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Welsh Government

## PUBLICATION

# COVID-19 interventions in schools: approach to the autumn term 2021 to 2022

Support for schools and local authorities to plan for the approach to COVID interventions from 1 September 2021.

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This advice note is to support schools and local authorities to plan for the approach to COVID interventions from the start of the new academic year 2021 to 2022, and should be read in conjunction with the updated [operational guidance for schools](#).

The situation remains uncertain, and there may be a need to issue further updates in the event of any significant developments during the summer holiday period. In these circumstances, we will work with stakeholders to consider how best to provide you with the time required to make any necessary adjustments to mitigations at the start of term (including any enhancements should these be judged necessary and proportionate to ensure safety at that time).

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The approach after the summer holidays reflects the progress that continues to be made with the vaccination rollout programme. By the end of September everyone working in our education system will have been offered both vaccinations, growing our defences against the virus. Emerging data on elements such as hospitalisation and severe illness, also suggests that by the time schools return after the summer holidays, we can move beyond the very restrictive approach to dealing with COVID that has been necessary to date.

Against this background, the main changes that schools and settings need to consider in planning operations after the school holidays is as follows:

- Testing will continue to play a part in supporting schools and settings in the autumn to quickly identify and isolate infected individuals. School staff and secondary age learners should be encouraged to undertake Lateral Flow Tests just before the return to school. Tests will be accessed through community channels during this time. Further communication on this will be made in due course.
- From the start of the new term we will no longer be recommending the routine wearing of face coverings in the classroom for staff or learners. Schools and settings may however wish to encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be more social mixing, such as in communal areas. Face coverings should continue to be worn by learners in secondary schools and settings when travelling on dedicated school transport. As part of a school's risk assessment process, supported by public health officials, and in discussion with local authorities, schools and settings will be able to decide whether the wearing of face coverings is appropriate anywhere on the school site based on the school's own circumstances and local context. If however an individual wishes to wear a face covering this should not be prevented.
- Schools and settings should return to their normal session times for the new term.
- Schools and settings should plan on the basis that contact groups will no longer have a role to play at the start of the autumn term, this is consistent with the approach being taken in child care. Contact groups will be replaced

by a stronger focus on contact tracing, in line with the general populations. We will use our TTP system in order to identify close contacts of learners who have tested positive, and TTP may contact the school or setting to supplement the information they have gathered with any further intelligence that may be available. Our expectation of schools/settings is that they follow the specific advice they receive from TTP about whether individuals need to self-isolate.

- Cleaning regimes need to be proportionate and in line with any other communicable disease. There will no longer be a need for schools and settings to set aside specific days for deep cleaning. If however there is a confirmed case in the school/setting a deep clean of the immediate area will continue to be helpful in reducing transmission.
- We will publish 'The Local Covid-19 Infection Control Decision Framework' at the start of the autumn term for you to embed it into your operations during the weeks that follow. In the meantime, the current Operational Guidance has been updated to reflect these points and should be used at the start of the autumn term until the framework is embedded.

Moving forward the framework will enable schools to tailor some of the interventions to reflect the level of risk identified locally. Schools and settings will not be expected to make these decisions in isolation, they will continue to be supported by public health officials and their local authorities to ensure measures are appropriate to their own circumstances. Each local authority area have developed incident management teams, or similar in place to bring key experts together to inform decisions.

Please note that over the summer holidays there will be no expectation for staff or learners to continue with Lateral Flow Tests. If however, settings remain open we would encourage this to continue. Anyone wishes to continue testing they can do so through their local community channels.

## About this document

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