Welcome to the eighth edition of the regular Designated Teacher input. Please circulate to any staff who are involved in completing review meetings or to any staff who are working with your looked after or previously looked after pupils.

In this update we aim to provide information relevant to DTs during lockdown.

The Virtual School staff are all working remotely to support schools, families and social workers. Most Designated Teachers have been in touch and have had conversations with their caseworker about education provision, safeguarding and attendance monitoring. There has been some brilliant work going on in Oxfordshire schools and most of our pupils have a very good package. Schools have been doing valuable things such as online class meet ups, video assemblies, challenges, online lessons of different kinds, regular contact with families and home visits.

Thank you.

Online tuition is working well for targeted KS4 pupils and the take up has been good. Our post 16 team have undertaken a huge piece of work contacting and catching up with all our post 16 young people and finding out what they are up to and helping them with next steps.

We have been communicating weekly with foster carers through an online letter and rolling out a foster carers training app. Training for schools has happened - but online! Mental health is very much at the heart of everyone’s work. Michelle Johnson, has been helping to collate and distribute lovely creative packs to young people, as part of the Oxfordshire Kindness Wave; an initiative in collaboration with Populate Coop, Ark T Oxford, Oxford HUB and Timpson which aims to support children, young people and families to give them comfort and much needed positive activity during the pandemic. Follow them on twitter @kindness_wave and see their website to read more about how you can get involved. https://oxfordshirekindnesswave.org.uk/

Attendance of vulnerable pupils in school

Latest advice for schools (20.04.20) includes the updated statement: ‘The government encourages vulnerable children and young people to attend educational settings unless they have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk’. Previous figures showed that only 5% of vulnerable pupils were attending school, compared to the 10% that had been expected. The DFE expect decisions on attendance, will be based on discussions between the school, the parent/carer and others, including social workers, local authorities etc. where applicable.

DTs can contact their VS case workers to discuss any looked after children and school attendance.

Latest DFE guidance for schools can be found here.
Personal Education Plan update

PEPs due to be held in May can still go ahead.
EPEPs can be completed and Designated Teachers can gather information by telephone or email. When setting new outcomes – this may not be as straightforward as usual, but there will be some natural outcomes (supporting the child to complete work at home; sourcing a lap top or resources; accessing online tuition from school; supporting well being through regular school/home contact etc)

If the pupil is doing online tuition, is accessing the school online lessons or attending school, it will be appropriate to complete the PEP in the usual way.

There is now available a shortened ePEP on Welfare Call, in light of lockdown. You will see it when you open the ePEP.

You can discuss this with your Virtual School caseworker, who can advise if you are not sure which version to do.

Thank you all for keeping these going and please keep in touch with your case workers who can also help set up Skype meetings, so PEPs can include everyone involved.

Pupil Voice Mind of My Own app

OCC has been exploring the use of an app which helps children and young people express themselves and have their own say.
The app is called Mind of My Own and comes in two versions - one and express.
Express is for children with additional needs.
The app is accessible and easy to use and can be used by pupils to record their ideas, questions and views. They can decide who to send the information to and the pupil voice converts easily to PDF so that IROs or Social Workers can include it in review meetings. It is safe to use and complies with all the necessary ISO ad GDPR regulations. Pupils can have control over what they write and who sees their views. You can have a look at it here.

Planning ahead for when schools are able to widen access

Although we don’t have a time frame as yet, schools are thinking about how things will be when we return to more regular timetables.

There are many issues to think about including mental health, safety of pupils and staff, logistics of keeping social distancing in place etc. The attainment gap is a major consideration. The Sutton Trust have reported on the gap in access to home learning across different demographics. Their survey shows that only 10% of pupils from working class backgrounds have accessed live and recorded online lessons compared to 30% of pupils from middle class homes and 51-57% of privately educated pupils. Access to electronic devices is one of the barriers.

Schools have been working hard to lessen the inequality gap and you will recognise these strategies from your own schools:

• Contacting parents/carers to offer advice on learning
• Providing lap tops
• Providing stationery and resource packs
• Emailing/messaging home directly
• Providing food boxes

Recommendations to help vulnerable pupils close the gap include providing online 1-1 tuition and then face to face tuition on school return, training staff to deliver online lessons, running catch up over summer or on return.

OCC is working on some guidance for head teachers so watch this space.

Sutton Trust report here
Ideas for free training for teachers to deliver lessons online: Teacher tool kit, Future learn