Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department
for Education

Guidance

What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19

Updated 5 May 2021

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Main messages

The key messages from this guidance are:

- nurseries, pre-schools and childminders are open, including maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in schools
- face coverings are not required in education settings
- the Public Health England (PHE) and Wellcome Trust has made it clear that the overwhelming majority of children and young people still have no symptoms or only mild symptoms
- all secondary school colleges, universities, boarding schools and colleges have been offered coronavirus (COVID-19) testing (rapid lateral flow test)
- rapid lateral flow testing is now available to everyone in England and we ask people to do this twice a week
- all pupils in secondary school and school sixth form colleges whether they have been testing or not
- from 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the roadmap, face coverings will no longer be required in secondary school and college classrooms (continued where it is already in place)
- children and young people aged 11 and over must still wear a face covering on school and college premises and in other settings when they are in close contact (PHE), they must also wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college (unless exempt)

Attendance and remote education

Attending nursery, childminder, school or college is vital for children's and students' educational progress, their wellbeing, and for their wider development.

To continue to manage the risks, nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will carry on implementing a range of protective measures.

Your child's nursery, childminder, school or college can give you more information about the measures they have in place.

Attending nursery and childminders

Sending your child to a nursery or childminder is your decision. We encourage you to take up a place for your child.

You can check if your child is eligible for any of the free childcare entitlements through Childcare Choices.

Attending and college children

Attendance is mandatory. This means if it is your legal duty as a parent to send your child (if they are of compulsory school age) to school regularly if they are registered at a school.

If you have concerns about your child attending, you should discuss these with your school or college.

- **Local authorities and schools have a range of legal powers to enforce attendance. If a child or young person misses school without a valid reason.**

If your child is over 18 and attends a college or other training, they are not legally obliged to attend. Their college or training provider may not continue to offer them a place if they do not attend.

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household member or close contact
- are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19
- attending advice has been passed nationally from Dr Paul A. McCarney (nationally recognised expert in paediatric respiratory medicine) to your child's school or college, could number of pupils under pandemic or other specialist care and recommended advised by their GP or clinician not to attend

Pupils who live with someone who is CEV should continue to attend school as normal.

Attending alternative provisions, special schools and special post-16 provisions

All children and young people who have education, health and care (EHC) plans should continue to attend school.

Your child's school or college should continue to work collaboratively with you to agree an approach that is in your child's best interests.

Education health and care (EHC) plans

If your child has an EHC plan they should receive the support they need to cover when they attend their nursery, childminder, school or college.

There may be circumstances in which early years providers, schools and colleges cannot provide the support outlined in your child's EHC plan. For example, if a member of staff with the right training is absent. In these cases they will take reasonable steps to provide as close to your child's usual provision as same as possible.

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will be in touch with you to discuss the right support for your child. Any decisions taken should be regularly reviewed.

Remote education if your child cannot attend school or college

All state-funded schools must provide remote education for school-aged children if they cannot attend in person because they are:

- self-isolating
- part of a very small number of children, pupils or students under pandemic or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend

Independent schools also need to provide remote education in these circumstances to meet the necessary standards.

FE providers are expected to provide remote education for students aged 16 to 19 who cannot attend on-site because they are:

- self-isolating
- part of the very small number of students under pandemic or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend

Guidance is available for you to support your child while they are learning from home.

Schools

Schools should provide remote education equivalent in length to the teaching your child would receive in school.

You can find out about your school's remote education offer on their website. You should talk to your child's teacher or headteacher if you have concerns about the amount or quality of the remote education they are receiving.

If you have enough for your school's complaints process and you still have concerns, you can raise them with Ofsted. Ofsted will consider the complaint and act where appropriate.

Colleges

Colleges will use their best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours, recognising this may not be possible if your child's course involves practical teaching and training which involves:

- specialist equipment and supervision
- work experience placements.

You can find out more about your college's remote education offer on their website.

Help to get online

Contact your child's school or college if your child:

- does not have access to a device
- needs support with internet or remote education

Schools and colleges have been allocated a number of devices and are distributing these to the children who need them most.

Online safety

Talk to your child about staying safe online and encourage them to talk to you if they come across something worrying.

Our guidance for parents and carers to keep children safe online explains how to talk about online safety issues.

The guidance about cheaters safe online includes information on setting up age appropriate controls, anti-bullying, privacy settings, and screen time recommendations.

Helping make nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges as safe as possible

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges have their own health and safety risk assessments, and they follow public health advice.

As part of this, there are certain approaches that we have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to implement that are essential to reduce health risks. You can ask your nursery, childminder, school or college for more information.

Face coverings

Based on the current state of the pandemic and the positive progress being made, it is no longer necessary for people in the additional precautionary face covering measures set in place from 8 March.

All schools, colleges, nurseries and childminders

From 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the roadmap, face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils in classrooms or communal areas in all schools.

Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms.

In all schools we continue to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible and in other indoor communal areas where they come into contact with others.

Where schools are delivering education and training, including extra-curricular activities and wraparound childcare, in a community setting (for example, libraries or community centre), staff and pupils will be exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering. This is because they are considered to be the premises being occupied mainly for the wide use of the public and not schools.

College students may be asked to wear face coverings where:

- the teaching setting is more similar to, or is, a workplace environment
- it is a requirement in the workplace or indoor environment and students are likely to come into contact with other members of the public

The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a local area or a particular school, college, university or childcare setting in response to a concern. In all cases, any educational setting will be expected to assess and implement risk mitigations of managing transmission.

Travelling to school or college

Children and young people aged 11 and over still wear a face covering on public transport and in other situations where they are in close contact with others. Children when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college. This does not apply to children and young people who are exempt from wearing face coverings.

Exemptions

Some children, pupils, students and adults may be exempt from wearing face coverings. Exemptions are based on health concerns and children, schools, and colleges, including educational visits.

Symptoms, testing and self-isolation

Asymptomatic testing

Due to 3 people with COVID-19 do not experience any symptoms and may be spreading the virus without knowing, it is important that we find and break the chain of transmission by rapidly screening people. As part of this screening testing offer everyone aged 5 and over, everyone in England can access twice-weekly rapid lateral flow tests for COVID-19 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-rapid-lateral-flow-test-for-coronavirus-symptoms-and-no-symptoms.

All secondary schools and colleges are offering their pupils and students COVID-19 testing (rapid lateral flow tests) for some out at home.

All pupils and students should attend school or college in person.

If you're in a childcare or support bubble with someone who attends or works at a school or college, you can find out how to get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to do it at home. You're advised to do a test twice a week.

Rapid testing using lateral flow devices (LFD) and support attendance is face-to-face education helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

These who test positive will self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus and keeping other pupils and students in face to face education. If someone is their household or support bubble.

Testing is voluntary for all settings but is strongly encouraged.

Nurseries and primary school children

Pre-school children and primary aged pupils will not be tested with rapid lateral flow tests. Staff will be testing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Secondary school pupils and college students

All secondary aged pupils and students in school and college (year 7 and above) should take a test twice a week (3 to 4 days apart).

All secondary aged pupils and college students will be given home tests kits and should report their results to NHS Test and Trace, as well as to staff your school or college.

- **Report a COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result**

The home test kits include instructions for testing and reporting results.

Positive rapid lateral flow test results

Report with a positive test result on the website.

- self-isolate in line with the rapid lateral guidance (if they test positive at school, you should arrange for them to be collected)
- book a further test (a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test) to confirm the result, whether the test done at home, school or college

If the PCR test is taken within the 3 days following the positive LFD result, and is negative, your child can return to school. If your child does not return to school or college, as they are illegally not attending.

Anyone with symptoms, should book a lab-based and follow government self-isolation guidance until the results of that test are known.

If you have any questions about the asymptomatic testing programme, please speak to your school or college.

Testing in school or college

Schools and colleges will continue to offer testing on site, so that pupils who are unable to test themselves at home can still take part.

Testing staff

Staff across all settings will be taking part in the asymptomatic testing programme to help reduce transmission of the virus and keep everyone safe.

Managing cases in nurseries, schools and colleges

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will take swift action when they become aware of a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting. They will contact their local health protection team if they:

- have 2 or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 among pupils or staff within 14 days
- see an overall rise in sickness or staff absence rates where COVID-19 is suspected

The local health protection team will advise what action is required. Closures will not usually be necessary, but some groups may need to self-isolate.

Your child's school will send you a letter if they are asked to self-isolate. This letter will include information on the free School Support Payment scheme. If you need to apply for school support.

If you suspect your child has coronavirus

Do not send your child to their nursery, childminder, school, college or to an entry test for a selective school if:

- they are showing one or more coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- someone in their household is showing symptoms
- they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive has symptoms and they have been in close contact with them since the symptoms started (or if they did so before they started)
- they are a close contact household or support or childcare bubble has tested positive for COVID-19
- they are required to quarantine twice-weekly evidence and test based quarantine

Book a PCR test if you or your child develops symptoms. Inform your nursery, childminder, school or college of the results.

Positive PCR test results

If the test is positive, follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

If your child is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and they do not develop symptoms, they should still self-isolate if they develop symptoms.

This also applies to other members of your household (including any other children in the same school or college).

If your child has been a close contact of someone who has tested positive, and then develops symptoms, they should self-isolate and book a PCR test. Self-isolate for the full 10 days from the day after contact with the person who tested positive.

If your child develops symptoms at nursery, school or college

If your child displays symptoms, or has a positive test, while at nursery, childminder, school or college, they will be sent home and asked to self-isolate in line with guidance. They should not use public transport.

In exceptional circumstances, if you cannot arrange to have your child collected, or they are 5 or aged-appropriate and unfit to do so, they should wait, quite or could home. If your child is unwell and arrangements may need to be organised by the nursery, childminder, school or college.

Children should be kept in a separate room (ideally to be the only person in the school), but can share a car with their household or support bubble if necessary, if sharing they should:

- open windows
- use a face covering
- sit as far away from others as possible

Your child does not need a test if they:

- have a runny nose, are sneezing or feeling unwell, but do not have a temperature, or have any other cold or flu-like symptoms
- are advised to self-isolate because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. For example, another pupil in their class, but are not showing symptoms themselves

Self isolating

Anyone contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate has a legal obligation to do so, but you may leave home to:

- avoid injury or illness
- escape the risk of harm.

More information can be found on NHS Test and Trace, how it works.

Financial support to care for a child who is self-isolating

You may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from your local authority if you are on a low income and have been instructed to self-isolate (children acting global where they have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace).

To be eligible, you must be either:

- the parent or carer of a child that is aged 15 and under
- the parent or carer of a young person aged 16 to 25 with an education health and care (EHC)

You also need to:

- be on a low income
- be receiving a benefit or tax credits
- be taking time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating
- be living in England
- meet the eligibility criteria

You do not require an NHS Test and Trace Account ID number in order to claim.

Further information on claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is available.

Ask your nursery, childminder or school to provide you with a letter, detailing your child's name and the dates of their isolation period. You will need to use this letter as evidence when you apply for the Test and Trace Support. Do not let a lack of the financial support without the letter.

When you apply to the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme your local authority will contact your nursery, childminder, school or college to verify the information you've supplied. This includes your child's:

- name
- age
- dates of self-isolation

This is a standard check against fraudulent claims, and may take place before or after a payment is made.

Exams, assessment and awards for 2021

Assessments in primary schools

Statutory key stage 1 and 2 tests and teacher assessments planned for summer 2021 will not take place.

Schools will continue to use assessment during the summer term to:

- inform teaching
- provide information about your child's attainment in their annual report
- support your child's transition to secondary school if they are in year 6

GCSEs and A levels

GCSE, A and AS level exams will not go ahead this summer as planned.

Students taking GCSE, AS and A levels, will receive grades based on assessment by their teachers. The exam boards have published guidance on the determination of grades, to support teachers to reach their judgements.

Any exam papers that are left after they had to stop, will be unlikely to contribute towards them. Students will receive their results in August, which will include a review and dispute process. Results are required to submit grades by 18 June 2021.

Read the DfE guidance for students and parents for find out how your child will be assessed this year.

Vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs)

From April onwards, different approaches should be taken for awarding VTQs in 2021.

VTQs most similar to GCSE, AS and A levels that are used for progression to further or higher education

Exams for these VTQs will not go ahead, and results will be awarded using similar arrangements to GCSEs, AS and A levels. This will apply to many VTQs approved for performance tables including:

- Hospitality
- Cambridge Nationals and Technicals
- T Level core assessments

VTQs used to enter directly into employment

Exams or assessments will continue where they are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence and can be delivered in line with public health guidance.

Where the assessment cannot take place safely, it will be delayed.

Other qualifications that are used to progress to FE or employment such as Level 2 Diplomas, Level 3 Diplomas, Level 2 and Level 3 Technical Certificates or higher education

Exams for these VTQs will not go ahead, and results will be awarded using similar arrangements to GCSEs, AS and A levels. This will apply to many VTQs approved for performance tables including:

- Hospitality
- Cambridge Nationals and Technicals

Functional Skills qualifications are English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
Exams and assessment for these will continue in line with public health measures, alternative arrangements will be available for those who cannot access the assessments.

Summer term for pupils in years 11 to 13

DfE has asked schools to provide educational activities during this period to:

- reinforce what they have learnt during the year
- help them prepare for the next steps in their education
- provide support to pupils around their learning and pastoral needs

Schools should make appropriate judgements on the activities for their own pupils. This might not mean full-time provision and could include:

- visits to education providers
- independent study or remote provision combined with attendance in person

Annex B of our guidance to schools has more information about what schools should offer.

The legislation that governs compulsory school age isn't changing. Pupils cease to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the year in which they turn 16. That means that those pupils (most of whom will be in year 11) are not required to attend school after this date.

Getting to and from education and childcare

Your child's start or finish times may change to allow them to avoid other settings to stagger arrivals and departures in order to keep groups apart.

Always keep your distance from others when dropping off and picking up your child.

Using public transport

Social distancing on public transport means that capacity is limited. Look for alternative transport options if you can, especially walking or cycling or scooting, particularly at peak times. Some local transport authorities are providing extra dedicated school and college transport to support public transport at this time.

Guidance is available from:

- Living Streets on walking to school
- Sustrans on keeping safe on the school run

If you or your child do need to use public transport follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Free home to school transport for eligible children

Local authorities will continue to provide free home to school transport for eligible children.

Your local authority might ask you to accept a personal travel budget or mileage allowance instead of a seat on dedicated transport.

Accept any offer if you can. It will not affect your child's eligibility for dedicated transport in the future. The local authority cannot make you accept if you do not want to or are not able to.

Local authorities will:

- not expect you to commit to accepting a personal payment or mileage allowance for a specified period of time
- need reasonable notice to reinstate home to school transport for your child

Using dedicated school or college transport

Follow any local advice provided by the local authority, school or transport provider and make sure that your child knows and understands the importance of following any rules that are set. Further information about the measures local authorities, schools and transport providers are taking is available in the guidance on transport to schools and colleges.

Wearing face coverings when travelling to and from school and college

You will need to ensure that your child has a suitable face covering and uses it correctly when asked to.

Children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport. In accordance with advice from PHE they must also wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college. This does not apply to children and young people who are exempt from wearing face coverings.

Travelling by car

If your child needs to share a car to travel to school or college you should follow the guidance on car shares.

Out-of-school clubs and school- age childcare

Separate guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is available.

Curriculum

Schools will continue to teach a broad and balanced curriculum in all subjects, and will use their professional judgement and planning to ensure pupils cover the most important content. In exceptional circumstances, schools may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils, but only where this is in the best interest of the pupil and in discussion with parents.

Colleges are expected to continue delivering their courses and training in full.

There may need to be adaptions to some subjects, such as sport and performance subjects, so that schools and colleges can teach these as safely as possible.

Catch-up support

We know that extended school and college closures have had a substantial impact on children and young people's learning.

In June 2020 we announced a £1 billion catch-up package including a National Tutoring Programme and a Catch-up Premium for this academic year, and in February 2021 we committed to further funding of £700 million to fund summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for next academic year.

Contact your child's school to find out more about the national tutoring programme and what support there is available.

Elective home education

We encourage parents to send all children back to school, but if you're considering elective home education you should be certain that it's right for your child and is in their best interests.

Parents who are considering home education due to concerns around safety should discuss these with their school, to see what safeguarding measures have been put in place.

Schools are not required to provide any support to parents who have withdrawn their child for elective home education. Local authorities can provide support and guidance to families who elect to home educate but this is discretionary.

School admissions

You can apply for school places in the usual way and admission authorities will consider your applications. They will either offer your child a place or, if they refuse to offer a place, offer an appeal.

Admission appeals can now be held by telephone, video conference or in writing, instead of face-to-face hearings.

Entry tests for selective schools

Follow any guidance schools give you about travelling to and sitting an aptitude or ability entry assessment.

Children should take their own writing materials to a test.

Specific guidance on how aptitude or ability entry tests should be conducted can be found in the COVID-19 guidance: assessment processes for selective school admissions.

Holidays and travel abroad

You should plan your holidays within school and college holidays as usual. Avoid seeking permission to take your children out of school or college during term time. You should make sure any travel is in line with national travel guidance.

Keep in mind that you and your children may need to self-isolate when you return from a trip overseas.

Where pupils are abroad and unable to return, local authorities and schools are advised to continue to work with families to understand the child's circumstances and their plans to return.

They will encourage families to return where they are able to, emphasising the benefits of regular school attendance and reminding you that school attendance is mandatory.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

Where schools are able to do so, they should provide remote education for pupils who are abroad, and facing challenges to return due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, for the period they are abroad.

All pupils travelling to England must adhere to government travel advice and you should bear in mind the impact on your child's education which may result from any requirement to quarantine or isolate upon return.

Those arriving from a 'red list' country, or who have travelled through one in the past 10 days, must quarantine in a government approved facility with a parent or legal guardian rather than at home.

Boarding and residential schools and colleges

You will need to confirm if you or your child can travel to the UK under the current rules if they need to travel from abroad to return to boarding school.

All pupils who travel from abroad must quarantine on arrival in the UK (normally for 10 days). Boarding school pupils can quarantine in their school's boarding facilities. They should stay a home testing package, with COVID-19 tests to be taken on days 2 and 8 after arrival.

Anyone who is not a British or Irish national, or who does not have the right to reside in the UK (this includes those with long-term visas), who has travelled from or through a 'red list' travel ban country in the previous 10 days, is not permitted to enter the UK and should not travel.

If your child meets UK entry requirements and has travelled from or through a 'red list' country in the previous 10 days, then the school must meet additional requirements covering transport from ports of entry to school, quarantine accommodation and testing.

> **Your child should not travel if the school has not confirmed that it has arrangements in place that allow for transport, quarantine accommodation and testing that meet the requirements in the guidance for boarding schools.**

School visits

In line with the COVID response roadmap nurseries, childminders schools and colleges can resume:

- educational day visits
- domestic residential educational visits at Step 3, from 17 May
- transitional, taster and open days

Given the complexities attached to international travel at this stage of the pandemic, we recommend schools do not go on any international visits this academic year up to and including 5 September 2021.

> The position beyond 5 September will be reviewed again in advance of Step 4.

Your child's nursery, childminder, school or college should carry out full risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be undertaken safely.

School uniform

Schools decide their own uniform policy.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned:

- more often than usual
- using different methods

School and college food

Schools and colleges, and some nurseries, will continue to provide free meals for eligible students, including those who are at home during term time due to COVID-19.

The guidance on providing school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak outlines how and when children eligible for benefits-related free school meals should be supported at home.

Mental health and wellbeing

Some children and young people may be experiencing feelings of anxiety, stress or low mood as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support for children and parents

Encourage your child to talk to you or their teacher if they are feeling anxious or stressed.

Online resources to help you support your child with mental health and wellbeing, include:

- MindEd - a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health
- Every Mind Matters - an online tool and email journey to support everyone in taking action to look after their mental health and wellbeing
- Bereavement UK and the Childhood Bereavement Network - information and resources to support bereaved pupils, schools and staff
- the CBT book - includes mental health material for children, parents, carers and school staff

Public Health England's (PHE's) advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing includes actions you can take to support your child and emphasises the importance of taking 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Youth Sport Trust and Sport England have advice and support on helping children and young people stay physically active.

NHS mental health services remain open and have digital tools to connect with people and provide ongoing support. Please use your local children and young people's mental health service when needed.

Support for children and young people

Get free, confidential support at any time by:

- texting SHOUT to 85258
- calling Childline on 0800 1111
- calling the PSs on 0808 808 4994

Encourage your child to:

- Young Minds - information on coronavirus (COVID-19) and mental health
- Think Ninja - a free app for 10 to 18 year-olds to help build resilience and stay well
- Every Mind Matters - building resilience and supporting good mental health in young people aged 10 to 16

PHE has also launched new e-learning which can help parents and carers to support their children and young people in emergency or crisis situations.

Barnardo's See, Hear, Respond service, provides support to children, young people and their families who are not currently seeing a social worker or other agency, and who are struggling to cope with the emotional impacts of COVID-19. Use the See, Hear, Respond self-referral webpage or Freephone 0800 151 7015.

Report any safeguarding concerns you have about any child. Contact the NSPCC helpline.

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