



To: Directors of Children's Services
LA Pupil Place Planning Contacts
LA Admissions Contacts

Friday 3rd April 2020

Dear colleagues,

**Operational update on Primary National Offer Day, admissions appeals
and delivery of September 2020 school places**

Thank you for all your work in responding at pace to the issues caused by COVID-19. A number of local authorities have raised helpful questions about the impact of COVID-19 on primary National Offer Day, admissions appeals and delivery of school places for September 2020.

Primary National Offer Day should continue as expected on 16 April. Many LAs have already told us that they have found ways to ensure that they will be able to deliver offers of primary school places as planned. Some LAs have requested further advice or support and the department is following up with LA admissions leads to establish what is required. If you wish to request further advice or support, please email your request to Queries.ADMISSIONS@education.gov.uk as soon as possible.

We know LAs (and other admissions authorities) are concerned about how to manage admission appeals over the coming weeks. This is understandable and we need to agree a way which takes into consideration the requirements around administration of admission appeals and consistency of approach, but also considers the current situation on COVID-19. Given the current restrictions we do not consider it is sensible to go ahead with admission appeal panels at present. As you will know, the requirements around how appeal panels are carried out are very detailed and failure to comply can result in maladministration complaints. We are working urgently on emergency regulations and guidance to establish alternative arrangements which are suitable but also flexible. We are looking at flexibility for admissions authorities to hold panels via telephone or video conference or in writing and at extending the normal timescales. It will remain important however that there is a formal clerk. We will update you further on this ahead of primary National Offer Day.

In parallel, the department is assessing the potential impact of COVID-19 on the sufficiency of school places for academic year 2020/21. With the ongoing demands on local authorities to support schools at this time, we have decided to cancel the Pupil Place Planning National Offer Day Survey. Instead, we are now asking for a very focused, short return from each local authority to capture the vital latest information on the level of risk to your own school building projects (ie presumptions and expansions) for September 2020. We will join up this information with our own intelligence about the delivery of free schools and Priority School Building projects due to open or move into permanent buildings in September 2020. This in turn will allow us to identify which local authorities require support in meeting their duty to provide sufficient school places and to engage with them on mitigations and contingency planning.

So, any information that you can provide will be crucial to enabling us to help your local authority. Capital colleagues will be in touch with you about projects that DfE is delivering in your authority.

The questions we would like you to answer are in the template attached to the email - please try to answer these by **Monday 20th April 2020**, including by sending us a nil response if you have no school capital projects within the scope of this request. If you have any issues at all with meeting that deadline, please do not hesitate to get in touch, either by email at advisers.ppp@education.gov.uk or speak to your PPP adviser.

We also recognise there could be time critical decisions that local authorities will need to take on which they might require advice or support. If so, please get in touch via the same route. Equally, if there are concerns that you wish to raise about the delivery of school places in 2021, please contact us in the same way.

By May we expect to engage with any local authorities with significant challenges, on what we can do to advise or support the delivery of local authority projects (where possible) and on contingency planning to deal with risks to either DfE programmes or local authority projects.

Yours sincerely



Dominic Herrington

National Schools Commissioner
Regional Delivery Directorate
Department for Education



Mela Watts

Director
School System Infrastructure Directorate
Department for Education