

Learning & Systems Leadership
Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 4JF

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Dear Colleague

Support to disadvantaged pupils

We are all gearing up for what will be a very unusual term. In exchanges with several of you, the issue of disadvantaged pupils and how they can properly access educational opportunities has arisen. One Primary colleague said to me “my concerns remain with those families that are unable to access internet and online work for the children. This will become our focus at the start of the new term” and a Secondary colleague stated, “the current circumstances further highlight a discrepancy between those who are socially deprived and those who can easily access the tools and the means to engage with online learning”.

As a Council, we share the concern that, whilst schools are providing care to a very small number of children and young people, the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” will increase. I know the Department for Education mirror this concern and are seeking the views of schools and Local Authorities on how this can be managed. In the Departmental Guidance ‘*Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for schools about temporarily closing, updated 9 April 2020*’ it states;

“Do schools need to provide educational support for pupils at home?”

We recognise that many schools have already shared resources for children who are at home and are grateful for this. We want to support parents and schools to ensure young people’s education can continue. Support available includes:

- *a [list of online education resources](#) which have been identified by some of the country’s leading educational experts to help pupils to learn at home*
- *the BBC is enhancing its education provision to include daily lessons, starting from 20 April 2020”*

For all of the above reasons I want to explore with you, as our system leaders, what a Waltham Forest focused solution could look like.

I would ask that through your professional local networks you discuss this and come forward with questions, suggestions and examples of best practice you would recommend to the LA and your peers. The Local Authority has a small financial sum that it would be happy to use

to pump prime any local solutions, but this will only be truly effective if we collectively gather our wisdom and resources both intellectual and material. No suggestion is too big or small, and I know Councillor Grace Williams, Portfolio Lead Member is keen to lend her support to anything that can best protect the educational outcomes of the most disadvantaged in these unprecedented times.

Please could I ask that you call/email Gerry Kemble or Donna Miller, Governor Services Manager with any thoughts you have. I know that Gerry and Donna are keen to engage in detail to understand what is possible.

For information and to provide some assurance, please be advised that an officer group including myself, Amana Gordon, (Corporate Director, Children's Social Care), Fay Blyth, (Headteacher of the Virtual School), Duncan James-Pike (Schools Finance) and Gerry Kemble (Assistant Director Schools) has been formed to lead and manage considerations as to what the Council can do to assist in this matter. Needless to say, it is only through your engagement and support that we will achieve the best outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people.

For information some of the questions that officers are grappling with include;

- Who are the "most needy" that we are trying to support – LAC, FSM, Children in Need?
- What is needed above and beyond what pupil premium is designed for?
- What are our schools currently doing or planning to do that is innovative?
- What consideration is being given by schools to how the rest of the academic year looks and what impact this has, if any, on the normal summer holiday closure period?
- What can the LA bring to assist maintained schools, MATs and stand-alone academies?

Please get back with ideas, suggestions and examples of best practice to Donna, Gerry or me by Monday 27 April so we can progress matters at pace and get effective support in place for early in the term.

Thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely,



David Kilgallon
Director of Learning & System Leadership