, educational space at their Droitwich HQ which can be used by schools and community groups to learn more about sustainability in floristry.

They want to ensure that it's a valuable resource from the get-go, so they need your help.

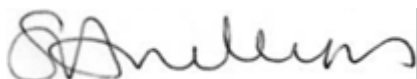
They're asking school representatives to join them at their fulfilment centre for an Infinite Garden Workshop where you'll get the opportunity to:

- Hear their Infinite Garden plans
- Provide input into the Infinite Garden and the learning curriculum
- Have a tour of the site
- Network with other local schools and community groups
- Build relationships with a local ethical business

The Infinite Garden Workshop will be held on Wednesday 11th October, 4pm to 5pm. They'd love to meet and welcome you to their site. Please get in touch with Jess, ESG Manager on Jessica.Latham@ArenaFlowers.com to confirm your availability.

All participants will receive a free bouquet to take home as a thank you.

Best wishes,



Sarah Wilkins

Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning

