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Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Guidance for full opening - schools

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Introduction

It is our plan that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

This guidance is intended to support schools, both mainstream and alternative provision, to prepare for this. It applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), infant, junior, middle, upper, school-based nurseries and boarding schools. We expect independent schools to follow the control measures set out in this document in the same way as state-funded schools. The guidance also covers expectations for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), including those with education, health and care plans, in mainstream schools.

Separate guidance is available for early years, further education colleges and for special schools.

This guidance is in 5 sections. The first section sets out the actions school leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission in their school. This is public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

The rest of the guidance is focused on how the Department for Education (DfE) expects schools to operate in this new context. This includes:

- school operations
- curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support
- assessment and accountability
- contingency planning to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak

This guidance has been prepared with input from school leaders, unions and sector bodies and in consultation with PHE and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

We will keep this guidance under review and update as necessary.

Welcoming children back to school

When we made the decision to ask schools to open only to a small number of children, this was done with the aim of reducing transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), to protect the NHS and save lives. As the situation improved, we began to consider how we could bring more children and young people back into schools, and supported primary schools to do so from 1 June, focusing on some year groups being educated in small 'bubbles', and secondary schools from 15 June, with Year 10 and 12 spending some time in school in small groups, with public health risk reduction measures in place. Since 15 June, primary schools have also had flexibility to bring back other pupils where they have space to do so.

Now, the circumstances have changed. The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased our NHS Test and Trace system is up and running, and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools.

Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children's future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.

The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. We know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.

Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well-qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households, school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.

In relation to working in schools, whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, the Office of National Statistics analysis on coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths linked to occupations suggest that staff in educational settings tend not to be at any greater risk from the disease than many other occupations. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.

Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), and this guidance explains the steps schools need to take to reduce risks still further. As a result, we can plan for all children to return and start to reverse the enormous costs of missed education. This will be an important move back towards normal life for many children and families.

We are, therefore, asking schools to prepare to welcome all children back this autumn. While coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, this means making judgments at a school level about how to balance and minimise any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience for children and young people. Schools should use their existing resources to make arrangements to welcome all children back. There are no plans at present to reimburse additional costs incurred as part of that process.

The measures set out in this guidance provide a framework for school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff, which also ensure that all pupils receive a high quality education that enables them to thrive and progress. In welcoming all children back this autumn, schools will be asked to minimise the number of contacts that a pupil has during the school day as part of implementing the system of controls outlined below to reduce the risk of transmission. If schools follow the guidance set out here, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

While our aim is to have all pupils back at school in the autumn, every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education.

Purpose of this guidance

The first section of this guidance sets out the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at school. This guidance has been developed with advice from PHE.

The public health advice in this guidance makes up a PHE-endorsed 'system of controls', building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

The system of controls provides a set of principles and if schools follow this advice, they will effectively minimise risks. All elements of the system of controls are essential. All schools must cover them all, but the way different schools implement some of the requirements will differ based on their individual circumstances. Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by PHE, we have said 'must'. Where there is a legal requirement we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach where the system of controls describes every scenario. School leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk. The system of controls provides a set of principles to help them do this and, if schools follow this advice, they will effectively minimise risks.

We expect schools and trusts to work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would, when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances. Where the personal circumstances of parents and/or staff create added concerns, schools and trusts should discuss these, and we have offered advice in this document about how to do this. We want all pupils and staff to be back in schools, and believe the conditions are right for this, but some people will understandably have worries that should be heard and addressed.

The rest of the guidance sets out more details on how DfE expects schools to operate in the autumn term. This covers:

- school operations, including attendance, workforce, estates, catering
- curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support
- assessment and accountability, including plans for inspection
- contingency planning in case of self-isolation of multiple pupils or staff or local outbreaks

Section 1: Public health advice to minimise coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

We are asking schools to prepare for all pupils to return full time from the start of the autumn term, including those in school-based nurseries. Schools should not put in place rotas.

Schools must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Schools should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments and draw up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using the system of controls set out below. These are an adapted form of the system of protective measures that will be familiar from the summer term. Essential measures include:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:

- grouping children together
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

Risk assessment

Employers must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, pupils and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within the education setting.

Schools have remained open to some pupils since 20 March, welcoming more pupils back from 1 June. Schools should therefore have already assessed the risks and implemented proportionate control measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus

(COVID-19) for a limited number of pupils.

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed), to consider the additional risks and control measures to enable a return to full capacity in the autumn term. Settings should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls in respect of their conventional risk profile considering the implications of coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should ensure that they implement sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of control to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

School employers should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice

For more information on what is required of school employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments, see annex A.

The system of controls: protective measures

Having assessed their risk, schools must work through the below system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school, and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for their pupils, including full educational and care support for those pupils who have SEND.

If schools follow the guidance set out here they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

System of controls

This is the set of actions schools must take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection' and are outlined in more detail in the sections below.

Prevention:

1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school

2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach

5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community

9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school

Ensuring that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 7 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). All schools must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the child, with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance.

If a child in a boarding school shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their residential setting household. Most children will benefit from self-isolating in their boarding house so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their family home. For more information on how to care for a symptomatic child while protecting the welfare of other pupils and staff, read the guidance on isolation for residential educational settings.

As is usual practice, in an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any pupils who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test & Trace.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

Public Health England is clear that routinely taking the temperature of pupils is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. Schools must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement:

- whether the school has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' available so that all pupils and staff can clean their hands regularly

- supervision of hand sanitiser use given risks around ingestion. Small children and pupils with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly. Skin friendly skin cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative
- building these routines into school culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so schools must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available in the school to support pupils and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, schools must ensure younger children and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all pupils understand that this is now part of how school operates. Some pupils with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these pupils and the staff working with them, and is not a reason to deny these pupils face to face education.

Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in schools. This evidence will be kept under review. They are not required in schools as pupils and staff are mixing in consistent groups, and because misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. There may also be negative effects on communication and thus education. Face coverings are required at all times on public transport (for children, over the age of 11) or when attending a hospital as a visitor or outpatient.

4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach

Points to consider and implement:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:
  - more frequent cleaning of rooms / shared areas that are used by different groups
  - frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- different groups don't need to be allocated their own toilet blocks, but toilets will need to be cleaned regularly and pupils must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet

By the end of the summer term, Public Health England will publish revised guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings to advise on general cleaning required in addition to the current advice on COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

5. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and schools must consider how to implement this. Schools must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on:

- children's ability to distance
- the lay out of the school
- the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum (especially at secondary)

It is likely that for younger children the emphasis will be on separating groups, and for older children it will be on distancing. For children old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff where possible.

Points to consider and implement.

How to group children

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. They have been used in schools in the summer term in recognition that children, and especially the youngest children, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other and this provides an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible.

However, the use of small groups restricts the normal operation of schools and presents both educational and logistical challenges, including the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as playgrounds, boarding houses, dining halls, and toilets, and the provision of specialist teaching. This is the case in both primary and secondary schools, but is particularly difficult in secondary schools.

In this guidance for the autumn term, maintaining consistent groups remains important, but given the decrease in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, schools may need to change the emphasis on bubbles within their system of controls and increase the size of these groups.

In secondary schools, and certainly in the older age groups at key stage 4 and key stage 5, the groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and students to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended. At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (key stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in group become ill with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Schools should assess their circumstances and if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around school, they can look to implement year group sized 'bubbles'. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and older children should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible. When using larger groups the other measures from the system of controls become even more important, to minimise transmission risks and to minimise the numbers of pupils and staff who may need to self-isolate. We recognise that younger children will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all-or-nothing' options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep children in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport, or for boarding pupils in one group residentially and another during the school day. Siblings may also be in different groups. Endeavouring to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between children will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

All teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable. This will be particularly important for secondary schools. Where staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger children and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.

Measures within the classroom

Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face to contact lowers the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that staff in secondary schools maintain distance from their pupils, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other, and from children. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger children, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many pupils who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These pupils' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

For children old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest children and some children with complex needs and it is not feasible in some schools where space does not allow. Schools doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

When staff or children cannot maintain distancing, particularly with younger children in primary schools, the risk can also be reduced by keeping pupils in the smaller, class-sized groups described above.

Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating pupils side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space..

Measures elsewhere

Groups should be kept apart, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the school site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups).

Schools should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

Measures for arriving at and leaving school

We know that travel to school patterns differ greatly between schools. If those patterns allow, schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. A staggered start may, for example, include condensing / staggering free periods or break time but retaining the same amount of teaching time, or keeping the length of the day the same but starting and finishing later to avoid rush hour. Schools should consider how to communicate this to parents and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, including that gathering at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.

Schools should also have a process for removing face coverings when pupils and staff who use them arrive at school and communicate it clearly to them. Pupils must be instructed not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival (as is the case for all pupils), dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands again before heading to their classroom. Guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care provides more advice.

Other considerations

Some pupils with SEND (whether with education, health and care plans or on SEN support) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and/or other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff. Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for

pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual. Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, and ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors.

Where a child routinely attends more than one setting on a part time basis, for example because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and an alternative provision setting or special school, schools should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified and allowing them to jointly deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the child.

Equipment and resources are integral to education in schools. During the summer term, their use was minimised, many were moved out of classrooms, and there was significant extra cleaning. That position has now changed for the autumn term, because prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased and because they are so important for the delivery of education. For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, it is recommended that staff and pupils have their own items that are not shared. Classroom based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared within the bubble; these should be cleaned regularly, along with all frequently touched surfaces. Resources that are shared between classes or bubbles, such as sports, art and science equipment should be cleaned frequently and meticulously and always between bubbles, or rotated to allow them to be left unused and out of reach for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different bubbles.

Outdoor playground equipment should be more frequently cleaned. This would also apply to resources used inside and outside by wraparound care providers. It is still recommended that pupils limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, hats, coats, books, stationery and mobile phones. Bags are allowed. Pupils and teachers can take books and other shared resources home, although unnecessary sharing should be avoided, especially where this does not contribute to pupil education and development. Similar rules on hand cleaning, cleaning of the resources and rotation should apply to these resources.

6. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases, including:

- where an individual child or young person becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at schools, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- where a child or young person already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

Read the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care for more information about preventing and controlling infection, including when, how PPE should be used, what type of PPE to use, and how to source it.

Response to any infection

7. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Schools must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process and how to contact their local Public Health England health protection team. Schools must ensure that staff members and parents/carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they are displaying symptoms. Staff and pupils must not come into the school if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them in school. All children can be tested, including children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents/carers if using a home testing kit
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test & Trace
- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient. We will release more details on new testing avenues as and when they become available and will work with schools so they understand what the quickest and easiest way is to get a test. By the autumn term, all schools will be provided with a small number of home testing kits that they can give directly to parents/carers collecting a child who has developed symptoms at school, or staff who have developed symptoms at school, where they think providing one will significantly increase the likelihood of them getting tested. Advice will be provided alongside these kits.

Schools should ask parents and staff to inform them immediately of the results of a test:

- if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.
- if someone tests positive, they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

8. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community

Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

The health protection team will work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between children and staff in different groups (see section 5 of system of control for more on grouping pupils). This should be a proportionate recording process. Schools do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

A template letter will be provided to schools, on the advice of the health protection team, to send to parents and staff if needed. Schools must not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others.

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'. They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'

Schools should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

Further guidance is available on testing and tracing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

9. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If schools have two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, they may have an outbreak, and must continue to work with their local health protection team who will be able to advise if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole site or year group. If schools are implementing controls from this list, addressing the risks they have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole school closure based on cases within the school will not generally be necessary, and should not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

In consultation with the local Director of Public Health, where an outbreak in a school is confirmed, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive. Testing will first focus on the person's class, followed by their year group, then the whole school if necessary, in line with routine public health outbreak control practice.

Alternative Provision

It is our intention that all pupils in alternative provision (AP) settings (including pupil referral units, AP academies and AP free schools) will return to school full time from the start of the autumn term. To support this return, AP settings must comply with health and safety law which requires employers to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. They should work through the system of controls outlined above, adopting measures that help them meet each control in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their setting, and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils.

When working through the system of controls, APs should take steps to minimise social contact and mixing as far as is practicable. All APs, especially larger AP schools, should consider whether pupils can be placed into smaller groups and still receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Due to the smaller size of many AP settings, and because APs are not typically organised by year groups, APs may wish to adopt whole school bubbles as part of their system of control and in order to best meet the needs of their students.

Section 2: School operations

Transport

Social distancing has significantly reduced available transport capacity. This guidance sets out a new framework for supporting transport to and from schools from the autumn term.

We are making a distinction between dedicated school transport and wider public transport:

- by dedicated school transport, we mean services that are used only to carry pupils to school. This includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry school pupils only
- by public transport services, we mean routes which are also used by the general public

Dedicated school transport, including statutory provision

Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. This means that the advice for passengers on public transport to adopt a social distance of two metres from people outside their household or support bubble, or a 'one metre plus' approach where this is not possible, will not apply from the autumn term on dedicated transport.

The approach to dedicated transport should align as far as possible with the principles underpinning the system of controls set out in this document and with the approach being adopted for your school. It is important to consider:

- how pupils are grouped together on transport, where possible this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school
- use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and/or disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles
- organised queuing and boarding where possible
- distancing within vehicles wherever possible
- the use of face coverings for children over the age of 11, where appropriate, for example, if they are likely to come into very close contact with people outside of their group or who they do not normally meet

Dedicated school services can take different forms. Some journeys involve coaches regularly picking up the same pupils each day, others involve use of a minibus whilst other services are used by different pupils on different days, or by pupils with SEND. The precise approach taken will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the different circumstances.

It will also require a partnership approach between local authorities, schools, trusts, dioceses and others. In particular, it is imperative that schools work closely with local authorities that have statutory responsibility for 'home to school transport' for many children, as well as a vital role in working with local transport providers to ensure sufficient bus service provision. DfE will shortly publish new guidance to local authorities on providing dedicated school transport, based on the framework outlined here.

Given the pressures on public transport services it may also be necessary to work with local authorities so that they can identify where it might be necessary to provide additional dedicated school transport services, including in places where these services do not currently operate. The government is currently evaluating this position and will set out next steps shortly.

Wider public transport

In many areas, pupils normally make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses. We expect that public transport capacity will continue to be constrained in the autumn term. Its use by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

To facilitate the return of all pupils to school, it will be necessary to take steps to both depress the demand for public transport and to increase capacity within the system. Both will require action at a national and local level. Schools have a critical role to play in supporting collaboration between all parties - providers, local authorities, parents and pupils.

Schools should work with partners to consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours. We recognise that this option will be more feasible in some circumstances than others.

Schools should encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if at all possible. Schools may want to consider using 'walking buses' (a supervised group of children being walked to, or from, school), or working with their local authority to promote safe cycling routes. The government has announced a £2 billion package to promote cycling and walking, including to support pop-up bicycle lanes and widened pavements. For some families, driving children to school will also be an option.

However, these options will not be suitable for all. The Department for Transport is asking local authorities to:

- urgently work with schools to survey parents on their typical routes to school and potential alternatives
- consider a range of options for shifting demand for public transport onto other modes
- consider using traffic demand management approaches in order to ensure that children are able to attend school from the start of the autumn term

Travel patterns, the availability of vehicles, the length of journeys undertaken, and other local pressures on public transport vary significantly. The government recognises the challenge but is confident that if all available options are considered by all parties it will be possible to reduce demand and ensure transport is available for those who need it most. Experience during the 2012 London Olympics showed that it is possible to make a very real difference to travel patterns where there is a concerted effort to do so and where the general public understand the imperative for doing so.

Families using public transport should refer to the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Attendance

Attendance expectations

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the current advice on shielding
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school in September (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity (as set out in the section below).

Where children to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).

Action for all schools and local authorities

We are asking schools to work with families to secure regular school attendance from the start of term as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

We are asking schools and local authorities to:

- communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year
- identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic
- use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance
- work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance

We will issue further technical guidance for schools to record attendance and absence, including what data schools will be asked to return to the department.

School workforce

Following the reduction in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and relaxation of shielding measures from 1 August, we expect that most staff will attend school.

It remains the case that wider government policy advises those who can work from home to do so. We recognise this will not be applicable to most school staff, but where a role may be conducive to home working for example, some administrative roles, school leaders should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable

Where schools apply the full measures in this guidance the risks to all staff will be mitigated significantly, including those who are extremely clinically vulnerable and clinically vulnerable. We expect this will allow most staff to return to the workplace, although we advise those in the most at risk categories to take particular care while community transmission rates continue to fall.

Advice for those who are clinically-vulnerable, including pregnant women, is available.

Individuals who were considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable and received a letter advising them to shield are now advised that they can return to work from 1 August as long as they maintain social distancing. Advice for those who are extremely clinically vulnerable can be found in the guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19.

School leaders should be flexible in how those members of staff are deployed to enable them to work remotely where possible or in roles in school where it is possible to maintain social distancing.

People who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable can attend the workplace.

Staff who are pregnant

As a general principle, pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category and are advised to follow the relevant guidance available for clinically-vulnerable people.

Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report. The reasons are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future. If people with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and explain the measures the school is putting in place to reduce risks. School leaders should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures where appropriate.

People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Employer health and safety and equalities duties

Schools have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, from harm and should continue to assess health and safety risks and consider how to meet equalities duties in the usual way. Following the steps in this guidance will mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to pupils and staff and help schools to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

Supporting staff

Governing boards and school leaders should have regard to staff (including the headteacher) work-life balance and wellbeing. Schools should ensure they have explained to all staff the measures they are proposing putting in place and involve all staff in that process.

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. Schools already have mechanisms to support staff wellbeing and these will be particularly important, as some staff may be particularly anxious about returning to school. The Department for Education is providing additional support for both pupil and staff wellbeing in the current situation. Information about the extra mental health support for pupils and teachers is available.

The Education Support Partnership provides a free helpline for school staff and targeted support for mental health and wellbeing.

Staff deployment

Schools may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff, and use existing staff more flexibly to welcome back all pupils at the start of the autumn term. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals.

It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens. This could include a review of existing practices in this respect and schools may wish to draw on DfE's workload reduction toolkit.

DfE has also published a range of resources, including case studies to support remote education and help address staff workload, this includes case studies on managing wellbeing.

If, having pursued all the immediate options available, you still have concerns about your staffing capacity talk to your local authority or trust.

Deploying support staff and accommodating visiting specialists

Schools should ensure that appropriate support is made available for pupils with SEND, for example by deploying teaching assistants and enabling specialist staff from both within and outside the school to work with pupils in different classes or year groups.

Where support staff capacity is available, schools may consider using this to support catch-up provision or targeted interventions. Teaching assistants may also be deployed to lead groups or cover lessons, under the direction and supervision of a qualified, or nominated, teacher (under the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012 for maintained schools and non-maintained special schools and in accordance with the freedoms provided under the funding agreement for academies). Any redeployments should not be at the expense of supporting pupils with SEND. Headteachers should be satisfied that the person has the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work, and discuss and agree any proposed changes in role or responsibility with the member of staff. This includes ensuring that safe ratios are met, and/or specific training undertaken, for any interventions or care for pupils with complex needs where specific training or specific ratios are required.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published guidance on making the best use of teaching assistants to help primary and secondary schools.

When deploying support staff flexibly it is important that headteachers consider regulated activity and ensure only those who have the appropriate checks are allowed to engage in regulated activity. Full guidance is provided in part 3 of keeping children safe in education.

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual. The government's Teaching Vacancies service can help schools to list vacancies for both permanent and short-term teaching staff quickly. As the free national service for searching and listing teaching roles we will be directing newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and job seeking teachers to this service.

We recommend that schools continue to recruit remotely over the summer period.

Interviewing remotely may be a new experience for many schools. The DfE teaching blog provides some information on the experience of implementing interviews remotely. There is also advice that can be sent to candidates on how to prepare for remote interviews.

When recruiting, schools must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks. We refer schools to part 3 of the statutory guidance keeping children safe in education. During the summer, safeguarding checks can be carried out remotely as set out in coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers. From the start of the autumn term checks will revert to being carried out in person. Initial teacher training (ITT) providers have worked flexibly to ensure this year's NQTs are ready and prepared to enter the classroom. They will also be supported by materials the Department for Education is making available to all schools based on the early career framework reforms, to support them as they start their teaching career. Schools in the early roll-out regions (Bradford, Doncaster, Greater Manchester and the North East) will be able to benefit from the full support package being offered to some 2,000 NQTs from the autumn. In addition, around 3,000 NQTs will be offered a one-year version of the structured support package.

Supply teachers and other temporary or peripatetic teachers

Schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this period. We recommend that schools consider using DfE's and Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal when hiring agency workers, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge.

Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between schools, but school leaders will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the school where possible. Where it is necessary to use supply staff and to welcome visitors to the school such as peripatetic teachers, those individuals will be expected to comply with the school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the school premises, and secure best value, schools may wish to use longer assignments with supply teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year. This advice for supply teachers also applies to other temporary staff working in schools such as support staff working on a supply basis, peripatetic teachers such sports coaches, and those engaged to deliver before and after school clubs.

Expectation and deployment of ITT trainees

We strongly encourage schools to consider hosting ITT trainees. Demand for teacher

training is high this year and, while it is understandable that schools will have prioritised other activity, there is a risk that insufficient training places will be available. ITT trainees have the potential to play a significant role in supporting schools. Schools should consider how they could host ITT trainees, and discuss with relevant ITT providers how this can be done flexibly and innovatively to help meet both school and trainee needs. Deployment decisions will need to take into account the skills and capacity of the trainees in question.

Trainees could:

- take responsibility, with the usual mentor oversight, for small groups of pupils across or within years, adapting resources for such groups, creating online learning materials, re-planning sequences of lessons or delivering catch-up lessons
- be engaged in wider professional activity, for instance tackling pupil, family and school needs by learning about, identifying and addressing challenges such as vulnerability, mental health problems or safeguarding issues
- develop or engage in working groups to share best practice around resilience, commitment and team-working
- work in pairs or groups to co-plan, co-teach and co-assess lessons with their mentors or other trainees. Paired and group placements, where these are possible, benefit trainees, mentors and teaching staff, promoting a greater sense of team collaboration, ongoing professional learning and reductions in workload

This is not intended to be exhaustive and ITT partnerships will need to ensure they have identified and comply with all legislation and guidance relevant to ITT.

Staff taking leave

We recognise that school staff have been working extremely hard throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and will be working hard to prepare for all pupils to return from the start of the autumn term. Many staff will want to take a holiday over the summer period, which may involve travelling abroad. The government has set a requirement for people returning from some countries to quarantine for 14 days on their return. The latest guidance on quarantine can be accessed at coronavirus (COVID-19): how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK.

As would usually be the case, staff will need to be available to work in school from the start of the autumn term. We recommend that school leaders discuss leave arrangements with staff before the end of the summer term to inform planning for the autumn term.

There is a risk that where staff travel abroad, their return travel arrangements could be disrupted due to factors arising beyond their control in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), such as the potential for reinstatement of lockdown measures in the place they are visiting.

Where it is not possible to avoid a member of staff having to quarantine during term time, school leaders should consider if it is possible to temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.

Other support

Volunteers may be used to support the work of the school, as would usually be the case. It is important that they are properly supported and given appropriate roles. Where schools and colleges are utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in the volunteer section in Part 3 of keeping children safe in education. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity. Mixing of volunteers across groups should be kept to a minimum, and they should remain 2 metres from pupils and staff where possible.

Safeguarding

Schools should consider revising their child protection policy (led by their Designated Safeguarding Lead) to reflect the return of more pupils. Schools must have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, keeping children safe in education and should refer to the coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers guidance.

Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be provided with more time, especially in the first few weeks of term, to help them provide support to staff and children regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns and the handling of referrals to children's social care and other agencies where these are appropriate, and agencies and services should prepare to work together to actively look for signs of harm.

Communication with school nurses is important for safeguarding and supporting wellbeing, as they have continued virtual support to pupils who have not been in school.

Catering

We expect that kitchens will be fully open from the start of the autumn term and normal legal requirements will apply about provision of food to all pupils who want it, including for those eligible for benefits-related free school meals or universal infant free school meals.

School kitchens can continue to operate, but must comply with the guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

Estates

We do not consider it necessary for schools to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all children back to school. We also do not think schools will need to deliver any of their education on other sites (such as community centres / village halls) because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use. Following a risk assessment, some schools may determine that small adaptations to their site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual schools, based on their particular circumstances.

It is important that, prior to reopening for the autumn term, all the usual pre-term building checks are undertaken to make the school safe. If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. Advice on this can be found in the guidance on Legionella risks during the coronavirus outbreak.

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers' guidance on emerging from lockdown.

Once the school is in operation, it is important to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak.

In classrooms, it will be important that schools improve ventilation, (for example, by opening windows).

Educational visits

We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight and overseas educational visits at this stage see coronavirus: travel guidance for educational settings.

In the autumn term, schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. These trips should include any trips for pupils with SEND connected with their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits, travel training etc.). This should be done in line with protective measures, such as keeping children within their consistent group, and the coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures in place at the destination. Schools should also make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support delivery of the curriculum. As normal, schools should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be done safely. As part of this risk assessment, schools will need to consider what control measures need to be used and ensure they are aware of wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues. Schools should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits.

School uniform

It is for the governing body of a school (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to make decisions regarding school uniform. Some schools may have relaxed their uniform policy while only certain categories of pupils were attending. We would, however, encourage all schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

Schools should consider how pupil non-compliance is managed, taking a mindful and considerate approach in relation to parents who may be experiencing financial pressures.

Extra-curricular provision

Schools should consider resuming any breakfast and after-school provision, where possible, from the start of the autumn term. We recognise that schools may need to respond flexibly and build this up over time. Such provision will help ensure pupils have opportunities to re-engage with their peers and with the school, ensure vulnerable children have a healthy breakfast and are ready to focus on their lessons, provide enrichment activities, and also support working parents.

We recognise that this will be logistically challenging for schools, particularly for clubs that would normally offer support across year groups, where parents are using multiple providers, or where childminders are picking up/dropping off pupils. Schools should carefully consider how they can make such provision work alongside their wider protective measures, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible. If it is not possible to maintain bubbles being used during the school day then schools should use small, consistent groups.

Schools can consult the guidance produced for summer holiday childcare, available at Protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreakas much of this will be useful in planning extra-curricular provision. This includes schools advising parents to limit the number of different wraparound providers they access, as far as possible. Where parents use childcare providers or out of school activities for their children, schools should encourage them to seek assurance that the providers are carefully considering their own protective measures, and only use those providers that can demonstrate this. As with physical activity during the school day, contact sports should not take place.

Section 3: Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support

Curriculum expectations

This section sets out some key principles and expectations for curriculum planning in school based nursery, mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision (AP), so that all pupils – particularly disadvantaged, SEND and vulnerable pupils – are given the catch-up support needed to make substantial progress by the end of the academic year.

The key principles that underpin our advice on curriculum planning are:

- education is not optional: all pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- the curriculum remains broad and ambitious: all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.
- remote education, where needed, is high quality and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision: schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate pupils remotely, where this is needed.

Informed by these principles, DfE asks that schools and other settings meet the following key expectations if considering revisions to their school curriculum for academic year 2020 to 2021:

Teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term, but make use of existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important missed content.

Up to and including key stage 3, prioritisation within subjects of the most important components for progression is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which pupils may struggle to pick up again later. In particular, schools may consider how all subjects can contribute to the filling of gaps in core knowledge, for example through an emphasis on reading

Aim to return to the school's normal curriculum in all subjects by summer term 2021.

Substantial modification to the curriculum may be needed at the start of the year, so teaching time should be prioritised to address significant gaps in pupils' knowledge with the aim of returning to the school's normal curriculum content by no later than summer term 2021.

Plan on the basis of the educational needs of pupils

Curriculum planning should be informed by an assessment of pupils' starting points and addressing the gaps in their knowledge and skills, in particular making effective use of regular formative assessment (for example, quizzes, observing pupils in class, talking to pupils to assess understanding, scrutiny of pupils' work) while avoiding the introduction of unnecessary tracking systems.

Develop remote education so that it is integrated into school curriculum planning

Remote education may need to be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some pupils, alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of a local lockdown. All schools are therefore expected to plan to ensure any pupils educated at home for some of the time are given the support they need to master the curriculum and so make good progress.

Schools may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils in exceptional circumstances. Schools should be able to show that this is in the best the interests of these pupils and be subject to discussion with parents during the autumn term. They should also have a coherent plan for returning to their normal curriculum for all pupils by the summer term 2021.

Relationships and health education (RHE) for primary aged pupil schools and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) for secondary aged pupils becomes compulsory from September 2020, and schools are expected to start teaching by at least the start of the summer term 2021.

Specific points for early years foundation stage (EYFS) to key stage 3

For children in nursery settings, teachers should focus on the prime areas of learning, including: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and physical development. For pupils in Reception Year, teachers should also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary. Settings should follow updates to the EYFS disapplication guidance. For nursery settings and Reception, consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor learning.

For pupils in key stages 1 and 2, school leaders are expected to prioritise identifying gaps and re-establish good progress in the essentials (phonics and reading, increasing vocabulary, writing and mathematics), identifying opportunities across the curriculum so they read widely, and developing their knowledge and vocabulary. The curriculum should remain broad, so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, humanities, the arts, PE/sport, RE and RHE.

For pupils in key stage 3, the curriculum should also remain broad from year 7 to year 9 so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, languages, humanities, the arts, PE/sport, RE and RSHE. For pupils in year 7, it may be necessary to address gaps in English and maths by teaching essential knowledge and skills from the key stage 2 curriculum.

Specific points for Key Stages 4 and 5

As with earlier key stages, it is likely that pupils in key stage 4 and 5 will need extra support to catch up on any content they have missed, but the school curriculum may be less flexible given the requirements of qualification specifications.

To ensure exams and assessments next summer are as fair as possible, and take into account any public health requirements and the well-being of students, Ofqual will consult on proposals for next year shortly, and will confirm its decisions as soon as possible to allow time for schools to prepare.

The vast majority of pupils in year 10 and 11 are expected to continue to study their examination subjects. This will support them towards their preferred route to further study.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be in the best interests of a year 11 pupil to discontinue an examined subject because the school judges that, for example, they would achieve significantly better in their remaining subjects as a result, especially in GCSE English and mathematics.

School leaders are expected to make such decisions in discussion with pupils and parents and informed by ongoing assessment of a pupil's progress and wellbeing, using the existing discretion that schools already apply on these matters.

Schools are expected to review any plans for early entry among year 10 pupils in summer 2021. It may be in the best interests of the pupil to take their exams and assessments the following year when they are in year 11, if the curriculum can be adjusted to provide further teaching and study time in the summer term and academic year 2021 to 2022.

Pupils in years 12 and 13 are more likely to undertake self-directed study, but may still need additional support. Compared to key stage 4, there is less scope to drop an examined subject as fewer qualifications are studied at this key stage. Discontinuing a subject is therefore likely to significantly limit choices for further study and employment, so is expected to be rare.

Schools should note that there may be an additional risk of infection in environments where you or others are singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments or shouting. This applies even if individuals are at a distance. Schools should consider how to reduce the risk, particularly when pupils are playing instruments or singing in small groups such as in music lessons by, for example, physical distancing and playing outside wherever possible, limiting group sizes to no more than 15, positioning pupils back-to-back or side-to-side, avoiding sharing of instruments, and ensuring good ventilation. Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as school choirs and ensembles, or school assemblies. Further more detailed DfE guidance will be published shortly.

Physical activity in schools

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided whilst following the measures in their system of controls. Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups, and contact sports avoided.

Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising distancing between pupils and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sports setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities

Schools should refer to the following advice:

- guidance on the phased return of sport and recreation and guidance from Sport England for grassroot sport
- advice from organisations such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust

Schools are able to work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities where they are satisfied that this is safe to do so. Schools should consider carefully how such arrangements can operate within their wider protective measures.

Activities such as active miles, making break times and lessons active and encouraging active travel help enable pupils to be physically active while encouraging physical distancing.

Catch-up support

We have announced a package worth £1 billion to ensure that schools have the resources they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time, with extra support for those who need it most.

£650 million will be spent on ensuring all pupils have the chance to catch up and supporting schools to rise to the challenge. This one-off grant funding will be paid to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. Whilst headteachers will decide how the money is spent, the Education Endowment Foundation has published guidance on effective interventions to support schools. For pupils with complex needs, we strongly encourage schools to spend this funding on catch-up support to address their individual needs. We will set out how this funding will be distributed between individual schools shortly.

Alongside this universal offer, we will roll out a National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million, which will deliver proven and successful tuition to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, accelerating their academic progress and preventing the gap between them and their more affluent peers widening. The evidence shows that tutoring is an effective way to accelerate learning, and we therefore believe a targeted tutoring offer is the best way to narrow the gaps that risk opening up due to attendance at school being restricted.

Pupil wellbeing and support

Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. This may particularly be the case for vulnerable children, including those with a social worker and young carers. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. Some may need support to re-adjust to school; others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return; a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school.

The return to school allows social interaction with peers, carers and teachers, which benefits wellbeing. The Department for Education, Public Health England and NHS England are hosting a free webinar for school and college staff on 9 July to set out how to support returning pupils and students, and a recording will be available to access online afterwards - see DfE - Supporting pupil and student mental wellbeing for further details. This includes hearing from experts on the impacts of the pandemic on pupils' mental wellbeing and recovery techniques, and from education leaders about the actions they have been taking.

The Whole School SEND consortium will be delivering some training and how-tos for mainstream school teachers (including free insets and webinars) on supporting pupils with SEND to return to their mainstream school after the long absence, and on transition to other settings. Details of future training sessions are held on the events page of the SEND Gateway. You can opt to join Whole School SEND's community of practice when you sign up for an event to receive notifications about future training and resources as they are published.

DfE has also published the first of the relationship, sex and health education training modules for teachers to support them in preparation to deliver content on mental health and wellbeing. The training module on teaching about mental wellbeing, which has been developed with clinical experts and schools, will improve teacher confidence in talking and teaching about mental health and wellbeing in the classroom. It was published early given the importance of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing at this time.

Schools should consider the provision of pastoral and extra-curricular activities to all pupils designed to:

- support the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement
- address and equip pupils to respond to issues linked to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- support pupils with approaches to improving their physical and mental wellbeing

Schools should also provide more focused pastoral support where issues are identified that individual pupils may need help with, drawing on external support where necessary and possible. Schools should also consider support needs of particular groups they are already aware need additional help (for example, children in need), and any groups they identify as newly vulnerable on their return to school. To support this, teachers may wish to access the free MindEdlearning platform for professionals, which includes a coronavirus (COVID-19) staff resilience hub with materials on peer support, stress, fear and trauma and bereavement.

Schools should consider how they are working with school nursing services to support the health and wellbeing of their pupils; school nursing services have continued to offer support as pupils return to school – school nurses as leaders of the healthy child programme can offer a range of support including:

- support for resilience, mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, bereavement and sleep issues
- support for pupils with additional and complex health needs
- supporting vulnerable children and keeping children safe

Schools and school nurses need to work together to ensure delivery of the healthy child programme (which includes immunisation), identifying health and wellbeing needs which will underpin priorities for service delivery.

Behaviour expectations

Schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules/policies, and consider how to communicate rules/policies clearly and consistently to staff, pupils and parents, setting clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour. Further details are available at Behaviour and discipline in schools. Schools should set out clearly at the earliest opportunity the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how they will enforce those rules including any sanctions. This is particularly the case when considering restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules. Schools will need to work with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that behaviour expectations are clearly understood, and consistently supported, taking account of individual needs and should also consider how to build new expectations into their rewards system.

It is likely that adverse experiences and/or lack of routines of regular attendance and classroom discipline may contribute to disengagement with education upon return to school, resulting in increased incidence of poor behaviour. Schools should work with those pupils who may struggle to reengage in school and are at risk of being absent and/or persistently disruptive, including providing support for overcoming barriers to attendance and behaviour and to help them reintegrate back into school life.

We acknowledge that some pupils will return to school having been exposed to a range of adversity and trauma including bereavement, anxiety and in some cases increased welfare and safeguarding risks. This may lead to an increase in social, emotional and mental health concerns and some children, particularly vulnerable groups such as children with a social worker and young carers, will need additional support and access to services such as educational psychologists, social workers, and counsellors. Additionally, provision for children who have SEND may have been disrupted during partial school closure and there may be an impact on their behaviour. Schools will need to work with local services (such as health and the local authority) to ensure the services and support are in place for a smooth return to schools for pupils.

The disciplinary powers that schools currently have, including exclusion, remain in place. Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Where a child with a social worker is at risk of exclusion, their social worker should be informed and involved in relevant conversations.

Any disciplinary exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be consistent with the relevant legislation. Ofsted will continue to consider exclusions, including the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusion and to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable. Ofsted is clear that pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school (including to home educate their child) is a form of off-rolling. Elective home education should always be a positive choice taken by parents without pressure from their school.

Section 4: Assessment and accountability

Inspection

For state-funded schools, routine Ofsted inspections will remain suspended for the autumn term. However, during the autumn term, inspectors will visit a sample of schools to discuss how they are managing the return to education of all their pupils. These will be collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations set out in this document, and will not result in a judgement. A brief letter will be published following the visit. The insights that inspectors gather will also be aggregated nationally to share learning with the sector, the government and the wider public. In addition, Ofsted has the power to inspect a school in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding.

For independent schools, Ofsted/the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) standard inspections also remain suspended. During the autumn term, Ofsted/ISI will undertake non-routine inspections, as commissioned by the Department for Education, where appropriate. For example, this may be a pre-registration inspection or an inspection to follow up on significant safeguarding concerns. These inspections will have a judgement, as usual, and result in the production of a report.

It is intended that routine Ofsted and ISI inspections will restart from January 2021, with the exact timing being kept under review.

Primary assessment

We recognise that pupils will have missed a critical period of their education due to lockdown in the 2019 to 2020 academic year. It is vital that we know the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on this cohort of pupils nationally, and can give support to schools that need it the most.

We are, therefore, planning on the basis that statutory primary assessments will take place in summer 2021. The early years foundation stage profile, and all existing statutory key stage 1 and 2 assessments, should return in 2020 to 2021 in accordance with their usual timetables. This includes:

- the phonics screening check

- key stage 1 tests and teacher assessment
- the Year 4 multiplication tables check
- key stage 2 tests and teacher assessment
- statutory trialling

The statutory rollout of the reception baseline assessment has been postponed until September 2021, giving schools flexibility to sign up to our early adopter year in 2020 to 2021.

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) are reviewing requirements for the phonics screening check in year 2 (following the cancellation of the 2020 assessment) and also arrangements for implementation of the engagement model (for the assessment of pupils working below the national curriculum and not engaged in subject specific study) and will provide an update to schools before the end of the summer term.

Exams

For the summer 2021 exams, we recognise that pupils in years 11 and 13 will have missed a critical period of their education due to lockdown in the 2019 to 2020 academic year. It is vital that these pupils are able to catch up and access exams that lead to the qualifications they need to progress. We are, therefore, planning on the basis that GCSEs and A levels will take place in summer 2021 but with adaptations, including those which will free up teaching time. Ofqual will launch a consultation on proposed adaptations to exams shortly.

There will also be an exam series taking place in autumn 2020. Following the cancellation of summer 2020 exams, the exam boards will be providing students with calculated grades (except in some exceptional cases) this summer, which students will use to move onto their next step. DfE has, however, also announced that there will be an opportunity for students to sit exams in the autumn and Ofqual has confirmed these exams will be available in all subjects. Where a student wishes to sit an exam, DfE's guidance on Centre responsibility for autumn GCSE, AS and A level exam series sets out that we expect the centre that entered them for the summer series to enter them in the autumn series and take overall responsibility for ensuring that they have somewhere appropriate to sit their exams. We are also exploring further ways in which it might be possible to minimise additional burdens on centres whilst ensuring that exams remain accessible for students, and we will provide further information on this.

Accountability expectations

Performance tables are suspended for the 2019 to 2020 academic year, and no school or college will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020. Until the new data release is available, all those working with schools, including Ofsted and DfE regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data. The Department for Education will continue to use 2019 data as a starting point for any conversation about support for schools with Ofsted judgements below good. More information is set out at coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college accountability.

Section 5: Contingency planning for outbreaks

Process in the event of local outbreaks

If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread. The Department for Education will be involved in decisions at a local and national level affecting a geographical area, and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice. We will provide more information on this process in due course.

Contingency plans for outbreaks

For individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils, remote education plans should be in place. These should meet the same expectations as those for any pupils who cannot yet attend school at all due to coronavirus (COVID-19). (see section on remote education support).

In the event of a local outbreak, the PHE health protection team or local authority may advise a school or number of schools to close temporarily to help control transmission. Schools will also need a contingency plan for this eventuality. This may involve a return to remaining open only for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, and providing remote education for all other pupils.

Remote education support

Where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there is a local lockdown requiring pupils to remain at home, we expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education. Schools are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September. This planning will be particularly important to support a scenario in which the logistical challenges of remote provision are greatest, for example where large numbers of pupils are required to remain at home.

In developing these contingency plans, we expect schools to:

- use a curriculum sequence that allows access to high-quality online and offline resources and teaching videos, and that is linked to the school's curriculum expectations
- give access to high quality remote education resources
- select the online tools that will be consistently used across the school in order to allow interaction, assessment and feedback, and make sure staff are trained in their use
- provide printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks, for pupils who do not have suitable online access
- recognise that younger pupils and some pupils with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support, and so schools should work with families to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum.

When teaching pupils remotely, we expect schools to:

- set assignments so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects
- teach a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practised in each subject

- provide frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher in the school or through high quality curriculum resources and/or videos
- gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum, using questions and other suitable tasks and set a clear expectation on how regularly teachers will check work
- enable teachers to adjust the pace or difficulty of what is being taught in response to questions or assessments, including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations to ensure pupils' understanding
- plan a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school, ideally including daily contact with teachers

We expect schools to consider these expectations in relation to the pupils' age, stage of development and/or special educational needs, for example where this would place significant demands on parents's help or support. We expect schools to avoid an over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities.

The government will also explore making a temporary continuity direction in the autumn term, to give additional clarity to schools, pupils and parents as to what remote education should be provided. DfE will engage with the sector before a final decision is made on this.

A range of resources to support schools in delivering remote education is available:

- curriculum maps for key subjects for year groups from Reception to year 9 will be published in July. They aim to provide support to schools in developing the ability to switch from classroom teaching to remote provision immediately in case of local lockdowns or self-isolation. A number of education resource providers intends to align their resources to these maps, to further support schools. These maps are designed as a support for schools and are entirely non-mandatory, for use at the discretion of the school.
- DfE has produced a quality assured list of remote education resources which are available to schools and parents for free over the summer term. Where pricing models have changed, schools may consider using some of their catch-up funding on remote resources in line with the access to technology section of the EEF's COVID-19 support guide for schools
- from that start of the autumn term, Oak National Academy will make available video lessons covering the entire national curriculum, available to any school for free. These are being in developed in partnership with a wide group of teachers and school leaders to develop lessons in the popular topics. The resources will be as flexible as possible, allowing schools to reorder topics and lessons, to match their own plans and curriculum.
- Oak National Academy specialist content for pupils with SEND. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy. Their provision for next academic year will include an expanded range of content for the specialist sector.
- government-funded access to one of two free-to-use digital education platforms: Google for Education or Microsoft Office 365 Education. Schools can apply through The Key for School Leaders. The Key also provides feature comparison and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms.
- a network of schools and colleges for help and support on effective use of tech for remote education that can be accessed through the EdTech Demonstrator Programme.
- laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers have been made available to local authorities and academy trusts to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children (specifically, care leavers, children and young people with a social worker, and disadvantaged year 10 pupils). Local authorities and academy trusts will continue to own and use these devices following pupils returning to school in the autumn term. They will be responsible for loaning them in the event that a school is required to close temporarily due to coronavirus (COVID-19). If required, the department will look to provide further device and connectivity support for disadvantaged pupils who would otherwise lack access during a school closure. These devices will be owned by the school.
- In addition to 4G routers provided to local authorities and academy trusts, the Department for Education is working in partnership with BT to offer free access to BT WiFi hotspots for disadvantaged pupils. We are also working with the major telecommunications companies to expand this offer and provide access to free additional data to families who rely on a mobile internet connection while the response to coronavirus (COVID-19) requires pupils to learn from home and access social care services online. More information on increasing internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged children is available.

Further support is available from:

- The National Cyber Security Centre, on which video conference service is right for you and using video conferencing services securely

- annex C of the guidance on Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19), , as well as statutory guidance on online safety in Annex C of keeping children safe in education.

Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means school employers and leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff, pupils and young people face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). School employers must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable and make the school COVID-secure. General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the HSE guidance on working safely.

Schools should undertake a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment by considering the measures in this guidance to inform their decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace, and the role of others in supporting that. The risk assessment will help school leaders and employers decide whether they have done everything they need to. Employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time. It also makes good sense to involve pupils (where applicable), young people and parents in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place. Employers can do this by listening and talking to them about how the school will manage risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) and make the school COVID-secure. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that the school takes their health and safety seriously.

Sharing your risk assessment

Schools should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce. If possible, they should consider publishing it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and pupils (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

Monitoring and review of risk controls

It is important that employers know how effective their risk controls are. They should monitor and review the preventive and protective measures regularly, to ensure the measures are working, and taking action to address any shortfalls.

Roles and responsibilities

All employers are required by law to protect their employees, and others, from harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum employers must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in the organisation (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

Given the employer landscape in schools is varied, we have set out here what the existing DfE Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools guidance states about the roles and responsibilities for health and safety in schools:the employer is accountable for the health and safety of school staff and pupils. The day-to-day running of the school is usually delegated to the headteacher and the school management team. In most cases, they are responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This includes health and safety matters. Schools must appoint a competent person to ensure they meet their health and safety duties. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides more information on the role of headteachers and employers in the guidance The role of school leaders - who does what and a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of school setting in its FAQs section, under 'Who is accountable for health and safety within a school?'. References to actions by employers in this guidance may in practice be carried out by headteachers in schools, but the employer will need to assure themselves that they have been carried out, as they retain the accountability for health and safety. If not already done, employers should ensure that a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment for their school is undertaken as soon as possible. As some pupils are already attending at school, the employer is likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that those employers use this document to identify any further improvements they should make.

Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

Health and safety risk assessments identify measures to control risks during education and childcare setting activities. Health and safety law requires the school employer to assess risks and put in place measures to reduce the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law also requires employers to record details of risk assessments, the measures taken to reduce these risks and expected outcomes. Schools need to record significant findings of the assessment by identifying:

- the hazards
- how people might be harmed by them
- what they have in place to control risk

Records of the assessment should be simple and focused on controls. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring.

Risk assessments consider what measures you need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff
- pupils
- visitors
- contractors

Schools will need to think about the risks that may arise in the course of the day. This could include anything related to the premises or delivery of its curriculum or activities, whether on-site or in relation to activities offsite.

Consulting employees (general)

It is a legal requirement that employers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of staff creates a culture where relationships between employers and staff are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, staff should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer. Consultation does not remove the employer's right to manage. They will still make the final decision but talking to employees is an important part of successfully managing health and safety.

Leaders are encouraged to ensure that consultation on any changes to risk assessments that will be in place for the start of the autumn term commence with staff before the summer break, to ensure that those that are on term-time only contracts have adequate time to contribute.

Resolving issues and raising concerns

Employers and staff should always come together to resolve issues. As providers widen their opening, any concerns in respect of the controls should be raised initially with line management and trade union representatives, and employers should recognise those concerns and give them proper consideration. If that does not resolve the issues, the concern can be raised with HSE. Where the HSE identify employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

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Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

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Services and information

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Business and self-employed

Childcare and parenting

Citizenship and living in the UK

Crime, justice and the law

Disabled people

Driving and transport

Education and learning

Employing people

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