Department
for Education

Guidance
What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Prepared 24 July 2020

This guidance is for parents and carers of children:

- registered childcare providers (including nurseries and childminders)
- primary and secondary schools (including independent schools, maintained schools, academy trusts, free schools and special schools)
- colleges[1]

Main changes to previous guidance

On 24 July, we:

- added a new section on flexibility for primary schools to welcome back additional children this term
- updated guidance on vulnerable children and young people
- added further information on safety in schools and the national NHS Test and Trace programme
- updated content 20 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare
- updated parent and transport sections with information on using face masks on transport
- revised section on school meals, adding more information on the reopening of school kitchens and on free school meals
- updated content on exams in 2021

Opening early years providers, schools and colleges to more pupils

From 1 June, we asked:

- early years providers to welcome back children of any age
- primary schools in England to welcome back children in key transition years – nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6

Schools will also continue to offer places to children:

- who are vulnerable
- of critical workers

From 15 June, secondary schools, sixth form and colleges can offer some face-to-face support for:

- pupils in year 10 and year 12
- 16 to 19 learners in the first year of a 2-year study programme

Colleges and schools will continue to offer places to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers.

Flexibility for primary schools to welcome back additional children this term

We know that in some schools, there will be capacity to welcome more children back, in some cases by the end of the term. To define the summer holidays. This may be because fewer children than usual are taking up their place in school, or because they are able to space safe arrangements within the school and available staff to teach and supervise. These schools will be able to welcome back additional children where they judge that it is safe and feasible to do so.

Your school will contact you if it is able to welcome back additional children. It will be up to individual schools to decide which children to invite back.

If you have a child in nursery, reception, year 1 or year 6 and have not yet taken up the offer of a place for your child, your school may be in touch to see if you want to take up your place back this term. If you do not, the school may choose to offer this capacity to other children.

Vulnerable children and young people

Vulnerable children and young people is one year group should attend school, where it is appropriate and there is childcare available for the child or their household. Vulnerable children and young people include those who are:

- aged between 0 and 18 with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) plan. This is a plan that sets out the educational and health needs of children and young people.

Vulnerable children and young people are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or are looked after
- have an EHC plan and are determined, following a risk assessment, to be most likely to be at risk or may safely mark in the educational environment
- have been identified by their school, college or local authority (children's social care, authorities (including children's social care services) or other multi-agency partners (such as health care professionals, youth services and the police), as for whom attendance would mean a significant, high or increased risk to their welfare and safety. This might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training), those at risk of in-school exclusion, those with an existing mental health care plan and those with recorded attendance because of a mental health need and others at local discretion

The term 'one group' in this context refers to children and young people in a single year group, for example those who are in year 6 or those aged 5 to 16 (or aged 5 to 25 for children and young people with an EHC plan).

Critical workers

Children in any year group with at least one parent or carer who is listed as a critical worker can attend schools.

You may be asked for evidence that you are a critical worker, such as a work ID badge or payslip.

Steps early years providers, schools and colleges are taking to make sure they are safe for pupils

We have worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) to develop guidance on implementing protective measures within early years providers, schools and colleges. Children should not attend school if they are ill, or have a family member who is a clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable person, or if their self-isolation or shielding is significantly delayed.

These controls are:

- avoiding contact with anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- cleaning surfaces
- minimising contact and mixing

We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. We know that bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking the risks around:

Early years providers, schools and colleges should reduce the risk of coronavirus by minimising contact and mixing between groups and keeping groups separate from each other.

Secondary schools should ensure sufficient distance between pupils in classrooms where no more half their size.

Colleges should aim to keep students in groups that are as small as possible and that mix as little as possible with other groups.

Actions early years providers, schools and colleges will take if there is a suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19)

If a child, young person or staff member has symptoms compatible with coronavirus (COVID-19), or someone in their household does, they should not attend school or other educational settings. If they develop symptoms while attending their setting, they should be sent home.

Anyone with symptoms should self-isolate for 7 days. Other household members should self-isolate for 14 days. They should follow guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Everyone has access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and testing is prioritised for those who are most clinically positive (as should inform the school or other educational setting immediately.

Actions early years providers, schools and colleges will take if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)

The NHS Test and Trace service will contact anyone that tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and will ask them to provide details of anyone they have been in close contact (close, recent contact) and place they have visited. NHS Test and Trace should contact 18 year olds who have tested positive by phone whenever possible. They will also be contacted from a parent or guardian to continue the call.

When NHS Test and Trace identifies that a child, young person or member of staff who attended a school or other setting, PHE will work with the setting to understand the risk to other children and staff who have been in the setting and those with whom the person had contact. Further guidance is available on managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools and colleges.

Local Public Health England teams will contact those identified as being at risk of close contact, school or college attended by someone that tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). They will be in touch with the school or college to let them know that a person with the positive test. Their other household members of that close or group contact should be asked to self-isolate. A temporary letter will be provided to the school to send to parents and staff members.

In most cases, this will be the child or member of staff's immediate class or group which they have been in contact for 15 minutes or more. Public Health England will work with the school to contact with the person during the period that they were infectious and the school will be asked to self-isolate. The school, college or nursery will therefore be able to provide the school to send to parents and staff members.

In some cases, a larger number of children or young people may be asked to self-isolate. Public Health England will work closely with the school, college or nursery in this group. Where early years providers, schools and colleges are able to put in place other measures guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure will be avoid, setting will not generally be necessary.

Special schools

Over 1 June, we asked special schools and hospital schools to work towards a phased return, prioritising vulnerable and young people, without a return to the same groups and informing local assessments.

From 15 June, we asked special provision and AP institutions to work towards a phased return of young people, without a focus on specific year groups or proportion of learners and informed by risk assessments.

Read the guidance for special schools, specialist colleges and local authorities to find out more about the phased return of special provision and AP in DfE's plan for recovering education in 2020 to 2021.

Early years providers

We have worked early years providers including nurseries to open for children of any age.

Childcare fees and charges

We expect nurseries to continue with the fees and take a reasonable and proportionate approach to parents' fees, considering these unprecedented circumstances, and to discuss any concerns with their provider.

Fees that you may have to pay include cancellation charges, if you cancel your place (COVID-19 cancellation), your child's 20 hours entitlements and Parents Achieving Childcare Offer (PACO) and charges fees.

20 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare

If you are entitled to 20 hours free childcare, continue to access your 20 hours free childcare or tax-free childcare. If your circumstances have changed, you may be eligible for 30 hours free childcare and may receive the threshold for these schemes, you will be treated as eligible.

You should continue to apply or recertify if you have a childcare account already. You will be contacted by your local authority further evidence of eligibility.

Subject to parliamentary approval of a temporary amendment to the 30 hours free childcare eligibility, if your child's 3 or 4 year old birthday falls between 1 March and 31 August 2020, but you missed the deadline of 31 March 2020, 31 August 2020 or 31 December 2020, you will be treated as eligible for 30 hours for the current 2020 to 2021 or year 2021 to 2022.

We have previously asked providers to use their discretion to take the earlier deadline dates on 30 hours codes where childcare providers and parents of vulnerable children were unable to meet the deadline. We have extended the deadline for 31 March 2020, 31 August 2020, but have moved the deadline of 31 March 2021, 31 August 2021 to take up their places in the summer term.

Previously, only the children of critical workers and children who are vulnerable were able to access childcare. Now that early years providers are able to open to all children and children of parents who are working or looking for work, the 30 hours free childcare also moves to 31 March deadline, provided they meet the eligibility criteria and there is capacity for providers to take them on. Providers and local authorities will work together to ensure that the 30 hours free childcare is in place for the children who ensure they are eligible for a place in the summer term.

You should continue to apply for your 30 hours free childcare if you are currently using it.

Read the guidance on tax-free childcare and 30 hours free childcare during coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for more information.

Attendance

We strongly encourage children and young people who are in the eligible year groups to attend, unless they are staying at home and other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions).

You should notify your child's school or college as normal if your child is unable to attend or that staff are aware and can discuss with you.

Parents will not be penalised for non-attendance at this time.

If you are a parent of a vulnerable child and do not want them to attend school, speak to your social worker or school.

If you are concerned about the risk of your child contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) attending school or college, speak to your school or college about the protective measures they are putting in place to reduce the risks of transmission for all children and staff in school.

Opening hours

We expect early years providers, schools and colleges to:

- be open for their normal hours
- if possible, continue with breakfast club and after school provision

Breakfast / after school clubs

School based wraparound care providers, such as breakfast and after school clubs, can open to children who are in the eligible year groups, subject to the following:

- operating on the same premises as the school or early years provider those children are attending
- only caring for children of that school or early years provision and no others

Providers should follow the same protective measures being taken by early years providers, schools and colleges. Parents of children who are in the eligible year groups should consider groups that they are using during the day.

If wraparound providers are unable to implement the same protective measures as the school or early years provider, they should remain closed for the time being.

Admissions

We have extended the regulations so that admission authorities can hold appeals by telephone, video conference or in writing, where necessary, instead of holding face to face hearings with parents. More information on the appeals process is available.

Transport

Local authorities continue to be under a statutory duty to provide home to school transport for eligible children that are able to attend school.

Colleges and schools also have the capacity to support transport costs where reasonable to fit the year olds.

You are encouraged to walk or cycle where possible and avoid public transport, particularly at peak times. When planning your journey to school, consider including if using public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Transport providers will also make extra care and offers to their customers. This can be for example:

- not leaving home if anyone in your household has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- avoiding travelling on public transport, particularly at peak times
- using a face covering or mask if you are able to and are not exempt
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by using the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- avoiding touching your face
- washing your hands thoroughly before and after travelling
- wearing a face covering if you need to use public transport

School transport is provided by local authorities, academy trusts or schools to the children who are entitled to free school transport. Local authorities, academy trusts or schools

Children are not required to wear face coverings on school transport, but they can wear one if they wish. School transport is operated specifically for the exclusive use of pupils that children can attend school. It is limited to children travelling to school, and their journeys are not shared with members of the public. Transport is arranged by schools for the planned number of children which means demand for services can be managed in a way that ensures social distancing measures can be maintained. Children who are able to attend school from other children in their household, whereas provided the school transport offers carries the same children on a regular basis, which may reduce the risk of transmission.

When deciding whether children should wear a face covering on school transport, it is important that parents consider:

- whether a child will be expected to wear face covering in other settings
- it's important that these face coverings are able to do so properly – guidance on how to wear a face covering is available online
- children under 11 are those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly and so parents will need to help them
- children under 11 are not expected to wear face coverings on public transport

School meals

Schools should provide meal options for all children attending school. Meals should be available free of charge to all eligible pupils and pupils who meet the benefits related free school meals eligibility criteria.

If your child usually receives free school meals and is not attending school, then the school should provide a meal or a food voucher.

As school kitchens reopen, we expect schools to make food parcels available for collection or delivery for any children that are eligible for free school meals who are not in school. We expect schools to be able to provide meals for children who are eligible who are at home, they can continue to offer vouchers for delivery.

We know due to coronavirus (COVID-19) there is increased pressure on household budgets, and we recognise families and face particular challenges over the coming months. We have made it easier for families to claim free school meals, and we ask schools and eligible children who are eligible for free school meals to claim vouchers for the 6 week summer holiday period.

You can still apply for free school meals. Contact your local authority who will verify your eligibility.

Meals in colleges

We expect colleges to continue to support students who are eligible for and usually receive, free meals in colleges. This includes students who are newly eligible, whether they are in receipt of benefits the provider or are studying remotely due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues.

What pupils will be taught

Schools continue to be best placed to make decisions about how to support and educate all their pupils during this period, based on the local context and staff capacity.

Where year groups are returning to school, we expect schools and teachers to:

- consider their pupils' mental health and wellbeing and identify pupils who may need additional support as they are ready to learn
- identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and what adjustments may be needed to the school curriculum over the coming weeks
- identify and plan how best to support the education of high needs pupils, including those with complex and vulnerable educational needs and disabilities, and other vulnerable pupils
- support pupils in year 6, who will need both their primary and secondary schools to ensure they are ready to transition to secondary school in 2020
- consider how to take additional contact time to support those in year 10 and year 12 and the first year of a 16 to 19 course, who are starting their first year of study for GCSEs, A levels and other qualifications next academic year

Early years providers, schools and colleges should continue to support pupils attending remotely as well as those remaining at home, making use of the resources they have received.

No school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils during this period.

Exams

Students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels and vocational and technical qualifications will receive their results as usual.

For students taking other qualifications instead of or alongside GCSEs and A levels, such as some BTECs, we also expect a standardised result wherever possible.

There will be some qualifications where this is not possible, such as those that need to demonstrate a more practical set of skills. These assessments will be approached as close as possible so that students can receive a result this summer.

Where it is not possible to deliver the assessments, these will be delayed. Ofqual – the exam regulator – will work with awarding organisations to develop alternative assessments to ensure the approaches.

We recognise that students who are sitting GCSE, A level or equivalent courses, but are not due to take exams until 2021, will have experienced disruption to their education and will need to be assessed on the content that the exam boards in development to run year's exams in light of this.

Resources and support

We have published a DfE offers resources and services to help children to learn at home. You can also access guidance on supporting your children's education during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Mental wellbeing

Social isolation, reduced exercise and bereavement may affect children's wellbeing in this period. Resources to promote and support children and young people's mental health are available.

- Mental health and wellbeing resources for parents about children and young people's mental health which is relevant for parents and carers as well as schools, colleges and other professionals working with children.
- Mental health and wellbeing support for children after your own and other's mental health
- guidance on parents, carers and families with mental health conditions during coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- guidance on supporting children's wellbeing and mental health
- Public Health England's Every Mind Matters

Children and young people may also need extra mental wellbeing in the list of online educational resources we have collated to support children to learn at home.

NHS mental mental health trusts are setting up 24/7 helplines and listening to use digital and virtual channels to continue delivering support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Keeping your child safe online

With children spending more time online to do schoolwork and other activities, there could be an additional risk.

It's important that you talk to your children about online safety, ideas are relevant in this guidance. Ensure your child is using the internet safely and that you know what your child is interacting with online. It is helpful to your children, if they are using the internet, to be aware of what they are doing online. Talk to your children about the things, what games and apps are appropriate to use and what your children like and dislike about being online.

You should also consider setting up and monitor parental controls, such as child mode on popular streaming services, and the apps and software they have to keep children safe online.

Here are some useful links to help you keep your children safe online:

- Government's Online safety for children and young people and parents
- Child sexual exploitation, cyberbullying and harmful content
- Parents and carers resource on Childnet's website for information, advice, and tips on cyberbullying, cybersecurity and harmful and illegal online activity and screen time and how to talk to your child about online safety
- Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency (NCA). Thinkuknow offers resources, activities, and advice for children and young people, teachers, and parents and carers on how to keep children safe online.

[1] Colleges and schools will continue to offer places to children and young people who are vulnerable or children of critical workers.

providing age-appropriate resources for children and support for parents

- Parent Info is a collaboration between Parentzone and the NCA providing support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations
- Childnet provides a tool kit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support
- Internet Matters provides age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world
- LGfL provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including 6 top tips to keep primary aged children safe online
- Net Aware provides support for parents and carers from the NSPCC and O2, providing a guide to social networks, apps and games
- Let's Talk About It provides support for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
- UK Safer Internet Centre provides tips, advice, guides and resources to help keep children safe online, including parental controls offered by home internet providers and safety tools on social networks and other online services

Age-appropriate practical support for children on reporting concerns is available from:

- Childline – for general support
- UK Safer Internet Centre - to report and remove harmful online content
- CEOP - for advice on making a report about online abuse

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1. For the purposes of this guidance 'colleges' means publicly funded sixth form and further education colleges, independent training providers and special post 16 institutions. ↩

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Transition period: get ready for 2021

Services and information

Benefits
Births, deaths, marriages and care
Business and self-employed
Childcare and parenting
Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
Disabled people
Driving and transport
Education and learning
Employing people
Environment and countryside
Housing and local services
Money and tax
Passports, travel and living abroad
Visas and immigration
Working, jobs and pensions

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