

A spotlight on the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector



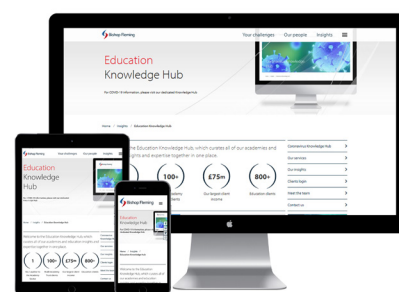
I think we all agree that the education sector is an important part of public life, but it has been even more important during the pandemic.

There are also many people who now think they are experts in education, given that there has been so much in the press over the last 12 months, and of course many parents have now experienced home schooling.

Schools are not alone in that they have had to cope with constant changes but they have been expected to go the extra mile for things like delivering free school meals and rolling out testing facilities. However, there are not many sectors that have had as many new regulations to deal with as Academies. These regulations include compliance with the Policy Procurement notices, furlough regulations and other covid grant regulations, whilst ensuring they are fully compliant with the regularity requirements of the Academies financial handbook.

The sector now has 35% of primaries and 77% of secondaries as Academies. Of these, most are in a MAT and we have also reached a tipping point of 50% of all pupils in an academy. The sector continued to grow at a rate of 7.8% in 2020 but given that Gavin Williamson recently stated that the government wants to see far more schools in strong MATs by 2025, we are expecting the growth in the sector to pick up again to pre-pandemic levels of more than 10% per annum.

The academy sector is continuing to evolve and Academies are being expected to help lead the way out of the pandemic. The challenge facing the sector over the summer period is immense. Whilst leadership teams are grappling with this immediate challenge, there is also the longer term impact on educational strategy. As Gavin Williamson, said on 1 March 2021 "catching up is the educational challenge of the decade".



Our [Education Knowledge Hub](#) is being updated regularly with the latest insights and advice, but if you can't find what you are looking for, please contact your usual Bishop Fleming adviser who will be happy to help you.

Key takeaways & top tips



1. Whilst the PPN02/20 has expired, the underlying principles will still be relevant.
2. Its time to revisit your Trust strategy and improvement plan.
3. Have you justified your use of furlough? (or not)
4. Have you given IT strategy a high enough priority?

Pam Tuckett
Partner and Head of Education

Relevant blogs

Trustees - is your strategy fit for purpose?

There is now an urgent requirement for trustees to revisit their strategy and for Trust and Schools improvements plans to be rewritten to help with the challenges facing the sector over the summer period

Click [here](#) to read more

Let's talk about IT

This pandemic has highlighted the inequality and postcode lottery across the sector when it comes to IT resources for pupils within schools.

Click [here](#) to read more

Edenred and the NAO report

Read our analysis of the National Audit Office's investigation into the free school meal voucher scheme, including points that have been missed from the press coverage.

Click [here](#) to read more

COVID- 19: We're still being asked for pay for supply teachers not currently working for us, is this correct?

Read our guidance on paying supply staff costs during the pandemic.

Click [here](#) to read more

To furlough or not?

We are still having conversations about whether or not Academies should furlough staff.

Click [here](#) to read more

Key contacts

If you would like to discuss any of these issues, please contact me directly:



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