

Sarah Wilkins

Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning

Email: swilkins@worcestershire.gov.uk

Tel: 01905 846082

Our Ref: CV192

Date: 16th December 2024

Education Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the end of this term and year, I want to sincerely thank all the education staff across Worcestershire. Your unwavering dedication, tireless efforts, and steadfast support for our children and young people have been extraordinary. The entire local school community deeply values and appreciates all that you have done over the past 12 months. Thank you for your outstanding commitment.

I would also like to take the opportunity to say a huge thank you and very best wishes to Dr Louisa Jones our Principal Educational Psychologist and Head of Inclusion Support Services as she leaves Worcestershire County Council to start a new and exciting role in the East Midlands. Louisa has been responsible for transforming our psychology services to meet the increasing demands, leading our inclusion services to share their brilliant expertise as far and wide as possible and leading on early years inclusion to raise the profile, impact and improve process to ensure we meet our children's needs early. This is a remarkable achievement in a relatively short time. In addition to the business-as-usual demands Louisa has led the development of mental health support in schools with the NHS and our emergency planning response to supporting critical events in schools. Whilst sad to need to do this she has on multiple occasions provided direct support to staff in schools when tragic events occur. We wish Louisa all the best.

We are also delighted to confirm that Dr Louise Oland (Senior Educational Psychologist) will be stepping into this senior position and brings her experience of Worcestershire and own expertise, and we look forward to introducing her further in the New Year.

And finally, a reminder that during the Christmas holiday, eligible students will receive free school meals through the voucher system provided by Edenred. All vouchers issued during the Christmas period will have a validity period of one month from the date of the order and schools are instructed to issue vouchers only for the corresponding holiday period. Schools will have access to the Edenred portal until Friday 10th January 2025 to allow for placing orders for the holiday. For more information on ordering vouchers please refer to [Education Bulletin 191](#) published on 5th December 2024.

Wishing you all a peaceful and restful break over the Christmas period and a very Happy New Year.

Contents

Latest education news and updates	3
Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme - Winter 2024.....	3
Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status	3
Latest SEND news and updates	4
What we're doing to improve SEND services: December update	4
Latest health and wellbeing news and updates	5
Infectious diseases in education settings - additional resources	5
Festive opening times for emergency contraception and sexual health services	5
Lumi Nova success and feedback	5
Latest training news and conferences	6
Managing School Attendance - Supporting Senior Leaders and Attendance Leads	6
New to Attendance/Attendance Refresher - for School Attendance Officers/staff	6
Mental Health Policy - template for schools.....	7
Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders.....	7
Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders.....	7
Latest news from School Teaching Hubs.....	8
Tudor Grange Teaching School Hub	8
Other local news and events	8
Worcestershire Youth Cabinet launches new manifesto.....	8

Latest education news and updates

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme - Winter 2024

A reminder that bookings are now open for Worcestershire's winter Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme!

During the school holidays, eligible families can book FREE holiday activities, family passes and events through the programme.

Funded by the Department for Education, HAF is primarily for children in receipt of benefits related Free School Meals aged 5-16, however, the programme does support other children and young people otherwise considered vulnerable (including LAC, SEND and refugee status).

We would be grateful if you could help us to promote this programme. Families can search and book activities through the HAF booking site. Information and booking instructions to share with families are included in the [HAF Winter 2024 School Comms Toolkit](#). The information is in different formats so can be tailored to the communication channels you use in school.

School holidays can be a difficult time for families, we want to make sure the HAF Programme reaches as many of those who need it as possible. Please support the HAF Programme in your school by:

- Sharing the information linked with eligible families.
- Encouraging families to book activities (HAF activities are FREE to families, no hidden cost (fully funded by the Department for Education).
- Encouraging new starters to sign up to HAF as they sign up to Free School Meals.

More information about the programme is available on the [Worcestershire County Council website](#) or you can contact the HAF Team at providers@hafworcestershire.co.uk

Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status

Strictly Education, as part of the HLTA national assessment partnership (www.hlta.org.uk) are the regional provider of Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status in Worcestershire. They would like to take this opportunity to offer your teaching assistants the chance to gain HLTA status during the Spring term 2024/25.

They have a suite of online HLTA preparation courses available in the spring term. All courses are delivered online, with the option of AM / PM or Twilight cohorts. Leading to a half day (3 hour) remote assessment. The total cost per candidate is £780.

For further details and course dates, please contact the HLTA team at Strictly Education on: HLTA@strictlyeducation.co.uk

Latest SEND news and updates

What we're doing to improve SEND services: December update

The local area partnership is working through the Priority Action Plan and SEND Improvement Plan following the outcome of the 2024 Ofsted and CQC inspection. During November we have been working on:

- **Coproduction workshop** – on 13th November we held a follow up workshop with parent carers on the quality and timeliness of EHCPs. Parent carers made suggestions on how to make improvements through better communication and transparency; and explored how an online system could help to track the EHCP process.
- **Children and Young People's Coproduction Lead** – we are now finalising the job description and person specification for the new role of Children and Young People's Coproduction Lead, to be advertised in January. This role will be crucial in enabling us to better involve children and young people with SEND in making changes and improvements to SEND services.
- **Independent Chair recruitment** – we have completed the interviews for an Independent Chair for the SEND and Alternative Provision Executive Board. An offer has been made and we are now carrying out the standard HR checks and processes before agreeing a start date – which will be in the New Year.
- **EHCP feedback report** – part of our quality assurance process includes collecting feedback from parent carers following the EHC Needs Assessment process where a new EHCP has been issued or following the annual review of an existing plan. The 'you said, we did' style report is available on the [Local Offer website](#).

[Read more about our SEND improvement journey on the Local Offer website.](#)

Latest health and wellbeing news and updates

Infectious diseases in education settings - additional resources

UKHSA have sent additional resources for educational settings about winter infections this week.

- [Winter infections in children – guidance leaflet for parents/guardians](#)
- [A letter for educational settings to use to send to parents/guardians](#)

We hope you find these resources useful to use alongside the [Worcestershire Winter Infections in Children pack](#) we have previously sent out.

Festive opening times for emergency contraception and sexual health services

Please download and share/display the posters with details of emergency contraception and sexual health services over the Christmas and New Year holiday. Posters can be accessed via [Google Drive](#).

Lumi Nova success and feedback

Thank you to all schools who have signposted parents to [Lumi Nova](#). Take up has been a huge success considering it was only launched in October. [Download Lumi Nova Resource Kit](#)

Lumi Nova is an early intervention App for parents and children aged 7-12 to use to address children's common worries, anxieties and fears. Class teachers can signpost parents to the App who can access it for free.

To date over 300 families have accessed Lumi Nova, most of these have been signposted by schools. Of those who have accessed Lumi Nova:

- 42% were male
- 3% were from ethnic minority backgrounds
- 18% reported having a disability

Children select up to 3 worries or anxieties to work through with the App and their parents. The top three concerns selected by children have been:

- Be ok with making a mistake on schoolwork - 20%
- Feel comfortable going to school - 12%
- Be able to sleep on their own - 10%

If you would like to receive physical posters/leaflets or receive the Lumi Nova newsletter, please email luminova@bfb-labs.com.

Latest training news and conferences

Managing School Attendance - Supporting Senior Leaders and Attendance Leads

This course is designed to support attendance leaders to embed the requirements of the DfE 'Working together to Improve School Attendance' practices and drive the requirement of attendance becoming everyone's business as part of school culture.

The course will be delivered as two virtual sessions, via teams and will:

- Consider DfE guidance expectations and the requirements upon attendance managers.
- Explore how Ofsted consider attendance.
- Explore how data can be strategically used to assist attendance management.
- Explore self-assessment and measuring Impact.
- Provide good practice examples.
- Consider DfE guidance expectations within the Worcestershire context.

Audience: School based Attendance Leads/Senior leaders with attendance responsibility

Cost: £60 + VAT per delegate

Details: 28 January and 4 February 2025, 10am to 11.30am, virtual delivery, course code: SCH 10434 / 90611

New to Attendance/Attendance Refresher - for School Attendance Officers/staff

This course is designed to support attendance officers new to the role, or experienced officers seeking a refresher to ensure good practice and compliance with the updated DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' expectations.

The course will be delivered as 2 virtual sessions, via teams and will:

- Outline current guidance, responsibilities, and legislation relative to school attendance.
- Enable delegates to understand the role and responsibilities of an attendance officer.
- Explore the importance of accurate pupil register coding and record keeping.
- Support officers to be able to identify and action attendance patterns of concern.
- Explore good practice models of addressing persistent and severe absence.
- Enable delegates to explore the important links between attendance and safeguarding.

Audience: School attendance officers/school-based attendance staff

Cost: £60 + VAT per delegate

Details: 30 January and 6 February 2025, 10am to 11.30am, virtual delivery, course code: SCH 10435 / 90612

Mental Health Policy - template for schools

A template mental health policy for schools to use is being launched on 5th February 2025 in time for Time to Talk Day (6th February 2025). This webinar will explain the policy content and how to amend the policy, so it reflects your school's ethos and approach to mental health.

All schools who do not currently have a mental health and wellbeing policy are encouraged to join this webinar. Schools with a policy in place may like to join to gather ideas for their policies when they are reviewed. The webinar will be delivered by Public Health Practitioners in the Children and Young People and Mental Wellbeing Teams at WCC Public Health.

Cost: Free

Details: 5 February 2025, 4pm to 5pm, virtual delivery, course code: 10551 / 90995

Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders

Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders is a specific course for school headteachers and senior leads. Led by Matt Potts EYFS training and advisor, this course explores current EYFS thinking including the OFSTED guidance 'Best start in life' and supports leaders to develop their understanding of the early years.

Cost: £70 + VAT

Lunch is provided - please ensure dietary needs are provided at the point of booking

Details: 10 January 2025, 9.30am to 3.30pm, Worcester, course code: 10536 / 90858

Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders

Understanding best practice within early years for school leaders is a specific course for school headteachers and senior leads. Led by Matt Potts EYFS training and advisor, this course explores current EYFS thinking including the OFSTED guidance 'Best start in life' and supports leaders to develop their understanding of the early years.

Cost: £70 + VAT

Lunch is provided - please ensure dietary needs are provided at the point of booking

Details: 10 January 2025, 9.30am to 3.30pm, Worcester, course code: 10536 / 90858

Book your place on the above training via [CPD](#) using your school CPD leader login details. Confirmations are issued at the point of booking and go to the delegate email provided. If your school requires support when booking, please contact the training team on **01905 844 420** or email workforcesupport@worcestershire.gov.uk

Latest news from School Teaching Hubs

Tudor Grange Teaching School Hub

On behalf of the Teaching School Hub Team, they would like to wish all their schools in the WM4 region a Merry Christmas and hope you have a restful holiday. They look forward to continuing to work with you in the new year.

Other local news and events

Worcestershire Youth Cabinet launches new manifesto

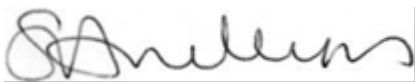
Worcestershire Youth Cabinet marked UK Parliament Week by launching their new manifesto, at an event at the Hive on Saturday 23 November.

The counties Youth Cabinet manifesto was developed directly from what young people in Worcestershire voted on as part of the Make Your Mark campaign. Top issues included improving mental health support and hospital experiences for young people, as well as tackling knife crime.

This year, the Cabinet has expanded not only in size, but also in its desire to achieve much more. They have undertaken a range of projects that address critical issues on the minds of young people today - issues such as health and wellbeing, crime and safety, and education. Their focus remains on addressing the concerns raised by young people across the whole of Worcestershire, as highlighted by 'Make Your Mark' programme. It is of vital importance that they continue to tackle the recurrent desire to improve mental health support and hospital experiences as well as knife crime.

Looking ahead, they are keen to see how they can make tangible changes by collaborating closely with key stakeholders, including MPs and councillors, with whom they have already started productive conversations. Their ambition is to ensure that they can make a real and lasting impact on the lives of young people across the county, ensuring that their voices are not only heard, but acted upon.

If you would like to find out more about the Youth Cabinet or get involved yourself, you can contact our Youth Voice Team: youthvoiceteam@worcestershire.gov.uk.



Sarah Wilkins

Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning

