Department
for Education

Guidance
COVID-19: Actions for out-of-school settings

Updated 17 August 2021

Contents
Changes to the previous version
Introduction
Who is the guidance for?
Why is the guidance for?
About the guidance
Overview
Who can attend your setting
Staff and workforce
Contractors
Clinically extremely vulnerable
Group sizes
Risk assessment
Mixing and 'bubbles'
Tracing close contacts and self-isolation
Face coverings
Stepping measures up and down
Control measures
Safety measures for activities in out-of-school settings
Parental attendance
Performances and events
Print this page

Changes to the previous version

Changes to the guidance since 17 July publication include:

- update to make clear that unvaccinated young people up to the age of 18 years and 9 months do not need to isolate when identified as a close contact of a positive case (16 years and 9 months) (see Tracing close contacts and self-isolation)
- updated information on the use of face coverings, including meeting their PCR test requirement (see Face coverings and self-isolation)
- updated information on contingency planning in out-of-school settings, with link to updated contingency framework (see Overview, Introduction and Staff)

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for all out-of-school settings providers and their staff, who provide:

- community activities
- tuition
- holiday clubs
- breakfast and after-school clubs for children

It applies to:

- providers of out-of-school settings (definition) as out-of-school settings
- providers caring for children aged 5 and over and registered with Ofsted or other the relevant inspectorate (definition)
- schools or colleges that offer extracurricular activities or provision for children before and after school, during weekends, or outside of term time
- providers that offer breakfast, after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities in addition to childcare (see this guidance on actions for childcare during the COVID-19 outbreak)
- registered early years providers caring for children under the age of 5, who should refer to the guidance for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak
- providers of parent and carer activities, who should also refer to the National Youth Agency's guidance for managing youth sector leisure and activities during COVID-19
- providers of the DfE funded summer activities programme

There is separate out-of-school settings COVID-19 guidance for parents and carers.

Venue-specific guidance

Out-of-school settings can take place in many kinds of venues. Some a private home to a small number of people, others in a school, college, or other large venue such as a place of worship. Therefore, if part of an out-of-school setting takes place in one of the following premises, you should also follow the guidance for:

- places of worship
- community centres, village halls and other multi-purpose community facilities
- sports and physical activity facilities (definition)
- schools during the COVID-19 outbreak
- working safely during COVID-19 in other people's homes

About this guidance

This guidance explains the actions out-of-school settings should take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their setting. This includes public health actions published by Public Health England (PHE).

We use the terms 'must' and 'should' throughout the guidance. We use the term 'must' where the person in question is legally required to do something and 'should' where the advice set out should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

Overview

The government will continue to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19 in a way that minimises the impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Vaccines mean young people from (largest) centres in secondary's day to day lives, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk.

As COVID-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to ensure that children, young people and their families can lead as normal a life as possible. We place critical importance on children's education, and every school, college and other place of first vaccine and the opportunity for two doses by mid September.

Our priority for you is to remain face-to-face, high quality provision to all children.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) to review the guidance.

Who can attend your setting

Out-of-school settings and educational childcare providers can offer provision to all children, without restriction on the reasons for which they may attend.

Home education

Where a child is not currently home educated takes part in an out-of-school setting, this guidance will apply. This is the case regardless of whether the setting is attended only by home educated children or by a mixture of children, or a combination of children attending school and children being home educated.

All children who are electively home educated may attend out-of-school settings.

Staff and workforce

Out-of-school setting leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of the children in attendance.

Contractors

You should ensure that key contractors are aware of your setting's control measures and ways of working.

Clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are advised, as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone else. It is important that everyone adheres to this guidance, but CEV people may want to think particularly carefully about the additional mitigations they can put in place, in line with the guidance. This will be found in the 'All day guidance on protecting people who are CEV from COVID-19'.

Social distancing measures have now ended in the workplace and it is no longer mandatory for people who are CEV to work from home. However, employers should be able to explore the measures they have in place to keep CEV staff safe at work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance on protecting vulnerable workers. This sets out advice for employers and employees on how to talk about returning safely in the workplace.

We welcome your support in encouraging vaccine take up and enabling staff who are eligible for a vaccination or booster dose to access appointments when offered.

All CEV children and young people should attend their education or childcare setting unless they are advised by their medical professional that they should not attend because of their health risks or have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.

Group sizes

Wraparound childcare and other organised activities for children may take place in groups of any number.

Group sizes for children under 5

Providers caring for children:

- under 5 years only should refer to the guidance for early years and childcare providers during the pandemic
- both under 5 years and aged 5 years and over, in mixed groups together, should follow this guidance

Risk assessment

As a provider, you are likely to have a legal duty of care to try to ensure the environment is safe for people who work or attend. This means you have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that people will be safe using the venue for the purposes for which they are invited. Risk assessments are a useful way of demonstrating that you have taken these 'being reasonable', as the government provides an whole up to date and proportionate advice changes. This should include provisions on what to do if a child or staff member becomes ill or displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at your setting. Public Health England (PHE) COVID-19 guidance for less specialist and learning disability services provides a framework for risk assessment, which may be helpful.

For more information on what is required of out-of-school setting leaders in relation to health and safety risk assessments and training, see health and safety: what you need to know and keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

Mixing and 'bubbles'

We are no longer recommending that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that bubbles will not need to be used in a way more onerous or from the autumn term.

You should make sure your contingency plans (outlined management plans) cover the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for enhanced protection, to minimise disruption.

Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' should not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of activities.

Tracing close contacts and self-isolation

Close contacts will be identified by NHS Test and Trace and contacted and asking will not be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the setting to support the management of identify close contacts. Contacts from an out-of-school setting will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. Close contacts will be identified on a case-by-case basis. The risk of an out-of-school setting COVID-19 case is the nature of the close contact. They may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, or currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

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Self-isolation

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone who is ill or who is a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 9 months
- they have been part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to be vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, and told to book a PCR test to see if they have COVID-19 and isolate if they do.

Staff who do not need to self-isolate, and children and young people aged under 18 years and 9 months, who attend an out-of-school setting, and have been identified as a close contact, can continue to attend the setting as normal. They do not need to self-isolate unless they are asked to do so by NHS Test and Trace or develop signs of COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for a COVID-19 PCR test.

Further information is available in NHS Test and Trace: what to do if you are contacted by phone, text or email and in Household with possible or probable COVID-19 infection: what you need to do.

People aged 18 will be treated in the same way as children, until 6 months after their 18th birthday. This will allow them to complete their education and training at a point they will be subject to the same rules as adults. If they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Settings will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local COVID-19 outbreak, including providing lists of pupils and staff attending and visiting the more information. See Preparing measures up and down for information on government offers the area or enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for children, parents, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where might advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms. Face coverings are not a substitute for other measures, but can be a contingency plans cover for a temporary measure.

In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication and understanding, should be worn by those who can wear one without difficulty, or who are exempt from a compulsory face covering requirement, when not reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, the evidence to support this is currently limited. Clear face coverings may be worn by those who are able to wear them, but the face to cover this would not be made with a breathable material and could be at risk of fitting adverse purposes.

The main benefit from a transparent face covering is that they can aid communication, for example enabling lip-reading or allowing for the full visibility of facial expressions. Transparent face coverings may be more difficult to put on and take off than those that contain plastic, which may mean that the face covering is not in place/fitted the layers of cloth.

Face masks or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but should not be expected attendance in terms of course setting or other provision. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are not a substitute for other measures, and there is currently limited evidence of their wider public health benefit. They should only be used when they are part of a wider risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

The use of face covering may have unintended consequences, such as causing skin or other signs for communication. Those who communicate with or provide support to those who lip read will need to make accommodations to wear face coverings or other mitigation settings.

Where appropriate, you should discuss with children and parents the types of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support and facilitate.

No child should be denied education or childcare on the grounds of whether they are, or are not, wearing a face covering.

Stepping measures up and down

You should have contingency plans (committees called outbreak management plans) in place to ensure you can take action if a local COVID-19 outbreak occurs. This would special if you were advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission in your setting or your area. Your local authority will lead on the response to outbreaks. Given the pressures on the system, the response to an outbreak will not always could one be considered as a last resort, but rather as the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest period of time possible.

Central government may offer local areas of particular concern an enhanced response package to help mitigate transmission.

For most settings it will make sense to think about taking extra actions if the number of cases is significantly higher than the rest of your local authority area, or if there is a sudden increase in cases. Public Health England (PHE) has published a framework for local outbreaks.

Public Health England (PHE) provides the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare settings. Local authorities, directors of public health (DPHs) and PHE health protection teams (HPTs) can recommend measures to educational settings, including temporarily reintroducing control measures in settings in a small number of settings, as part of their outbreak management responsibilities.

Control measures

You should:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone

Hand hygiene

Ensuring that thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. You should continue to ensure that children wash their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important.

This is about COVID-19 vaccine, remains these measures, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Staff working in out-of-school settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. The guidance on the use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings provides more information on the use of PPE for COVID-19.

2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products, such as detergents

You should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, fabric per day), with a focus on touch points and surfaces. Public Health England (PHE) has published guidance on the cleaning of non-healthcare settings.

3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

Where your setting is operating, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and that a fresh supply of air is coming into the room/space.

You should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of your risk assessment and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving priority over consideration where holding events where visitors such as parents are on site, for example performances.

Mechanical ventilation is a system that uses a fan to draw fresh air, or extract stale air, in rooms. There should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and ensure it is properly maintained. Opening windows increases fresh air exchange and flow from outside air is circulated.

If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible, then consider using portable air cleaners or units. If they are within a single room, and ensure they are used in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Where mechanical ventilation systems exist, you should ensure that they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Opening external windows can improve natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can assist with creating a through flow of air. If necessary, external opening doors may also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).

You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable environment.

The Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak and CIBSE COVID-19 guidance applies here.

DfE is working with the Public Health England, NHS Test and Trace, and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) on a pilot project to measure CO2 levels in classrooms and exploring options to help improve ventilation in settings where needed.

4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test

Children, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on when to self-isolate and what they need to do. Most people with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 will be able to continue to learn or work as normal, if they are able to do so.

If anyone in your setting develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, you should send their home and they should follow public health advice.

For everyone with symptoms, they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be left in a room on their own if possible and with access to a toilet. If another adult needs to be with them, for example to provide care, a face covering should be worn by that adult if they are able to do so, unless this can be harmful in the one of SEND/health reasons, or unless they have been cleared after they have left.

The household (including any siblings) should follow the PHE stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Asymptomatic testing

Testing is important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within settings. Routine testing of different measures are retained, offered and encouraged as necessary, in response to the latest epidemiological data, as we stand to be prepared to step measures up or down in future in response to changing circumstances.

Over the summer, staff and secondary age children should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open.

If you are operating on or linked to a school, you may wish to discuss with that school how you can most effectively and efficiently support testing. Secondary schools are expected to make tests available for twice-weekly testing of asymptomatic secondary school and sixth form pupils, and secondary school and sixth form staff.

Tests will continue to be made available to secondary settings for home testing. Secondary schools will continue to make available rapid lateral flow tests for home testing, or pharmacy or by ordering coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests online. We should communicate this to staff, secondary age children and parents.

There is no need for primary age children (those in year 6 and below) to test their bubble twice weekly, as they are not part of a bubble. Secondary schools will autumn term when they will start vaccinating school aged children. Secondary schools, if chosen, however, to start testing year 6 pupils earlier, including in summer schools, should communicate this to staff and parents.

Confirmed PCR tests

If a PCR test is taken for a positive (if first result should self-isolate in line with the stay at home guidance. Where the result is a PCR test is check if negative COVID-19.

Without awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it can be cancelled. (If it did not pick up a COVID-19 infection, it is unlikely that you will be testing as long as the individual doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms.

Admitting children back to your setting

In most cases, parents and carers will agree that their child with symptoms should not attend your setting, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a symptomatic child attending your setting, you should seek advice from your local or appropriate judgement. It is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. Your decision would need to be carefully considered in light of the circumstances and your wider public health advice.

Safety measures for activities in out-of-school settings

Parental attendance

We no longer advise that providers limit the attendance of parents and carers of learners. You should continue to ensure that you have parents' and carers' hard copy to date contact details in case of an emergency.

Sports provision

All sports provision, including competition between settings, should be planned and delivered in line with the guidance.

Providers of sports activities should also refer to:

- guidance on exercise venues for gyms and swimming pools and guidance from Sport England
- sport governing organisations such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust
- information on school swimming, water safety and returning to swaps outdoors from Swim England
- active clubs working safely

Performances and events

Performing arts indoor or outdoor focus on rehearsal performance in front of a live audience, you should follow the latest advice in the DCMS working safely during COVID-19 in the performing arts guidance.

Publishing operating or other organised events, more information can be found in COVID-19: Organised events guidance for local authorities.

Educational visits and trips

Out-of-school settings and educational childcare providers may undertake educational visits and trips, including residential and international visits, in accordance with current guidance. Given the long-term impact of COVID-19 disruption, educational visits are important. If you are considering booking a new visit, whether domestic or international, you are advised to book with providers who are members of a recognised trade association.

We continue to recommend you do not go on any international visits before the start of the school autumn term. From the start of the new school term, you can go on international visits that have previously been deferred or postponed and organise new international visits for the future from when the new school term starts.

You should be aware that the travel list (and broader international travel policy) is subject to change and green list countries may be moved into amber or red. The travel lists may change during a visit and you must comply with international travel legislation and should have contingency plans in place to account for these changes.

You should speak to either your visit provider, commercial insurance company, or the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to assess the protection available. Independent advice on insurance cover and options can be sought from the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) or Association of British Insurers (ABI).

Safeguarding

It is important that you and your staff are aware of safeguarding issues and the signs to look out for. Further information is available in the guidance for keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition.

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