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**149B Academy and School News and Resources Update, Jan 1-7 2022**

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**Covid follow up**

* The Chair of Ofqual **Ian Bauckham** has put forwards suggestions for ways of **coping with high staff absence** due to Covid-19.
* **Specialist subject teachers may need to be redeployed** in order to reduce pressure on staffing. "In cases where a specialist teacher rotates between classes to teach subjects that sometimes include for example PSHE, RSHE or music, it may be possible temporarily to suspend the teaching of that subject and use that teacher to teach classes whose normal teacher is absent and unable to teach remotely." *This idea has not been well received*
* **Practical subjects** normally taught in smaller groups for health and safety reasons may need to be taught in bigger classes with a more theoretical focus, to allow schools to prioritise GCSE and A Level students
* In some cases, teachers may need to **stream live lessons** from home to more than one class at the same time, including those in another part of the school, or to a different school in the same trust. In this scenario, he recommends:
	+ Adult supervision in each classroom where pupils are accessing the remote lesson
	+ Where this is impossible, combining classes "in a suitable larger space, such as a school hall, perhaps using examination desks"
	+ Focusing on revision/consolidation work, or starting a new topic or unit for all classes concerned
* School leaders will want to consider which **year groups** should be prioritised for "as routine a style of delivery as possible". "Classes preparing for public examinations, as well as some with SEND and early years, will be amongst our own priorities".
* Schools are reporting that they cannot access any **supply teachers**, and others say that they can, but they can’t afford them. This was especially problematic at primary level where smaller staff numbers meant it was difficult to provide cover internally. Half of respondents to a NAHT survey said they are using supply teachers to cover absences, but 37 per cent said they were unable to source the staff they needed. Some schools have introduced **internal supply systems**. For example, Active Learning Trust has established an “internal supply agency” to safeguard against future disruption. The trust will use its central team to plug gaps, with around eight qualified teachers ready to take over lessons and an additional 20 capable of filling support staff and data admin roles. The Roundhill academies in Leicester, use a staffing model where all staff have “capacity within their timetable to teach one extra lesson”. Meanwhile, some supply firms say the government’s call to arms for **retired teachers** to plug the gaps is making little impact. Many older teachers report that they are fearful of the potential increased risk of transmission in schools. Some teachers “think it is a voluntary scheme” and so are “surprised” to have to pay for a DBS. The two big things that slows it down is the DBS and the references.
* One of the questions being asked is **"if a parent tests positive for Covid can the child go to school?**" Advice on the government's website says anyone below the age of 18 years and six months is "not legally required to self-isolate" even if they live in the same household as someone who has Covid. So the answer for most pupils whose parent tests positive is that, if they don't have symptoms themselves, they would be able to go to school. The guidance "strongly advises" anyone over five years old, who is living in the same household as the infected person, takes a daily lateral flow test. This should be done "every day for seven days, or until 10 days after the household member who has Covid-19 started their self-isolation period if this is earlier." Official guidance says lateral flow tests should be taken before leaving home for the first time that day. If the test result is positive the government says you should then self-isolate.
* The DfE has **clarified the rules on returning to education settings following periods of isolation**. The last email to leaders, sent on Jan 2, stated that those who tested positive on a PCR test but who tested negative on lateral-flow tests on days six and seven of their isolation period could “return to your education setting from day 8”. But an email on Jan 5 stated that in fact, if both tests are negative and an individual does not have a high temperature, they may end their self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to their education setting “from day 7”.
* **Five education unions plan to challenge schools attempting to keep children in face-to-face learning** by following government advice to combine classes amid staff shortages. Nadhim Zahawi called for a “flexible approach to learning” to keep as many children in the classroom ahead of expected disruption from a surge in cases of the Omicron Covid variant. Updated government guidance advised schools “combining classes” was one solution. But a **“safety checklist**” from five teaching and support staff unions states this will only “increase virus transmission” and lead to “further disruption”. The advice – issued by the NEU, NASUWT, UNISON, GMB and Unite:
* Urges any teachers expected to accept pupils from other classes to “urgently” raise it with their union. The five unions say measures are needed to minimise mixing and “keeping groups as consistent as possible”. The NEU said, “No parent, child or young person wants to be taught by a teacher that is not qualified in the subject being taken for anything other than a short period. Nor would they see emergency cover being anything other than that and certainly not a long-term solution to a staffing problem.”
* The unions also add that teachers should “not routinely be expected to cover for absent colleagues nor should they be expected to teach pupils who they have not been assigned to teach”.
* They have also called for the return of one way systems and staggered lunch breaks should return.
* Teachers and other school staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable or pregnant should be able to work from home until more is known about the Omicron variant of Covid.
* Vulnerable staff to be offered the option of working in a non-front-facing role in schools with filtering face piece (FFP) masks provided.
* Household contacts of Covid should not to come into school until they have a negative PCR test result. .
* Large gatherings, such as whole-school or whole-year group/key stage assemblies, should be avoided or moved online.
* Face-to-face staff meetings and parents' evenings should also not take place. The unions call for these to be held online and to have appropriate social distancing maintained where there is no alternative to them being held in person.
* The guidance document says the advice is for use in schools for at least the start of the spring term of 2022 but will be kept under regular review See <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/01/Joint_union_checklist_Jan_2022.pdf>
* **Nadhim Zahawi** has addressed MPs about the return of pupils to school:
* He said more **air-cleaning units** would be ‘waste of money’, as CO2 monitors show that many rooms can be cleaned quickly and easily. Teacher Tapp found in December that around 4 per cent of respondents taught in a classroom with a CO2 reading of more than 1,500ppm, meaning the government’s allocation was “about right”. *But the pollsters also found that 47 per cent of primary teachers and 73 per cent of secondary teachers reported not having a CO2 monitor in their classroom – meaning the true figure may be higher, with schools adamant that they need more units.*
* At the end of last year, **staff absences** of about 8 per cent were reported, “and that’s probably likely to rise with increasing cases in school and of course young people as we return to school”.
* The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommended children aged **five to 11 in a “clinical risk group**”, or who are household contacts of someone who is immunosuppressed, should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine. Zahawi told MPs that any children in this category could get a jab “by the middle of this month”.
* The JCVI also recommended last month that a Pfizer booster be offered to vulnerable children aged **12 to 15**. Zahawi said these were “now on offer” through the NHS booking service, and that vaccinations in schools would resume next Monday.
* Zahawi said government had “already seen the first volunteer **returning teachers** heading back to our classrooms”. But he declined to give a figure for the number recruited through the scheme, saying he would “have a better idea on the exact number of how many former teachers have come forward to lend their support at the end of this week”.
* Zahawi said those settings that did place an order “will have received their **allocation of the 31 million tests** in advance of their pupils, students and staff returning through a dedicated supply channel”. It is not clear if he means 31 million tests, or 31 million test kits.
* Zahawi confirmed that **exams planned for this summer** would go ahead
* He has commissioned DfE staff to further research “the negative impacts of **face coverings** on education”. He said masks were “distracting for children at a time when they should be concentrating or listening to their teachers”. But overall he said they are a “sensible, pragmatic and proportionate thing to do” and hopes “that data will allow us to ditch masks in class” from January 26.
* Ofsted has said it will **resume school inspections next week** using only its full-time HMI staff. It has said schools that are significantly affected by Covid staff absence can request an inspection deferral and says this will decided on a case-by-case basis. Ofsted has just over 10 per cent of its usual inspection workforce to call on over the next few weeks, meaning far fewer schools will be visited than expected. Ofsted inspections of initial teacher training **(ITT**) providers will also resume this month.
* Headteachers have reported struggling with **staff absence rates** of 10 per cent or more as schools across the UK reopened following the Christmas break. One-third of schools had more than one in ten staff off already, with warnings that absence rates will continue to rise. A NAHT survey of around 2,000 leaders found 36 per cent reported more than ten per cent of their total staff absent on the first day of term. A quarter reported more than ten per cent of their teaching staff absent on the first day – with nine per cent warning they had one in five teachers absent. The **NAHT** said, “Many schools are teetering on the edge and the next few weeks at least will undoubtedly continue to be an incredibly challenging time.” In the **NAHT survey,** based largely on primary and middle schools:
	+ More than a third of heads (36 per cent) said they had more than 10 per cent of their total staff absent on the first day of term due to Covid-related reasons.
	+ More than a quarter (27 per cent) said they had more than 10 per cent of their teaching staff absent on the first day of term due to Covid-related reasons.
	+ 95 per cent said they had pupils absent for Covid-related reasons. Almost a third (29 per cent) said they had more than 10 per cent of their pupils absent for Covid-related reasons.
	+ Half (50 per cent) said they were using supply teachers to cover classes due to absence, but over a third (37 per cent) said they were unable to source the supply staff they needed, even via agencies.
	+ Less than 7 per cent reported combining classes or year groups, and only 4 per cent reported having to send classes or year groups home.
* Arbor statistics found around 3.3 per cent of **pupils were absent** this week from schools that use their management system due to Covid. The number of schools reporting at least one positive Covid case upon return has also increased – from 69 per cent at the end of last term to 82 per cent.
* **Long Covid rates** increased fastest among teachers and education staff in England towards the end of last term, compared with all other professions, and the sector has the second-highest rate of the condition overall, according to Office of National Statistics data The number of teachers and other education staff self-reporting long Covid symptoms increased by 4 per cent compared with the previous month - to a proportion of 3.1 per cent. It was the largest increase among professional groups, the latest ONS data covering the month to 6 December 2021 reveals. Teachers and education staff had the second-highest rate at 3.1 per cent - higher than healthcare workers at 3 per cent and just behind the 3.4 per cent of social care sector staff reporting symptoms. The number of people working in the teaching and education sector who have had self-reported long Covid symptoms for over one year has also increased from the last data set published on 6 December, from 0.97 per cent to 1.24 per cent. Long Covid symptoms include (but are not limited to) brain fog, chronic fatigue, heart palpitations, shortness of breath and joint pain. The rates reflect pre-Omicron levels and it is as yet unclear what the high rates of Covid infection in schools this term will mean for the number of school staff suffering from long Covid. The NASUWT has warned that long Covid is a "ticking time-bomb" for teachers and demanded financial compensation.

**Face coverings**

* In papers published the week before Christmas, **Sage** scientists told the government that "it may be necessary to reconsider the wearing of face coverings in places where the balance of risks and benefits did not previously support it - for example, **primary school classrooms**". The DfE subsequently decided to bring back mask-wearing for secondary pupils and staff in classrooms this term, but did not apply this rule to primary schools. It has now emerged that it decided not to ask for masks to be introduced for younger pupils because of difficulties with "hygienic use" and "communication". The DfE also made the decision on the basis it has a "range of measures to mitigate transmission in primary schools and early years settings" in place, including "staff testing, staff face coverings in communal areas, daily testing for close contacts and improved ventilation".
* For DfE papers summarising **evidence in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic**, particularly around children, young people and education settings, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-covid-19-children-young-people-and-education-settings>
* In one of these papers on its decision to bring back **face coverings** for secondary pupils, the DfE says that current "high infection rates...present a challenge to maintaining face-to-face education", and that studies have shown that there are "higher rates of Covid-19 in schools without mask requirements, compared to those with mask requirements". It also referenced preliminary findings - yet to be peer-reviewed - of its own study of mask-wearing in 123 schools last term, which it says "demonstrate a potential positive effect in reducing pupil absence due to Covid-19". It says its study shows that schools that had masks in place saw absence fall by 0.6 percentage points over a two- to three-week period last October, compared with a control group of schools that were not using face coverings. However, it says that the study results are "statistically uncertain" due to the fact they are not peer-reviewed and because of the small sample size. Overall, the government admits the evidence for using masks in schools to reduce spread of Covid is "not conclusive". The document does add that research into the effect of mask-wearing on communication found that "concealing a speaker's lips led to lower performance, lower confidence scores and increased perceived effort on the part of the listener". However, another DfE survey revealed that "pupils generally agreed that face coverings made others (87 per cent) and themselves (70 per cent) feel safe". Meanwhile, the paper acknowledges a Unison survey of support staff, which found that the majority (71 per cent) said face coverings in secondary school classrooms were an important safety measure. See also <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59895934>
* Some older pupils in England are **refusing to take lateral flow tests and wear face coverings** in classrooms as they head back to school, parents and other pupils say. Charities say they are worried about the effects on vulnerable students of this advice being ignored. However, other parents say masks impact on their children's learning. The NASUWT said that schools should engage with parents and pupils to encourage uptake. It said there were "huge numbers" of pupils refusing to wear masks and take lateral flow tests in six secondary schools in the north-west of England. At one school in Lancashire, only 67 children out of 1,300 were prepared to do either, he said - while another in Manchester said "there was no point" in offering lateral flow tests when pupils returned. It said this was likely to be the case in other parts of the country. There was an element of teenagers "railing against" authority, he added, made worse by some wanting to "push boundaries" with supply teachers in charge.

**Testing**

* **Schools that run out of tests** can still order more through the online ordering system – but have been given a tight deadline if they want to receive supplies by next week. In an email to headteachers on Jan 5, the DfE said orders for test kits received by 5pm Jan 5 “will be scheduled for delivery during next week”. However orders placed after 5pm “will be delivered the following week”, starting Monday January 17.

**Vaccinations**

* **All vaccine centres in England should be offering jabs for 12 to 15-year-olds as standard** to boost the sluggish uptake in the age group, an expert has said. Russell Viner, professor of child and adolescent health at University College London, said the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine was being delayed by the fact that many centres do not jab younger teens. In England, only 49.2 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds had received a first dose of the vaccine as of 3 January. Parents have reported struggling to find vaccine centres to get their child a jab before the start of term. Not all centres offer 12 to 15-year-olds jabs because they are not set up to handle issues of consent, or lack the necessary child safeguarding paperwork. And he said the Government should make use of “**peer type influencers**”, including on social media platforms such as Instagram, as well as potentially recruiting “vaccination champions in schools, trying to get other kids to step up and want it”.

**Student health and welfare**

* More than half of **black children** in the UK are now **growing up in poverty**, a new analysis of official data has revealed. Black children are also now more than twice as likely to be growing up poor as white children, according to research, which was based on government figures for households that have a “relative low income” – defined as being below 60% of the median, the standard definition for poverty. And over the last decade the total number of black children in poor households more than doubled – although that increase is partly explained by the overall size of the cohort increasing too. The proportion of black children living in poverty went up from 42% in 2010-11 to 53% in 2019-20, the most recent year for which the data is available. In 2019-20 4.3 million children (defined as people under 16, or aged 16 to 19 and in full-time education) were living in households in poverty. They accounted for 31% of the UK’s 14 million children. But there was a **wide variation among ethnic groups**. The research covered nine categories and it said Bangladeshi children are the poorest, with 61% of them living in a poor household. The figures for the other groups were: Pakistani children (55%); black African or Caribbean or black British (53%); other ethnicity (51%); other Asian (50%); mixed ethnicity (32%); Indian (27%); white (26%); and Chinese (12%).
* The NHS can no longer treat every child with an **eating disorder**, a leading psychiatrist has warned, as “worrying” figures reveal hospital admissions have risen 41% in a year. A dramatic surge in cases during the pandemic has left already struggling community services overstretched with many unable to care for everyone who requires help, experts said. NHS Digital data for England shows a sharp rise in admissions in every area of the country. The provisional data for April to October 2021 – the most recent available – shows there were 4,238 hospital admissions for children aged 17 and under, up 41% from 3,005 in the same period the year before. The 2021 figure is also a 69% rise on the pre-pandemic year of 2019. From April to October 2019, there were 2,508 admissions for those aged 17 and under. Charities said the fast rising number of hospital admissions was “only the tip of the iceberg”, with thousands more children needing support for eating disorders. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/04/nhs-unable-to-treat-every-child-with-eating-disorder-as-cases-soar>

**Public examinations**

* Thousands of students will be taking **online tests** in GCSE English, maths and science this year as part of a major new pilot launched by the AQA exam board. Up to 2,500 students from 100 schools and colleges will take part in the online GCSE pilots, in addition to their exams, which are expected to go ahead this summer. The pilot will include adaptive "smart" assessments that adjust in difficulty in response to a student's progression in the test. These online trials will not replace the actual GCSE and A-level exams that students are set to take this year, which they will sit in the current pen and paper format. The pilots will involve one 45-minute test for maths, one for English and two for science. AQA said this technology could be used to move away from students having to opt to take a particular level of exam paper in advance - such as a foundation or higher paper at maths GCSE. But it said there was a question over whether this approach could be used in the "high-stakes" GCSE and A-level exams.

**ITT and teacher recruitment**

* The DfE has issued “The **process for requesting initial teacher training (ITT) places and allocations for the 2022 to 2023** academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/itt-requesting-places-and-allocations-2022-to-2023>
* To find out about the visa and immigration routes, qualifications and help available for **overseas teachers who trained outside the UK**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teach-in-england-if-you-qualified-outside-the-uk>
* Ofsted has issued “**Initial teacher education** inspection data summary report (**IDSR**) guide”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/initial-teacher-education-inspection-data-summary-report-idsr-guide>

**Education news for schools**

* You can read the full list of those honoured for services to education in the **New year Honours** related to schools at <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/New-Years-Honours-2022-Schools-Week-Guide.pdf>
* Children are being helped by **adult chaperones** on their way to and from school in high-crime inner city areas. The £1.2m project is being piloted in the West Midlands with support from the Home Office and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Participating schools were selected on police intelligence about criminal activity in their neighbourhoods. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59759420>
* The conversation around reluctant readers often focuses on boys, but new research is warning that **high numbers of girls also do not enjoying reading**. In fact, 44 per cent of girls aged eight to 18 say that they do not enjoy reading according to a research report published by the National Literacy Trust. Entitled “Forgotten Girls”, the report draws upon a survey of more than 21,000 girls and finds that 10 per cent of those aged eight to 18 do not read at all in their free time. It warns too that 19 per cent of those aged six to 14 can be classed as struggling with their reading skills. See <https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Forgotten_girls_-_Reluctant_girl_readers_2021.pdf>
* The DfE has updated “**School attendance**: guidance for schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
* **Ofsted** has updated its “**School inspection data summary report (IDSR) guide**”. This guide gives an overview of the inspection data summary report (IDSR) for primary and secondary schools, along with information to help interpret the charts. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-inspection-data-summary-report-idsr-guide>
* Four of the country’s leading academy trusts have created **a new teacher training body** that has bid to run the government’s £121 million **Institute of Teaching**. Harris Federation, Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT), Star Academies and Oasis Community Learning have co-founded the School Led Development Trust (SLDT). The SLDT was formally incorporated as a company operating “for the public benefit” on 31 May last year, with the four trusts as members and their chief executives as directors. The Ambition Institute is also in the running. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-top-trusts-bidding-to-run-121m-institute-of-teaching/>

**School management**

* The DfE has issued “Find a DfE-approved framework for your school. Find **quality-checked suppliers of goods and services for your school**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-a-dfe-approved-framework-for-your-school>
* The DfE has issued its **Early years census manual**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-early-years-census>
* Ofsted has issued “**Local area SEND inspections**: information for families”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-5-january-2022>
* The DfE has updated “**Senior mental health lead training**. Find out how to apply for a grant and access DfE quality assured training to help develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>
* The DfE has updated “**Transport to schools and colleges** during the COVID-19 pandemic”. See

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

* The DfE has updated “**How to complete the educational setting status form**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-complete-the-educational-setting-status-form>

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