

DfE updates and changes – March to June 2024

Government launches crackdown on mobile phones in schools – Press Release

1. Schools will receive new guidance on prohibiting mobile phone use during the school day [Government launches crackdown on mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-crackdown-on-mobile-phones-in-schools) published 19/02/24

2. Wiltshire's position:

In Wiltshire, we are confident that schools will choose an approach to prohibiting mobile phone use which suits their individual context, and which aligns with DfE guidance.

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - Guidance

3. Find out what help you can get to develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. Updated resources to keep them current [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/promoting-and-supporting-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-schools-and-colleges) updated 22/02/24

4. Wiltshire's position:

Wiltshire provides a programme to support schools to plan and implement a whole school approach to health and wellbeing, through the Wiltshire Healthy Schools programme. This includes an audit theme on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health. Currently 137 schools are engaged, with 77 schools holding accreditation at bronze, silver or gold level (April 2024). Our Youth Ambassadors have been involved in recent Healthy School visits, to question staff and hear about good practice in school mental health provision.

From 2021 – 2023 Wiltshire delivered a programme of DfE assured Senior Mental Health Lead training. After 4 cohorts, most Wiltshire schools (215) have now received the training and claimed a national grant of £1,200. For the small number of schools that have not yet received this offer or wish to train a new school lead, the CPD is still available from a range of national providers. These schools are supported by an ongoing series of local network meetings to help embed this work facilitated by the Healthy Schools leads in B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire. The DfE report that successful grant applications are significantly higher in Wiltshire (84%) compared with the Southwest (70%) and national (67%). Data was last received in February 2024 and will be updated when we receive further updates from the DfE.

As an additional support, Wiltshire Council provide an ongoing offer of Youth Mental Health First Aid training to schools and others that work with young people aged 8-18. This internationally recognised programme is designed to promote awareness of psychological and emotional wellbeing and mental health and to support professionals to recognise and respond to mental health issues. From April 2023 – March 2024, 7 courses were delivered training 71 people. Evaluations from our local delivery show that this training increases the knowledge and confidence of delegates that attend.

Working together to safeguard children – Statutory Guidance

5. Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. Changes made, Pg 26, paragraph 48: amended the wording used to describe lead safeguarding partners. Pg 42: corrected the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel email address. Pg 161: updated the glossary definition of 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' to match that on pg 7 to 8. Pg 167: linked to the latest version of 'Good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability' [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) updated 23/02/24
6. Wiltshire's position:

The Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership has a clear plan set out in response to changes set out in Working Together 2023, which includes the following:

- Ensuring strategic education representation within the arrangements by September 2024 – this means having a head teacher as a member of the SVPP Executive
- Publication of the SVPP Annual Report for 2023/4 by September 2024
- Publicising an updated Safeguarding Plan by Dec 2024
- Updating of policies, guidance and relevant subgroups terms of references in line with Working Together 2023
- Updating terms of reference for SVPP Executive to include the responsibilities of Delegated Safeguarding Partners

Arrangements for chairing of the partnership by a safeguarding partner are already embedded and an Independent Scrutineer is in post. Agencies who have duties with regards to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including Wiltshire Council, will be asked to provide assurance in relation to how they are embedding new principles for working with parents including parents with a learning disability, in-line with expectations for multi-agency working and national multiagency practice standards for child protection as set out in Working Together 2023. We are exploring the additional membership from headteacher representatives.

New regulations for schools in next stage of attendance drive – Press Release

7. Every state school in England will now share their daily attendance registers across the education sector [New regulations for schools in next stage of attendance drive - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) published 29/02/24
8. Wiltshire's position:

We already receive daily attendance data from schools in Wiltshire via Groupcall and WONDE (the DfE data collection portal). This data is used to inform Targeted Support Meetings with schools and across children's services to support conversations and action planning to improve attendance. The heightened emphasis on the sharing and use of daily attendance data will further support early help work for those children and young people with lower attendance.

Working together to improve school attendance - Guidance

9. Guidance for schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities on maintaining high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities. Change made, added 'Working together to improve school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024' and 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024'. The status of these documents will be statutory as of that date [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) updated 29/02/24

10. Wiltshire's position:

We welcome the new statutory guidance to improve attendance of all our pupils. This work has already been a high priority across the Education and Skills Directorate and the new guidance will continue to support us working together with services and schools to prioritise positive attendance for all.

The Education Welfare Service has already begun to communicate the changes to school leaders through headteacher briefings, school business manager networks and governor briefings. We have scheduled a series of 6 sessions during term 6 for school leaders, for information sharing and question and answer opportunities. Supportive materials and toolkits for schools to use will be developed and refreshed in line with the changes and we will continue termly School Attendance Champion Networks across the next academic year.

National school breakfast Club programme - Guidance

11. Support for school breakfast club provision. Updated to reflect participating schools will receive the subsidy until the end of July 2025 [National school breakfast club programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) updated 04/03/24

12. Wiltshire's position:

We will continue to promote this to eligible schools and support them in setting up breakfast clubs where needed. This is in addition to the government expansion of wraparound care which aims to provide wraparound provision for all primary aged children from 8am until 6pm from September 2026.

PE and sports in schools - Guidance

13. Information to help schools increase access to PE, physical activity and extra-curricular school sport, including examples of good practice [PE and sports in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) published 23/03/24

14. Wiltshire's position:

Wiltshire schools are aware of the positive benefits of physical activity on the mental wellbeing of children and young people. The guidance offers high quality case studies and links to enhanced provision in a range of areas; most notably, developing and communicating a strong rationale for 2 hours minimum PE, staffing structures to support delivering 2 hours high quality PE, embedding extra-curricular plans and targets into the school's strategy, as well as understanding the needs

of the most inactive pupils and equality of access for children with SEND. Guidance was signposted to all Wiltshire Schools on 16th May 2024 through the Schools' Newsletter

Government delivering 60,000 more special needs places – Press Release

15. Councils are to receive a record £850 million cash boost to ensure children across the country receive an education that meets their needs [Government delivering on 60,000 more special needs places - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) published 26/03/24

16. Wiltshire's position:

In March 2024 the High Needs Capital Grant announcement resulted in Wiltshire Council receiving an extra £6.2M for 2024. This capital funding will be used to develop additional High Needs provision, including Special School and Resource Base classrooms. We are still waiting to find out if we will receive any Safety Valve Capital grant to support priority high needs capital projects, which includes a second school campus for Exeter House.

Participation of young people: education, employment and training – Statutory Guidance

17. Change Made, updated statutory guidance to amend out-of-date references and links. Statutory guidance for local authorities on their duties relating to the participation of young people in education, employment or training [Participation of young people: education, employment and training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) updated 04/04/24

18. Wiltshire's position:

Wiltshire ensures it meets its duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education employment and training. This includes strategic overview of the provision available in the area in direct collaboration with the DfE, as well as robust tracking of participation to identify risk of NEET (not in education, employment or training) so that support can be given to re-engage.

The Post 16 Skills and Participation Team carry out this responsibility and work with young people at risk of NEET in Year 11 of statutory school age through to Year 12 and 13 (post 16). Where a young person has an EHCP, the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Team provide direct support to address risk of NEET.

Wiltshire outcomes are strong in relation to both the national average and the South-West and currently ranks 30th out of 150 local authorities.

Free school meals guidance updated

19. The Department for Education has recently updated the guidance on free school meals. The update clarifies councils' responsibilities for providing school lunches for children who are educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS), as well as schools' duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children's school lunches [Free school meals \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

20. Wiltshire's position:

Wiltshire's position supports Section 512 of the Education Act 1996, which places a duty on maintained schools, academies and free schools to provide free school meals to pupils of all ages that meet the criteria.

Wiltshire Council provides an Eligibility Checking System (ECS) to make the checking process as quick and straightforward as possible for all subscribing schools. Schools that do not subscribe use the government free school meal calculator and administer their own free school meal provision.

The expectation from the DfE is that local authorities consider making equivalent food provision for children who are receiving EOTAS under section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. The children need to meet both of the following criteria:

- the child would meet the benefits-related criteria for free school meals if they were in a state-funded school, and
- the meals would be provided in conjunction with education and would, in line with the aim of free school meal provision, be for the purpose of enabling the child to benefit fully from the education being provided.

Wiltshire's position is that funding is provided to EOTAS pupils in the form of e-vouchers for parents and carers to give their child(ren) a lunch provision each school day. Local authorities are allowed to draw upon the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to fund such food provision.

EOTAS pupils eligible for free school meals have also been funded during school holidays by using the Household Support Fund, although continuation of this government funding is not confirmed beyond September 2024.

Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with pupils who are not disabled. Schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils on roll at a school to ensure they are not put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to accessing meals where appropriate.

Parents and carers can escalate any concerns they have about accessing free school meals, whether its eligibility or disability, to the free school meals team in Revenues and Benefits. These cases are escalated where needed to the Education and Skills team for resolution with schools.

Landmark childcare rollout on track – Press Release

21. Government publishes new data showing 195,355 children benefitting from government-funded childcare for two-year-olds in successful April launch [Landmark childcare rollout on track - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-childcare-rollout-on-track) published 19/04/24

22. Wiltshire's position:

We are continuing to roll out this initiative with our Early Years providers in Wiltshire. On the 17th of April 2024, the DfE data showed that Wiltshire had validated 89.52% of codes issued for the new 2-year-old funding. We are now working towards the next milestone which will be expansion

of 15 hours of funding for children from the term after they are 9 months old from a working parent/s household which will start from the 1st of September 2024.

Managing older school buildings – Guidance

23. Guidance to help school building owners and maintenance staff identify building systems and prioritise maintenance and repair of their school estate [Managing older school buildings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-older-school-buildings) published 25/04/24
24. Wiltshire's position: This guidance is intended to give those responsible for planning and carrying out school maintenance a high-level overview of the types of construction that may be present in their estates and to help identify these common types of construction. It outlines some of the common areas that should be considered to ensure buildings remain serviceable and structural elements do not deteriorate. The guidance is being reviewed by the Council's Strategic Asset Maintenance and Facilities Management team and will be shared with schools and Trusts.

Phonics screening check data collection: guide to submitting data – Guidance

25. How local authorities should collect phonics screening check data from all local-authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools. **Change made:** Updated the important dates section to include the date the 2024 collection opens and the deadline for submitting data. Added a link to the 2024 phonics screening data collection technical specification [Phonics screening check data collection: guide to submitting data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-data-collection-guide-to-submitting-data) updated 26/04/24
26. Wiltshire's position:

As a Local Authority, we collect the Phonics Screening Check scores from all schools in Wiltshire via Perspective Lite, following the guidance from the Standards and Testing Agency. This is organised and carried out by the data analysts in the Performance, Outcomes and QA (Children's) team, who check the data and submit to the DfE.

The PSC pass threshold is released by the DfE on 24 June. Schools can submit their scores to the LA from 17 June with a deadline of 28 June. Data and reports should be available to schools and the LA on Perspective/Nexus by 12 July. The LA must submit the data to the DfE by 19 July.

The School Effectiveness service ensures that schools are aware of arrangements and processes, communicating this through Headteacher briefings, School Business Manager briefings, weekly Schools newsletters, and detailed guidance is available on Right Choice. Schools can contact the assessment adviser directly for support and there is also a dedicated email address assessmentcollections@wiltshire.gov.uk to answer any questions from schools.

Protective security and preparedness for education settings - Guidance

27. How education settings should prepare for and respond to terrorism and other major incidents [Protective security and preparedness for education settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-security-and-preparedness-for-education-settings) published 29/04/24
28. Wiltshire's position:

Education Safeguarding Effectiveness are preparing a course with educational settings and colleagues from wider services including the Police. The initial meeting will be at the end of May

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June 2024

with a view to linking with work already underway on developing an updated Critical Incident document.

This guidance was signposted to all Wiltshire Schools on 16th May 2024 through the Schools' Newsletter.

End.