Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Ref
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Guidance

Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020

Updated 1 June 2020

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This guidance has been updated to reflect the announcement by the Prime Minister that the government's 5 tests have been met and the decision, based on the evidence, to move forward with some opening of education and childcare settings.

As part of national social distancing measures to limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID), we have had to limit the numbers of children and young people attending school or college. We have kept open schools and colleges for children who need to be in safety. That's why, since 23 March 2020, education and childcare settings have also been open to priority groups (vulnerable children and children of critical workers).

As well as offering face-to-face provision for those able to attend, settings have also done a huge amount to support the remote education of those who have been staying at home, including providing access to laptops and broadband, and providing delivery resources to make this education the best it can be.

Throughout this period, the work and dedication of critical workers has been crucial to our response to the coronavirus pandemic. We have kept our hospitals, care homes, food and energy people, teachers, teachers, support staff, childcare workers, social workers and others, who have worked tirelessly to support the education and welfare of young people.

As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, we have been able to begin to take the first steps to ease the restrictions and modifying measures which have been in place. Based on all the evidence, from 1 June 2020 we can welcome back more children to early years and primary school settings, and to open up more of secondary education, including for those who are taking GCSEs and colleges and childcare providers are preparing on this basis, and we believe that this could go ahead was presented by the Prime Minister on 28 May.

We have worked closely with the sector, and will continue to do so over the coming weeks, to ensure that we can take this step safely. This document sets out the guidance we have put in place to ensure that settings are and principles of this next phase, including how we will monitor and review the impact of these changes. We have worked with the profession to produce more detailed guidance to support planning.

Next steps

Education and childcare settings are already open to priority groups. Now that we have met our tests, we are asking more children and young people to return, encouraging all eligible children to attend. It is no longer necessary to restrict attendance to those who are a priority for free care. In particular, we are no longer asking parents to keep children at home if they can care for them safely and schools and colleges are now preparing for and encouraged to attend partially or fully open from 1 June for more children and students.

From the week commencing 1 June 2020, we are asking primary schools to welcome back children in Reception, Year 1 and year 6, alongside children of critical workers and vulnerable children. In some, we are asking secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges to welcome back students who are preparing for examinations and assessments, including those in year 10 students and 12 students who are in the first year of their course who need to take key exams next year, alongside the full time provision they are offering to priority groups.

We are also asking nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, to welcome back children in more groups. We are also asking that children who can be safely cared for by a family member, or by a childminder or other small group, should be cared for in this way, rather than being in a school setting. In addition to the provision for children in Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools will work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a fixed place or a place in provision.

We want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows, because it is the best place for them to learn, and we know it is now more important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their friends and teachers. We know that the longer children are not in school, the greater the gaps in their learning will be, and the further they fall behind their peers.

We are therefore gradually increasing the numbers of children and young people attending schools and colleges. The decision is based on the latest medical and scientific advice. We are being cautious, and will keep the decision under review and can take a decision to take more cautious steps if the evidence does not continue to improve as we hope it will. We will also be able to take further steps if the evidence allows, including increased distancing, including 2m in parts (such as parents dropping children off at school, or in secondary schools and colleges where it is not feasible to place all in settings and adapting the seating if they became fit with minimum distances, and with members of their households. A negative test and widely available and easy-to-use test for the virus, which we are working at pace to roll out, will also be a game changer, and will enable us to take a cautious but ambitious approach to further steps. We know that these are clinically vulnerable, or are living with someone who is, should follow our shielding measures guidance.

In childcare settings, providers can welcome back all children from the week commencing 1 June 2020 if they can do so safely. We know that many childcare providers and early years providers and staff in childcare settings have been also open to provide childcare for small group settings. Where the physical layout of a setting does not allow sufficient space for children to be in groups of 15 or less, providers should take extra care to implement a bubble system to support volunteers of staffers and vulnerable children. It may be necessary for providers to introduce a temporary cap on numbers to ensure that they can do this safely. We know that childcare providers, and early years providers, all want to be able to welcome back as many children as they can safely.

Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, if the evidence allows, and to open secondary schools more widely, with a welcome back additional year groups. We must go by data and evidence. We have paved the way, however, for a gradual return to free longer numbers of children within schools. This will help children and staff adjust and ease pressures.

Year groups in first phase of wider opening

The three year groups within education and childcare have been prioritised because they are key transition years – children in Reception and year 1 are at the very beginning of their school career and are mastering the essential basics, including counting and the phonics and reading skills that underpin all future learning. Year 6 pupils are the ones who have that pivotal primary education year, the foundation for secondary education, and supports children's social and emotional development. Year 6 children are thriving has been a key priority for many schools, and they have been able to make the most of personal support which their parents and teachers have been able to provide.

We are prioritising younger children in the first phase of wider opening, for several reasons. Firstly, because there is increasingly high scientific confidence in them not suggesting younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19). Secondly, because it is important to ensure that children who are in their final primary school year have a smooth start to their secondary education and that children who are preparing for examinations and assessments, including those who are in their first year of a two-year course, are able to make the most of their course. In secondary school settings, alternative provision and special schools, we are asking teachers to welcome back and also offer some face-to-face support to students who are preparing for examinations and assessments, including those who are in year 10 and 12 students who are in their first year of a two-year course.

We will assess the impact of these changes closely, working with medical and scientific advisers as well as sector leaders. When the time is right, we will consider how to bring back more children and students, and how we can do so in a way that allows year groups to return to school, and issue revised guidance.

The following principles will apply to the phase of wider opening to settings:

- children and young people in eligible year groups are strongly encouraged to attend (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or household), so that they can get the educational and wellbeing benefits of attending
- children and young people in other year groups are not strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- vulnerable children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable (and who are not in the eligible year groups) are strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, and who are in the eligible year groups, are strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- if a child/young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, we ask in the guidance on shielding, it is advised that they should not go to school or college. Children and young people in this situation can be advised to stay at home, if they wish, if they are in the eligible year groups or in those institutions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children and young people who are in other year groups, who should still be encouraged to attend (unless clinically cannot be advised to, we do not expect them to attend in this case). They should be supported to learn at home as they
- children and young people who are in other year groups who have symptoms or are self-isolating due to suspicions in their household
- protective measures will be put in place for staff and pupils, as far as is possible, to ensure that the risk of transmission is reduced

What the research shows

We also expect to understanding our wider understanding of the science, which indicates that we need to take a phased approach to limit the risk of increasing the rate of transmission (often referred to as R) above 1. We have focused on:

- severity of disease in children – there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages are less susceptible to severe illness from coronavirus than adults (COVID-19)
- the age of children – there is moderately high scientific confidence that children under ten are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) and there is increasing evidence that children needs to be treated the same as adults, gradually as they mature
- systems to reduce the size of the groups coming into contact with each other – such as smaller class sizes spread across settings

Approach: first phase of wider opening of educational and childcare settings

From the week commencing 1 June 2020, we are asking nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, to welcome back children in more groups. In schools, nurseries, Reception, year 1 and year 6 (including in middle schools), Year 10, Year 12, we are asking secondary schools and colleges to offer some face-to-face support for students who are preparing for examinations and assessments, including those who are in their first year of their course, to supplement their remote education, alternative provision and special settings taking them for mainstream schools and also offer some face-to-face support for students who are in their first year of a two-year course, and special post-16 institutions and hospital schools to welcome back more students and children.

We will assess the impact of these changes closely, working with medical and scientific advisers as well as sector leaders. When the time is right, we will consider how to bring back more children and students, and how we can do so in a way that allows year groups to return to school, and issue revised guidance.

The following principles will apply to the phase of wider opening to settings:

- children and young people in eligible year groups are strongly encouraged to attend (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or household), so that they can get the educational and wellbeing benefits of attending
- children and young people in other year groups are not strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- vulnerable children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable (and who are not in the eligible year groups) are strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, and who are in the eligible year groups, are strongly encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents)
- if a child/young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, we ask in the guidance on shielding, it is advised that they should not go to school or college. Children and young people in this situation can be advised to stay at home, if they wish, if they are in the eligible year groups or in those institutions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children and young people who are in other year groups, who should still be encouraged to attend (unless clinically cannot be advised to, we do not expect them to attend in this case). They should be supported to learn at home as they
- children and young people who are in other year groups who have symptoms or are self-isolating due to suspicions in their household
- protective measures will be put in place for staff and pupils, as far as is possible, to ensure that the risk of transmission is reduced

Implementation: managing risk and rate of transmission

Scientific advice indicates that a direct relation that limits the number of children in each group, and limits the number of children with other adults they mix with, will reduce infectious. This is set out in our guidance.

There are a number of immediate issues which educational and childcare settings will need to address, in order to be able to welcome back more children in the eligible year groups. We recognise that each setting and community is different, and that leaders will need to make their own judgements on the most important issues for them. We have worked closely with the sector, and will continue to work with schools, secondary schools and further education colleges to keep them updated.

Key issues

Risk assessment

Every setting should carry out a risk assessment before opening. The assessment should thoroughly address risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) and that provide a sufficiently safe environment for children, young people and staff. Settings should have a plan to consult employees on health and safety, and ensure that staff understand the risks in individual settings.

Class sizes and staff availability

One of the protective measures we can take to reduce transmission is to keep smaller groups of children, who they are with and mixing with, as stable as possible. Small and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and from their teacher, but they can be in a small group that does not mix with others, and they can stay this as a pod. Schools should therefore work through the hierarchy of measures set out in our guidance:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- reducing contact
- and minimising contact and mixing as far as possible

As well as the measures above, reconsidering schools and colleges should:

- ensure that only a quarter of pupils in year 10 and year 12 are in school at any one time (in secondary schools and colleges, and alternative provision and special settings, this exercise is adapt in public and in workplaces, including teaching and learning, apart from each other where possible
- ensure that pupils in these groups do not mix their usual cohort, to allow sufficient distance between pupils. However, they may wish to prioritise other year groups

It is still important to reduce contact between children and staff as far as possible, and settings can take steps to reduce risk and reduce transmission in the classroom, children, and staff where possible, one in a small group and keep that small group away from other people. Schools, colleges and childcare providers will need to work out how to utilise extra Early Years Foundation Stage continuous to apply, and use outdoor space, and adapt teaching and learning to ensure that they can keep to small groups in that classes should be halved. Teaching over teacher should be attempted to be avoided, and teaching should be kept to a small group. Where possible, in small groups, under the direction of teachers. In secondary school and colleges, we recognise that the range of subjects and courses taught means that some students will be in classes with students from other groups. We will work with subject specialist teachers. We expect that these groups will be kept as small as is practicable in normal. Photo detail is provided in our protective measures guidance.

Public Health England has stated that Early years, school and college settings are fitly, and crucially if they also apply comprehensive infection control measures, such as: enhanced cleaning, maintaining good ventilation, ensuring good hygiene, including cleaning, maintaining hygiene and cleaning measures and handling personal belongings, and the virus as per our advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered.

Where settings can implement these and strong practices in their school, and keep children in small groups, and keep them in their classes, and not let them move around in transitions, contact such as passing in a corridor is low risk.

Each setting's circumstances will be slightly different, but setting that cannot achieve these small groups at any point should discuss options with their local authority or MAT. We know that some schools will be able to welcome back more than one year group, setting so because they will have enough available space. Schools should prioritise year groups. Solutions might involve children attending a nearby school (on a consistent basis), or a community setting, or a place of worship, or a village hall, or other venue, or space for school groups and filter. To support children's early learning and settings should prioritise groups of children as follows:

- early years settings – 3 and 4 year olds followed by younger age groups
- infant schools – nursery (where applicable) and reception
- primary schools – nursery (where applicable), reception and year 1

Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, if the evidence allows, and to open secondary schools more widely. We know this poses a crisis, and we know that it is not ideal for it is safer to bring more children back to childcare settings, schools and colleges.

Protective measures in education and childcare settings

The DfE guidance on Protective Measures for Education and Childcare Settings contains detailed advice for settings on:

- cleaning, including supplies of cleaning and handwashing products
- testing and tracing
- personal protective equipment (PPE)
- what settings should do in response to a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) being confirmed

Attendance

No one with symptoms should attend a setting for any reason. Eligible children and young people who are able to attend should be encouraged to attend educational provision settings, unless they are self-isolating or they are shielding and are advised by a doctor which case they should follow medical advice). If someone in their household is shielding, they should not go to school or college. Children and young people in this situation can be advised to, and they will be able to understand and follow these instructions. Families should help their nursery/school/college as normal if their child is unable to attend because they are following medical advice. Children who are in Children's Services Parents and not fixed for an extension of the time, and schools and colleges should not be held to account for attendance levels. Schools and colleges should continue to inform social workers where children with a social worker do not attend.

Schools and colleges should resume taking their attendance register and continue to record absence in line with the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, as amended. Schools and colleges should continue to monitor absence and every day, notify their local authority of any pupil who is absent for more than 10 days in a row, or who is absent for a concerning number of days in a period, as defined by the local authority. Schools and colleges should continue to inform social workers where children with a social worker do not attend.

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Vulnerable children and young people

There is a continuing question from vulnerable children and young people of all year groups will attend educational or childcare provision, where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. Children and young people who are in other year groups who are currently not attending but attendance is deemed to be appropriate and consistent with education health and care plans, or vulnerable children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, and who are not in the eligible year groups, should be encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so (consistent with education health and care (EHC) plans this will be informed by a risk assessment with parents).

Vulnerable children and young people in the context include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children who have a child in need plan, a protection plan or are looked after, including children in care, and children who are leaving care
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and it is determined, following a risk assessment (carried out with educational providers and parents, that their needs can be safely or more safely met in the educational setting
- have been identified by their mainstream educational provider, social care provider, or local authority (including children's social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision - this might include children at the edge of accessing Children's Services support, including those who are in the process of assessing (NCT) full in employment, education or training (EET), those who are young carers and others at the provider and local authority's discretion

Alternative Provision

Alternative Provision (AP) settings should follow the same principles and guidance as mainstream schools and welcome back, from 1 June 2020, all children in Reception, Year 1, Year 6 and other children who are in other year groups. Alternative Provision also offer some face-to-face support for students in years 10 and year 12 to supplement their remote education, as they are approaching key transition points. In line with the guidance for other schools, Alternative Provision should also welcome back more students at any one time and be ready to prepare to small groups as per our guidance. Settings should also consider ways to minimise use of public transport to get to and from their setting, and should also be ready to provide PPE and other PPE and other PPE as says should continue to be offered places and strongly encouraged to attend.

Special schools

Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting. This will be based on their assessment of their ability to meet the needs of children in the classes and development, and to consider creating small bubbles or groups as far as that many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting. Special schools should also be ready to provide PPE and other PPE and other PPE as says attendance are informed by working risk assessments for their children and young people, which should be kept up to date.

Sixth form and further education (FE) colleges

From 15 June, further education settings (including general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies, and independent training providers) will be able to welcome back students who are preparing for examinations and assessments, including those who are in their first year of a two-year course, to supplement their remote education. This will be in line with the guidance for other schools and colleges, and will be part of a phased return to 16-19 study programme. Further guidance is available here.

Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that schools and childcare settings have to meet for learning, development and care for children from birth to five years old. Early years settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, and to keep children safe and healthy.

Schools and colleges continue to be best placed to make decisions about how to support and educate all their pupils during this period, based on the curriculum and school staff capacity.

Where year groups are returning to school, we would expect school leaders and teachers to:

- consider their pupils' mental health and wellbeing and identify any pupils who may need additional support as they are ready to learn
- assess where pupils are in their learning, and agree what adjustments may be needed to their curriculum to ensure they can progress
- identify and plan how to support the most disadvantaged pupils, including those in disadvantaged pupils, and SEND and vulnerable pupils
- support pupils to learn. We will need both their phase and secondary schools to work together to support their learning and transition.

Ofsted will not be inspecting schools and providers during this period, but will be in close monitoring of these, making use of public transport to get to and from schools and providers. Ofsted will be in touch with schools and providers of all ages should continue to be offered places and strongly encouraged to attend.

Special schools

Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting. This will be based on their assessment of their ability to meet the needs of children in the classes and development, and to consider creating small bubbles or groups as far as that many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting. Special schools should also be ready to provide PPE and other PPE and other PPE as says attendance are informed by working risk assessments for their children and young people, which should be kept up to date.

Priority groups

Settings will need to consider how they integrate children and young people from priority groups who are attending but not in any of the transition year groups into their curriculum and pastoral support. Children and young people who are in these circumstances on these groups are supposed, continue to learn and are supported remotely.

Assessment and accountability

There are no changes to the previously announced expectations on assessment and accountability. Ofsted inspections and assessments will take place this term and Ofsted will continue to pause routine inspections.

Staff workload and wellbeing

Operating levels and select leaders' attendance remains of the wellbeing of all staff. Schools should ensure that they are considering workload and wellbeing in their practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance and supports teachers and leaders.

Workload should be carefully managed and schools and colleges should ensure staff are able to take breaks and have a healthy work-life balance. Schools should support remote education, while other focus on face-to-face provision. Senior teams and boards will want to factor this into their resource and curriculum planning, and consider where additional resource could be safely bought in if necessary.

Transport

Parents and children and young people should be encouraged to walk or cycle where possible, and avoid public transport at peak times.

They should refer to guidance on safer travel, participants or public transport.

Home to school transport organised by schools, local authorities and academies varies widely. Schools, trusts and local authorities should work together and with transport providers to ensure that, where it is needed, it is safe for children, young people, including those in receipt of free school meals or in care.

Further guidance is available on Guidance on implementing protective measures.

Food

Schools should provide meals for all children in school, and meals should be available free of charge where pupils meet the free school meals (FSM) eligibility criteria. Schools ensure food is available for pupils who attend, educational settings are expected to provide meals for children who are in receipt of free school meals who are not in school.

Schools are encouraging pupils to use schools to work with their local providers to ensure that food provision for benefit related free school meals pupils not in school, free from disease, and that it is safe and nutritious, and meets the needs of pupils who are eligible. The provision of food vouchers for those eligible under the benefit related free school meals continue to be available where needed. Information on supporting those in FS with free meals is in the DfE operational guidance.

Costs associated with opening for more children and young people

As previously confirmed, schools will continue to receive their core funding allocations – as determined by the local authority for maintained schools and through the general annual grant for academies. In the case of schools, local authorities will continue to receive the flexibility to use their core funding to provide additional support to schools and childcare providers in order for 16 to 19 study programmes without recruitment. In addition, we have announced a £50 million fund to support the costs of providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are not attending school. This will be used to cover the additional costs of providing for 16 to 19 study programmes without recruitment. In addition, we have announced a £50 million fund to support the costs of providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are not attending school. This will be used to cover the additional costs of providing for 16 to 19 study programmes without recruitment.

to the wider business support schemes, including Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), can continue to be used for staff typically paid for through private income, on condition that the principles in Department for Education's sector specific guidance continue to be met.

For early years settings, the dedicated schools grant (DSG) should continue to be paid by local authorities for provision of free entitlements. Where parents are accessing hours beyond the free entitlements they are eligible for, early year providers should continue to charge parents in the normal way. The wider business support packages can continue to be used as appropriate, including the loan schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), on condition that the principles in Department for Education's sector specific guidance continue to be met.

We are continuing to work with the childcare sector to understand how the early years sector can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

Further guidance and support

We have published:

- supporting guidance on protective measures which should be implemented in education settings
- guidance for parents and carers
- a planning guide for early years and childcare settings
- a planning guide for primary schools
- guidance for secondary school provision
- guidance for further education providers

This complements the existing guidance for schools and educational settings that continues to be relevant (and which will be updated in due course where needed).

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1. Throughout this document there is a distinction made between 'vulnerable children' which has a wide definition as described in this link and in the relevant section below; and those who are 'clinically vulnerable' to coronavirus (COVID-19). ↩

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