

Part of

Education and childcare during coronavirus



Guidance

Guidance for secondary school provision from 15 June 2020

Updated 15 June 2020

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About this guide

This guidance has been updated to reflect the fact secondary schools can now welcome year 10 and year 12 pupils in for some face-to-face support. It also confirms that where possible, schools may invite pupils in other year groups in for a meeting this term.

On 10 May the Prime Minister announced a roadmap towards recovery, outlining the [phased return of some pupils](#) to education settings from the week commencing 1 June, including an ambition that secondary pupils facing exams next year will get some face-to-face support from their teachers this term, subject to the government's 5 tests being met.

On 28 May, the Prime Minister confirmed that the government's 5 tests have been met and that the wider opening of education and childcare settings would go ahead, and that secondary schools can invite year 10 and 12 pupils (years 10 and 11 for alternative provision schools¹) back into school for some face-to-face support with their teachers, from 15 June.

We are asking secondary schools to offer this face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 pupils, which should remain the predominant mode of education during this term for pupils in these year groups.

Our assessment, based on the latest scientific and medical advice, is that we need to continue to control the numbers attending school to reduce the risk of increasing transmission. Therefore, schools are able to have a quarter of the year 10 and year 12 cohort (for schools with sixth forms) in school at any one time.

We are unable to welcome back more children to secondary school at this time, beyond the face-to-face support schools can now offer year 10 and 12 pupils, and provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. We are not asking secondary schools with capacity to invite further year groups to return this term.

We know that secondary schools are keen to invite pupils in other year groups in for a face-to-face meeting before the end of this term, where it would be beneficial. As long as this happens in line with this and wider protective measures guidance, and guidance on the numbers of pupils permitted on-site at any one time, we would encourage this where possible. This time can be used to check-in on pupils, and ensure they are supported before a return to school from September or moving into employment or the next stage of education.

Schools should refer to the guidance on [implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#) to support their planning to welcome back year 10 and year 12 pupils. This document provides information on the approaches we are asking all schools to take to minimise risks as children and young people return to school.

This guide is designed for mainstream and alternative provision secondary schools (including those with a school sixth form). Some of this information may be helpful to those leading special or hospital schools, although it has not been developed with those settings in mind. We have also published [guidance for further education providers](#), including sixth-form colleges.

Expectations from 15 June

From 15 June, secondary schools are able to offer face-to-face support for a quarter of the year 10 and 12 cohort at any one time. Alongside this the government is asking secondary schools to:

- continue providing full-time provision for vulnerable pupils in all year groups (including year 10 and year 12)
- continue providing full-time provision for children of critical workers in all year groups (including year 10 and year 12)
- provide some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 pupils, with a clear expectation that remote education will continue to be the predominant form of education delivery for these year groups and that this should be of high quality
- continue to use best endeavours to support all other pupils remaining at home, making use of the available remote education support and ensuring a high quality offer

Minimising risks

The guidance on [implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#) provides detailed advice on the changes schools can make and the measures they can put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus. Many schools have already been using this in their planning to welcome back more pupils. Key points from this guidance are included below with some additional guidance for secondary school settings from 15 June.

We are asking all schools to adopt a range of approaches and actions which can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, create an inherently safer environment, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. This includes:

- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that pupils or staff who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- cleaning hands more often than usual - pupils and staff should be encouraged to regularly wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- minimising contact and mixing, as far as possible, by keeping pupils in small groups for face-to-face support and keeping those groups as consistent as possible whilst in school (e.g. for arrival, lunchtime, breaks and departure) and altering the school environment (e.g. changing classroom layouts so desks are further apart or dividing groups into different classrooms)

As well as the measures above, secondary schools should ensure that only a quarter of pupils in year 10 and year 12 are in school at any one time, including vulnerable children and children of critical workers in those year groups who are still encouraged to attend full-time. This is in addition to vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers who might be in full-time attendance from other year groups.

Schools have flexibility to determine how best to provide full-time provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers in year 10 and year 12, alongside the support for others in those year groups. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in other year groups should be accommodated as currently or if currently in a hub then schools should explore how to bring them back to their normal school, subject to risk assessments.

Schools should ensure that no pupils are on the school grounds unless for agreed contact time or attendance as above.

When seeking to minimise contact and mixing as far as schools are able, secondary schools should consider the following additional guidance:

- schools should aim to practise social distancing in line with the measures the government is asking everyone to adopt in public and in workplaces, including keeping pupils 2 metres apart from each other where possible. This is more achievable in secondary schools than in primary schools, due to the age of the pupils, and is more important as mixing between groups – while limited as far as possible – will be more common in secondary schools
- ensuring sufficient distance between pupils is likely to mean classes are no more than half their usual size. However, this may vary due to individual school circumstances (for example a larger group could be taught in a larger space provided social distancing can be maintained and mixing is minimised)
- mixing between different groups of pupils should be kept to a minimum. We recognise that the range of subjects taught in secondary schools means that some mixing may be unavoidable to provide pupils with face-to-face support from subject teachers. We would expect that these groups are still smaller than normal. We would also expect schools to minimise mixing for arrival, lunchtime, breaks and departure. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk
- given we are asking secondary schools not to have whole year groups in school at the same time, some schools may plan to use rotas. Where rotas are used, secondary schools should avoid split day rotas within the same day and ensure that only a quarter of children are ever in the school on any one day (e.g. morning and afternoon rotas should not be applied). Schools should ensure wider adherence to the approaches set out in the implementing protective measures guidance, to minimise transmission risks. If rotas are used, vulnerable children and children of critical workers in all year groups should still be encouraged to attend full-time and appropriate risk assessments should consider how this could be managed

We are asking primary schools not to plan on the basis of rotas at this stage as they do not provide the consistency of education and care required for the youngest children, who also require more support with remote education.

Minimising risks outside of school

Secondary schools should consider how pupils travel to and from school. Pupils should be encouraged to walk or cycle where possible. In preparing for wider opening, secondary schools should carefully consider:

- how many pupils in year 10 and year 12 will be travelling at the same time
- how those pupils are likely to travel
- the likelihood of pupils mixing with each other and coming into contact with other people on the journey to and from school

Schools should ensure that the use of public transport to travel to and from school is minimised as far as possible. Where it is totally necessary, this should not be during peak times. Schools should introduce staggered start and end times as appropriate to help achieve this.

Schools should give clear messages to pupils about minimising the use of public transport and how to reduce the risks of transmission outside of school. Schools should consider the potential for broader social mixing outside school when deciding their approach and communicate with pupils about not socialising with each other in groups outside school.

Flexibility

Within the guidance above, schools have the flexibility to implement face-to-face support for year 10 and year 12 pupils in the way that best suits their circumstances, including considerations around staff availability and workload. It is up to schools to decide how they want to use face-to-face support in the best interests of their pupils e.g. additional pastoral support, academic support, practical support, or a combination of these.

There may be some pupils who would particularly benefit from more face-to-face support, such as disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have not been engaging in remote education. These pupils may attend more frequently than others as long as schools ensure that only a quarter of the year 10 and 12 cohort are in school at any one time. This should be alongside full-time attendance of vulnerable children and children of critical workers in all year groups.

Scientific advice and rationale for approach

The guidance on how to phase the return of pupils in secondary schools is underpinned by our latest understanding of coronavirus (COVID-19). To limit the risk of increasing the rate of transmission, scientific advice indicates that we need to take a phased approach that limits both the number of children and young people in school and how much they mix with other pupils and staff. This is set out in detail in our [guidance on protective measures for education settings](#).

Overall, we need to limit the total number of pupils returning to school. Younger children in primary schools have been prioritised because we know that the early years of education are crucial for social and educational development. Advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) shows there is a lower overall risk from opening schools to younger children, and that they are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus compared to adults. Year 10 and year 12 have been prioritised in mainstream secondary schools because they are preparing for key examinations next year and, of the secondary year groups, are most impacted by falling behind due to time out of school. The focus on year 11 in alternative provision (which do not have year 12) recognises that this cohort are at high risk of disengaging from education, failing to make a successful transition to post-16 education/provision and ending up not in education, employment or training (NEET).

We cannot return more pupils to secondary school at this time. This position will be kept under review, and further advice will be provided as and when needed. One of the key reasons for this is because we know older pupils generally travel further to school and are more likely to use public transport to travel to and from school. The latest government advice is to avoid public transport as far as possible and to walk or cycle instead to reduce the risk of the virus spreading. Numbers of secondary pupils must also be limited because we know older pupils are more likely to have a wider group of social contacts outside of school.

Further information and support

All of the Department for Education's [coronavirus guidance for educational settings can be found on GOV.UK](#). This includes specific guidance on implementing protective measures, answers to frequently asked questions for schools and guidance on issues such as remote education, providing free school meals and attendance, among other things.

DfE coronavirus helpline
Telephone
0800 046 8687

If you have a query about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to schools and other educational establishments, and children's social care, in England contact our helpline.

Lines are open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm at weekends.

If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the helpline.

About this guide

This guide does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities. It is important that, as an employer, schools continue to comply with their existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with relevant protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors (including bus companies) and other people, as well as your employees.

This guide is designed to support planning for provision in secondary schools from 15 June until the end of the summer term. It does not cover the summer holidays or autumn term. Further guidance will be provided in due course, dependent on the developing risks related to the virus.

In most cases the preparation for wider opening will be led by the headteacher and senior colleagues. However, relevant bodies (such as local authorities, academy trusts or governing bodies, depending on the school type) retain responsibility for key decisions, and plans should be confirmed with them, particularly risk assessments of the school opening more widely before pupils and staff return.

In developing their offer, schools and trusts should work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances, and with their local authorities to determine what services they require and to agree on any specific arrangements for this period.

1. Alternative provision: references to year 10 and year 12 throughout this guidance mean year 10 and year 11 for alternative provision schools. [↗](#)

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