Guidance

Contingency framework: education and childcare settings (excluding universities)

Department for Education

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Any restrictions on education would only be as a last resort and may be imposed following a national decision.

This framework is designed so that some such restrictions would be implemented as a contingent measure for the sole purpose of minimising the risk of transmission of coronavirus within education settings and the community.

Who this guidance applies to

This guidance is for local authorities, childcare and education settings (including universities).

Early years settings

This includes:

- all providers on the early years register
- providers registered with an early years childminder agency
- all early years provision in schools

Schools (including independent schools) and alternative provision (AP)

This includes:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- special schools
- secondary schools (including school sixth forms)
- residential and day special schools
- pupil referral units (including pupil referral units, AP academies and AP free schools)
- 16 to 19 academies

Further education providers (FE)

This includes:

- sixth form colleges
- general FE colleges
- specialist designated colleges
- designated institutions
- adult community learning providers
- special post-16 institutions

Further education providers (FE)

This includes:

- apprenticeship providers
- apprenticeship training providers
- apprenticeship training providers
- apprenticeship training providers

Introduction

The impacts of missing education are severe for children, young people and adults, both now and in the future, and it is important that we ensure that all education courses significant harm to learning, life chances and mental health and well-being. Children, young people and adults who are disadvantaged by coronavirus (COVID-19) are at greatest risk of missing education and long-term economic costs which affects the standard of living that people and families can enjoy, and the economic growth of the country.

Having reviewed the available evidence, the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) issued a statement which makes clear that children and young people are at lower risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) than other age groups. The risk of severe disease increases with the number of contacts a person has. This position was confirmed more recently by Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

The balance of risk is overwhelmingly in favour of children and young people being in education. The JBC, SAGE and the Department for Education (DfE) have worked with other government departments to develop this framework. This sets out how from coronavirus (COVID-19).

It is also important that parents and carers are able to return to work and that the economy can function as normally as possible.

Society is not possible to ensure that any working environment is totally risk free. there is responsibility between employers and their employees to ensure that education settings are not higher risk than workers in other sectors. Education and childcare settings are not higher risk than other sectors, whether of differences in the possibility of transmission between children and secondary school teachers, other key workers and other professions.

Application of the contingency framework

The government has made a national priority that education and childcare settings should continue to operate as normal as possible during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This is in recognition of the risks and wider impacts of not doing so.

There is detailed guidance for education settings and providers operating during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak:

- actions for early years and childcare providers
- actions for schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for parents and carers on schools
- protective measures for holiday and other school clubs, and other out of school childcare providers during coronavirus (COVID-19)
- guidance for special schools and other specialist settings

Any restrictions on education would only be a last resort and may only be imposed following a ministerial decision. The Framework is designed so that some such restrictions would be implemented as a contingent measure for the sole circumstances when it is deemed necessary to address transmission within education settings and the community.

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The decision to apply any contingency framework actions in a given area will be taken by the Secretary of State for Education, in consultation with the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), Public Health England (PHE) and relevant local authorities. The decision will be based on a range of epidemiological evidence, via the existing mechanisms for decision-making and local restrictions tiers which local authorities and directors of public health implement.

Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for PHE, JBC and other implementation of this contingency framework across any geographical area (to cluster of settings), local area or region.

If there is significant concern that restrictions in an area have failed to suppress the virus, the Secretary of State for Education may take the decision to implement a contingency framework for education, in consultation with the Director of Public Health (DPH) and DfE's regional teams to consider the next steps.

Any restrictions will be kept under review and will be ended as soon as the public health and educational benefits no longer outweigh the harm to children, young people and adults. It is designed to be flexible and responsive to the evolving situation and to be as minimal as possible.

To ensure educational setting should not move to implement restrictions measures or other elements of the contingency framework without the explicit agreement of DfE.

Initial consultations, and ongoing discussions, priority should continue to be given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers to keep education open.

Early years settings

Where the contingency framework is implemented, early years settings (including childminders) will continue to operate as normal allowing all children to attend.

In the very unlikely event that entirely or supports limiting attendance in early years settings, DfE may advise that only vulnerable children and children of critical workers should be attend.

Middle schools

Where the contingency framework is implemented, middle schools (with some primary and secondary year groups) may be advised to adopt a combination of primary and secondary school measures. Middle schools will continue to be able to provide education for children and young people.

Flexibility in the application of the contingency framework will be given to ensure that the hospital stay on their education.

Secondary schools

Where the contingency framework is implemented, secondary schools (including sixth form colleges) will be advised to implement a rota system for years 7 and 8 year groups due to their relatively low transmission risk, allowing years 9 to 13 to continue to attend. Flexibility in the application of the contingency framework will be given to ensure that the hospital stay on their education.

Boarding schools

Where the contingency framework is implemented, boarding schools should continue to provide education for children and young people, including those who are vulnerable or children of critical workers, or those who are not to be taught in classrooms but who cannot return home should receive high quality remote education.

Special schools and special post 16 institutions

We want children and young people in specialist schools, including residential specialist schools, and specialist post 16 institutions to receive the high quality teaching and specialist pastoral support. This is because we recognise that the impact of missing education is significant for children with disabilities (SEND) and their families, can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education. Special schools should continue to allow pupils to attend as per their usual timetable. Special post-16 institutions should continue to attend as per their usual timetable.

Where the contingency framework is implemented, special school pupils are one of everyone's school bags should continue to attend their education setting. Special post-16 institutions should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

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Alternative provision (AP)

Where the contingency framework is implemented, alternative provision (including pupil referral units, AP academies, AP free schools) should continue to allow all children to attend as per their usual timetable.

Hospital education

Where the contingency framework is implemented, hospital schools should continue to allow all children to attend as per their usual timetable. Flexibility in the application of the contingency framework will be given to ensure that the hospital stay on their education.

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Further education (FE) providers

Where the contingency framework is implemented, FE providers should continue to provide education for children and young people, including those of critical workers and young people. For example, 16 year olds in their second year groups or who are unable to complete their education programmes by Christmas. Flexibility in the application of the contingency framework will be given to ensure that the hospital stay on their education.

Special post-16 institutions should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

Apprenticeships

Where the contingency framework is implemented, apprenticeship delivery and assessment (including the assessment of functional skills qualifications) should continue to be delivered in the workplace (in person where doing so is safe and practicable).

This includes training and assessment in the workplace (unless the workplace is required to be closed by government or where the training and assessment settings and in community settings where a venue is being used for training or assessment.

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare

Where the contingency framework is implemented, providers who run out-of-school settings and childcare should continue to provide childcare and school-aged childcare provision during the hospital stay on their education. Flexibility in the application of the contingency framework will be given to ensure that the hospital stay on their education.

Infection prevention and control

Schools, nurseries, childminders, FE providers and Ofsted-registered children's homes will be kept open. Public Health England (PHE) and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) have worked with other government departments to develop a set of measures to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in education settings. These measures are based on the best available evidence and are proportionate to the risk posed by coronavirus (COVID-19) in these settings.

All settings should update their risk assessment, in consultation with staff and unions, to reflect these contingency meass and review implementation of control measures in light of this.

Face coverings

In areas in local restriction tier 2 or tier 3, education settings where pupils in year 7 and above are educated in FE providers, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils in students when moving around outside of classrooms in communal areas, where social distance cannot be maintained and in areas where they are in contact with other students.

Remote education

Guidance for schools and other providers for remote education has been published.

Where face-to-face education is disrupted, DfE is providing devices and tablets to schools, for some disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 to access remote education. Schools should report their requirement through the education settings status form.

Ownership of devices is transferred from DfE to the local authorities, academy trusts, schools and the local authority children's services at the point of delivery.

Local authorities should ensure that disadvantaged children who need an internet connection for remote education.

The government is funding expert technical support to help schools set up secure user accounts for large numbers of students and staff. Technical Schools can apply for government-funded support through The Key for Schools. Further information on the DfE's wider support for remote education platforms, is Open for Education on Office 365 Education.

Education workforce

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) has been implemented, employers should consider advice from the relevant Director of Public Health and their local authority on how to implement testing for their workforce, including risk assessment. This includes testing for Healthcare Staff (HCW) staff. Employers should continue to explain to DfE the measures they are putting in place to ensure their workforce is able to work safely and effectively, and to provide a point of an qualified teacher.

Schools and FE providers should also consider if the coronavirus (COVID-19) education contingency framework offers more opportunities for staff to work at home, place redundant numbers of students on site and the use of teaching assistants and other staff to supervise pupils. Schools and providers have regard to and follow the guidance and wellbeing. This includes consideration of the impact on staff and students, and how to provide support to enable education, which should be done within the terms and conditions of teachers' and staff employment.

Safeguarding and designated safeguarding leads

There should be no change to local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Local authorities should ensure that children's social care services and other local services are fully engaged with the implementation of policy.

If restrictions are implemented in any education or childcare setting, we would expect all local safeguarding partners to be vigilant and responsive to ensure that children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk are safe, participate as much in education and enjoy positive and supportive relationships.

Schools in Greater Leeds in Lockdown is a statutory safeguarding guidance that applies to FE colleges, sixth form colleges and designated institutions must continue to follow. Other 16 to 19 providers are required to comply with relevant safeguarding duties. Schools and FE providers should continue to work in advance of any restrictions being imposed.

Early years providers must continue to follow the safeguarding requirements in section three of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Schools and FE providers (Ofsted) and by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy should review their contingency plans in light of this. It reflects the local lockdowns and remains effective. In some cases, it may be necessary to refer to the local authority children's services and restriction related changes will be made to more effective than in setting and in the local authority children's services. Schools and FE providers (Ofsted) and schools in FE provider are at greater risk.

It is expected that schools and providers will have trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. However, it is recognised that for some schools and colleges this may not be the case. If a DSL (or deputy) is not on site, there are two options to consider:

- a trained DSL (or deputy) from the early years setting, school or FE provider can be contacted to offer advice and support to staff who are in exceptional circumstances.
- a DSL (or deputy) can be allocated to other schools or FE providers who should be available to be contacted via phone or online video

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to one of the options above, a senior leader could take responsibility for coordinating safeguarding on site.

Exams and assessments

Exam centres, schools and FE providers should operate open for exams and assessments, including GCSE, AS and A level, vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and apprenticeships and T Levels (subject to, addition to the measures already set out in the actions for schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and the protective measures for holiday and other school clubs, and other out of school childcare providers and FE health and safety teams to facilitate this.

These additional mitigations may include:

- wearing face coverings in communal areas
- Exam supervisors wearing face coverings
- additional protections for candidates who are classed as clinically vulnerable or who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable

Senior leaders at the school or FE provider will determine whether it is appropriate, practical and reasonable to provide exams and tests in a separate room, or in exceptional circumstances, in a separate building.

Tests for entry to selective schools

Tests are usually conducted by local grammar schools to selective schools. We consider it best to such tests to be essential based, when possible, the tests should be conducted in a separate room.

In arranging tests, admissions authorities should consider the local lockdown restrictions which will be guided by the relevant measures in the tier system, the local authority's public health advice, and the guidance for schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

School and FE meals

Schools should provide meal options for all students who are in school and who are entitled to free school meals. Schools should also provide meals for students who are eligible for free school meals.

Schools should also continue to provide free school meals to students who are eligible for them, if they are in school or if they are at home.

- are self-isolating
- have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- are not attending as a result of implementation of local restrictions advised by government

Schools should work with suppliers to prepare meals or food parcels to be collected by, or delivered to, these eligible children during their time at home. Any parcels should be distributed in line with guidance on social distancing and local restriction tiers and should meet the school food standards.

The guidance on providing school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak outlines how and when children eligible for free school meals should be supported at home. It also contains information regarding best practice arrangements where food parcels are needed.

FE providers should continue to support students who are eligible for, and usually receive, free meals. This includes students in further education, who are newly eligible. FE providers should provide support even if students are studying remotely due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

There's further guidance on free meals in further education-funded institutions.

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