
Director General for Regulation

Neil McIvor
Chief Data Officer and Chief Statistician
Department for Education

1 May 2020

Dear Neil

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) ATTENDANCE IN EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

I am writing to endorse the approach taken by DfE in the recent [publication](#) of data on attendance in education and early years settings during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I would like to congratulate everyone involved for their work to produce these timely and valuable statistics in challenging circumstances.

My team has conducted a [rapid regulatory review](#) of the published information. We have reviewed the extent to which they have been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice's Trustworthiness, Quality and Value pillars, while taking account of the pressures you and your teams have faced to deliver timely statistics about a rapidly evolving situation. A summary of our findings is set out below and more detailed feedback has been provided to your team.

Value

- We welcome the rapid development and publication of these data to support understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on school attendance in England. The online data collection portal and guidance to educational settings on filling out the data were created quickly to aid this development.
- We encourage you to continue to review the information collected and the data that you publish, considering user needs as the current situation evolves.

Quality

- The methodology used is clearly set out within the publication, and aids interpretation of the statistics. It is impressive how promptly the methodology was developed given the quick production of these data, and how the methodology used is comprehensively explained within the publication.
- Currently, quality assurance checks are carried out on a manual basis on the data. The automated checks in the production process that you are planning to develop will help provide further reassurances around quality. Establishments will also welcome you minimising the burden of additional data checking during this challenging time.

Trustworthiness

- The publication is transparent around the possible undercounting of vulnerable children. It is particularly good that you have received positive feedback on the inclusion of vulnerable children within the data and that you are considering what more could be done in this area.

We look forward to seeing these statistics develop as circumstances change. As set out in the guidance on changes to statistical outputs you can include a statement in your release such as “These statistics have been produced quickly in response to developing world events. The Office for Statistics Regulation, on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, has reviewed them against several key aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics and regards them as consistent with the Code’s pillars of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.”

I am copying this to David Simpson, acting Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics and Jonathan Slater, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation