Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings

Updated 26 November 2020

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National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this guidance.

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Overview

It continues to be the aim that all children and young people, in all year groups and setting types, remain in education settings full time throughout the autumn term.

This guidance is for leaders and staff of:

- special schools
- special post-16 institutions (SPIs)
- other specialist education settings, such as hospital schools

It provides further information on the steps needed to ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can attend full time provision.

Separate guidance is available for:

- early years
- mainstream schools
- further education (FE) colleges and providers
- children's social care

The first section sets out the actions leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting, highlighting additional or different considerations for special education settings, compared to mainstream. This is public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE), and is relevant for all specialist settings.

The rest of this guidance is focused on how the Department for Education (DfE) expects settings, including special schools, to operate in this new context. This includes:

- school operations
- curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support
- assessment and accountability
- contingency planning to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak

SPIs may also want to refer to the general guidance for further education (FE) colleges and providers.

We produced this guidance with input from school leaders, unions and sector bodies and in consultation with PHE and the Health and Safety Executive

(HSE). We will keep the guidance under review and update as necessary.

Welcoming children and young people back to education

Attending school or college is vital for children and young people's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of an education setting is detrimental to cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. This impact can affect both current levels of education and children and young people's future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils and students can attend their setting.

The risk to children and young people themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school or college. We know that education settings are a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children, young people and families.

A child or young person's time spent in education is key to their preparation for adulthood. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils and students will have over the course of their entire lives. For many households, the closure of education settings has also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.

While it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment for people working in schools, there is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults, and no evidence that staff in education settings are at any greater risk of fatal outcomes than many other occupations. Given the growing evidence base, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children attending school. For the vast majority of children and young people, the benefits of being back in an education setting far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), and this guidance explains the steps settings need to take to reduce that risk still further.

For as long as coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, judgements will need to be made at a setting level about how to balance minimising risks from coronavirus (COVID-19), by maximising control measures, with providing a full educational experience for children and young people. There are no plans at present to reimburse additional costs incurred as part of that process.

The measures set out in this guidance provide a framework for education leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for children, young people and staff, which also ensure that all pupils and students receive a high quality education that enables them to thrive and progress. During the autumn, settings are asked to minimise the number of contacts that a pupil or student has during the day as part of implementing the system of controls to reduce the risk of transmission. If settings follow the guidance set out here, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 November, in England, education settings will remain open in all tiers.

Purpose of this guidance

The first section of this guidance sets out the public health advice which special educational settings must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process which should be followed if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at their setting. This guidance has been developed with advice from PHE. In developing this guidance for special settings, our partners have been clear that special education settings face some specific challenges, with social distancing and the use of consistent groups (bubbles). Coproduction and consultation with families is crucial.

The public health advice in this guidance makes up a PHE-endorsed 'system of controls', building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. When implemented in line with a revised setting-based risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children, young people and staff in which the risk of transmission of infection of coronavirus (COVID-19) is substantially reduced.

The system of controls provides a set of principles and if settings follow this advice and maximise the use of control measures, they will effectively minimise risks. All elements of the system of controls are essential. All settings must cover them all, but the way they implement some of the requirements will differ based on individual circumstances. Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by PHE, we have said 'must'. Where there is a legal requirement, we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach where the system of controls describes every scenario. Education setting leaders are best placed to understand the needs of their settings and communities, and to make informed judgements about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk. The system of controls provides a set of principles to help them do this and, if they follow this advice, they will effectively minimise risks.

We expect special settings, trusts and local authorities to work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances and to discuss any concerns. We want children, young people and staff to be back in settings, and believe the conditions are right for this, but some people will understandably have worries that should be heard and addressed.

Risk assessments for children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans

Following the partial closure of educational and childcare settings from 20 March 2020, we asked local authorities to consider the needs of all children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and to carry out a risk assessment. These risk assessments may prove useful over the autumn term to help identify any additional support that children and young people withEHCplans need in order to make a successful return to full-time education. We know that they help reassure pupils, families, and staff that it is safe for the pupil to be welcomed back to their setting. Risk assessments may also prove useful in the event that:

- children and young people have to self-isolate
- there is a local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Any risk assessments undertaken should inform a plan of action which focuses on supporting attendance and engagement and, in the spirit of co-production, should involve parents and incorporate the views of the child or young person. They should involve young people over 16 who have EHC plans. Where a child or young person with an EHC plan has a social worker, the social worker should also be involved in the risk assessment, along with the local authority virtual school head if the child is in care. Local authorities and educational settings should decide together who is best placed to undertake the risk assessment, noting that the duty to secure provision remains with the local authority.

Whether individual risk assessments are used or not, when a child or young person with SEND has spent some time out of education, specialist settings may consider using a range of approaches to support the return to full provision. These might include visits to the setting, social stories, and any other approaches that they normally use.

SEND legislation

From 1 May to 31 July, Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 was modified by a notice issued under the Coronavirus Act 2020. Local authorities and health commissioners were required to use their 'reasonable endeavours' to secure or arrange the specified special educational and health care provision within EHC plans. These changes were intended to balance the needs of children and young people with SEND with the ability of local authorities, education and childcare settings and health services to respond to the pandemic. These temporary changes have now ceased.

To ensure that children and young people receive the support they need, we will not be issuing further notices to modify this duty unless the evidence changes. It is vital that all children with SEND attend their education setting so that they can receive high quality teaching and specialist professional care. All therapies and support that would normally be in place for children with EHC plans should now be back in place, and our focus is on supporting local authorities, health commissioning bodies and education settings to restore full provision for all children and young people with EHC plans.

The temporary changes to the law on the timescales for EHC needs assessments and plans, which gave local authorities and others who contribute to the relevant processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus (COVID-19), have now also expired.

We remain committed to listening to and working with local authorities, parent/carer representatives and specialist SEND organisations, to ensure that the lifting of the temporary changes is managed in a way that supports the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Many children and young people will have found restrictions exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally. Settings should consider any challenging behaviours or social or emotional challenges arising as a response to restrictions (following discussion with the parents or young person) and offer additional support and phased returns where needed.

Vulnerable children

Our published definition of vulnerable children and young people includes those who have a social worker or an education health and care (EHC) plan or those who are deemed otherwise vulnerable by the school or the local authority.

Section 1: public health advice to minimise coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

Settings should have facilitated all children and young people to make a full return from the start of the autumn term. Special schools and other specialist settings should not have put in place rotas.

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Settings should:

- thoroughly review health and safety risk assessments
- draw up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using the system of controls

The system of controls is an adapted form of the system of protective measures that will be familiar from the summer term. Essential measures include:

- the requirement that people who are ill should stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene

- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in the setting and, wherever possible, minimise the potential for contamination as much as is reasonably practicable

Reducing contact will depend on the setting's individual circumstances and will include, as much as possible:

- grouping children and young people together
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

Health and safety risk assessments

Employers must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, pupils and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within the education setting.

Special schools and other specialist settings have remained open to some children, young people and staff and will therefore have already assessed the risks and implemented proportionate control measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) for a limited number of pupils or students.

As part of planning for a full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that settings should have revisited and updated existing risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices already developed), and considered the additional risks and control measures needed to enable a return to full capacity. They should also have reviewed and updated their wider risk assessments and considered the need for relevant revised controls in respect of their conventional risk profile, considering the implications of coronavirus (COVID-19). Special education settings should also have ensured that they have implemented sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of control, to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

Employers should have active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective, working as planned, and update them appropriately if any issues are identified and if changes in public health advice are announced.

For more information on what is required of school employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk, see annex A.

The system of controls: protective

measures

Having assessed risk, settings must work through this system of controls. They should adopt protective measures in a way that:

- addresses the risks identified in the assessment
- works for the setting and the individual, often complex, needs of the children and young people they teach
- allows settings to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, including full educational and care support for pupils and students

If settings follow the guidance set out here they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

System of controls

This is the set of actions education settings must take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection'.

Prevention

1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, or those who have been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, do not attend the setting.

2) Where recommended, the use of face coverings in settings.

3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.

5) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.

6) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

7) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

8) Always keep occupied spaces well ventilated.

Numbers 1 to 5, and number 8, must be in place in all settings, all the time.

Number 6 must be properly considered, and settings must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

9) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

10) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting's community.

11) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Numbers 9 to 11 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, or those who have been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, do not attend the setting

Ensuring that pupils, students, staff and other adults do not come into the setting if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 10 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in settings and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). All settings must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

If anyone in the setting becomes unwell with a new and persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 10 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19).

Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the child, with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings guidance.

If a child in a boarding school shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their boarding house (or the accommodation they stay in whilst at school). Most children will benefit from self-isolating in their boarding house so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their home. For more information on how to care for a symptomatic child while protecting the welfare of other pupils and staff, read the guidance on isolation for residential education settings.

As is usual practice in an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not otherwise visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms while wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or pupils who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, if wearing a face covering, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should self-isolate and arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the PHE advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left, to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

Public Health England has good evidence that routinely taking the temperature of pupils is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

If a child or young person in a boarding school shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their residential setting household. Most will benefit from self-isolating in their boarding house so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their home.

They should not use public transport if they are symptomatic. If arranging their return to their family home to isolate due to someone else displaying symptoms in the residential home, settings should follow advice on transport arrangement in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance.

2. Where recommended, use of face coverings in schools

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

The government is not recommending universal use of face coverings in all settings. Settings that teach children in years 7 and above, and which are in local restriction tier: medium alert will have the discretion to require face coverings for pupils, staff and visitors in indoor areas outside the classroom where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This could include areas such as corridors and communal spaces if deemed appropriate by settings for their particular circumstances. Primary-aged school children will not need to wear a face covering and, older children and young people in specialist settings may be exempt, depending on their needs.

In particular, settings that teach years 7 and above may decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings for pupils, staff or visitors in communal areas outside the classroom where the layout of the schools makes it difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises, for example, corridors.

In primary settings where social distancing is not possible in indoor areas outside of classrooms between members of staff or visitors, for example in staffrooms, headteachers will have the discretion to decide whether to ask staff or visitors to wear, or agree to them wearing face coverings in these circumstances.

We recommend that face visors or shields should not routinely be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing aerosol transmission, and therefore in a school environment are unlikely to offer appropriate protection to the wearer.

Based on current evidence and the measures that schools are already putting in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom even where full social distancing is not possible. Face coverings could have a negative impact on teaching and their use in the classroom should currently be avoided.

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- speak to or provide assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education settings, and we would expect teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Local restriction tiers: high alert or very high alert

When an area moves to local restriction tiers high alert or very high alert, in settings where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should

be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This does not apply to younger children or to those who are exempt.

In the event of an area moving into local restriction tier: high alert or very high alert, settings will need to communicate quickly and clearly to staff, parents and pupils that the new arrangements require the use of face coverings in certain circumstances.

Access to face coverings

It is reasonable to assume that staff and young people will now have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and PHE has made available resources on how to make a simple face covering.

However, where someone is struggling to access a face covering, or where they are unable to use their face covering due to having forgotten it or it having become soiled or unsafe, education settings should take steps to have a small contingency supply available to meet such needs.

No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

Settings should have a process for removing face coverings when those who use face coverings arrive and when face coverings are worn within the setting. This process should be communicated clearly to pupils and staff and allow for adjustments to be made for those children and young people with SEND who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully.

Children and young people must be instructed not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it and they must dispose of temporary face coverings in a 'black bag' waste bin (not recycling bin) or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands again before heading to their classroom.

Further guidance on face coverings

Separate guidance is available on:

- face coverings in education settings
- preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE, in education, childcare and children's social care settings

3. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser. Special settings must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at the setting, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating.

Special education settings will want to consider what frequency of hand washing is best for which pupils, students and staff, and incorporate time for this in timetables or lesson plans. Staff working with children and young people who spit uncontrollably may want more opportunities to wash their hands than other staff, or, children and young people who use saliva as a sensory stimulant or who struggle with 'catch it, bin it, kill it' may need more opportunities to wash their hands than children and young people who do not. Specialist settings will typically have handwash basins in or adjacent to classrooms, so may be able to use these to maximise hand washing.

Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement:

- whether the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' available so that all pupils and staff can clean their hands regularly
- supervision of hand sanitiser use given risks around ingestion. Small children and pupils with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly. Skin friendly skin cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative
- building these routines into school culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so settings must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available to support pupils and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, settings must ensure younger children and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all pupils understand that this is now part of how the setting operates. The e-Bug coronavirus (COVID-19) website contains free resources for schools, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Some pupils with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these pupils and the staff working with them and is not a reason to deny these pupils face to face education.

5. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents

Points to consider and implement:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes more frequent cleaning of rooms or shared areas that are used by different groups and frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal

- toilets will need to be cleaned regularly and pupils must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet - different groups being allocated their own toilet blocks could be considered but is not a requirement if the site does not allow for it

Public Health England has published revised guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings to advise on general cleaning required in addition to the existing advice on cleaning those settings when there is a suspected case.

6. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and education settings must consider how to implement this. Special settings must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children, young people and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on children's ability to distance, the layout of the setting, and the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum.

We recognise that maintaining distance or forming bubbles could be particularly difficult in special settings, particularly given the need for staff to administer care support and provide therapies to the children and young people attending. However, the average number of pupils or students attending a special school or SPI is much lower than the average number in a mainstream school, and this in itself, will help to limit the number of contacts for any individual.

The points to consider and implement are set out in the following sections.

a. How to group children and young people

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of children, young people and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. They have been used in special settings in the summer term in recognition that children, and especially the youngest children and those with complex needs, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other and this provides an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and to keep that number as small as possible.

However, the use of small groups restricts the normal operation of education settings and presents both educational and logistical challenges, including the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as the playgrounds, boarding houses, dining halls, and toilets, and the provision of specialist teaching and therapies. This is the case in both primary and secondary schools, but is particularly difficult in secondary schools, and special settings.

In this guidance for the autumn term, maintaining consistent groups remains important, but given the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, settings may need to change the emphasis on bubbles within their system of controls.

Settings should assess their circumstances and look to implement 'bubbles' of an appropriate size, to achieve the greatest reduction in contact and mixing, without unduly limiting the quality or breadth of teaching, or access for support and specialist staff and therapists.

Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and children and young people that are able should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Settings with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible.

When using larger groups, the other measures from the system of controls become even more important to minimise transmission risks and to minimise the numbers of pupils and staff who need to self-isolate. We recognise that younger children and those with complex needs will not be able to maintain social distancing and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some settings may keep children and young people in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport, or for boarding pupils in one group residentially and another during the school day. Siblings may also be in different groups. Endeavouring to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between children and young people will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

All teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the timetable and specialist provision but should minimise the number of interactions or changes wherever possible.

b. Measures within the classroom

Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face contact lowers the risk of transmission. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with children and young people with complex needs, or those who need close contact care. Educational and care support should be provided for these children and young people as normal, with other increased hygiene protocols in place (as set out above) to minimise risk of transmission.

Where possible, for example with older children with less complex needs who are able to self-regulate their behaviours without distress, children and young people should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers. This will not be possible for the youngest children, and some children and young people with complex needs, and it is not feasible in some settings where space does not allow. Settings doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time will help.

When staff, children or young people cannot maintain distancing, the risk can also be reduced by keeping pupils and students in the smaller, class-sized groups described above.

Settings should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating pupils side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space.

c. Measures elsewhere

Groups should be kept apart, meaning that settings should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the setting kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, settings should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Settings should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups).

Settings should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other.

Use of staff rooms should be minimised, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

d. Measures for arriving at and leaving the setting

> The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.
>
> National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

We know that travel patterns differ greatly between settings. If those patterns allow, settings should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave. Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. A staggered start may, for example, include condensing or staggering free periods or break time but retaining the same amount of teaching time, or keeping the length of the day the same but starting and finishing later to avoid rush hour.

Settings should consider how to communicate this to parents and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, including that gathering at the gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.

e. Other considerations

Some children and young people with SEND (whether with EHC plans or on SEN support) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that these measures will involve, so staff should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

Schools, local authorities, health professionals, regional schools commissioners and other services should work together to ensure that children with medical conditions are fully supported, including through the use of individual healthcare plans, so that they may receive an education in line with their peers. In some cases, the pupil's medical needs will mean this is not possible, and educational support will require flexibility. Our guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions remains in place.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual. They, as well as supply teachers, peripatetic teachers or other temporary staff can move between settings. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff. Such specialists will be aware of the PPE most appropriate for their role. Settings should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, catering staff and deliveries, as well as cleaning staff on site who may be working throughout the setting and across different groups. This will require close cooperation between settings and the other relevant employers. Settings should have discussions with key contractors about the setting's control measures and ways of working during the autumn term. Settings should ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school or college hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors with sufficient detail to support rapid contact tracing if required by NHS Test and Trace.

As normal, schools should engage with their local immunisation providers to provide immunisation programmes on site, ensuring these will be delivered in keeping with the school's control measures. These programmes are essential for children's health and wellbeing and can also provide benefits for staff.

Where a child or young person routinely attends more than one setting on a part time basis, for example because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and a special setting, the settings should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified and allowing them to jointly deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the child or young person. Pupils should be able to continue attending both settings. While some adjustment to arrangements may be required, pupils in this situation should not be isolated as a solution to the risk of greater contact.

Equipment and resources are integral to education. During the summer term, their use was minimised, many were moved out of classrooms, and there was significant extra cleaning. Given the increasing knowledge we have of the virus, that position has now changed for the autumn term. For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, it is recommended that staff and pupils have their own items that are not shared. Classroom based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared within the bubble; these should be cleaned regularly, along with all frequently touched surfaces. Resources that are shared between classes or bubbles, such as sports, arts, and science equipment should be cleaned frequently and meticulously and always when moved between bubbles, or rotated to allow them to be left unused for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different bubbles.

Settings will need to make an assessment of the cleanability of equipment used in the delivery of therapies (for example, physiotherapy equipment, sensory equipment), to determine whether this equipment can withstand cleaning and disinfecting between each use (and how easy or practical it would be to do so) before it is put back into general use. Where cleaning or disinfecting is not possible or practical, resources will have to be restricted to one user, or be left unused for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different individuals.

Outdoor playground equipment should be more frequently cleaned. This would also apply to resources used inside and outside by wraparound care providers. It is still recommended that children and young people limit the amount of equipment they bring into the setting each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, hats, coats, books, stationery and mobile phones. Bags are allowed. Pupils and teachers can take books and other shared resources home, although unnecessary sharing should be avoided, especially where this does not contribute to pupil education and development. Similar rules on hand cleaning, cleaning of the resources and rotation should apply to these resources.

7. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases, including:

- where an individual child or young person becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at settings, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- where a child or young person already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

When working with children and young people who cough, spit or vomit but do not have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, only any PPE that would be routinely worn, should be worn.

Read the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care for more information about preventing and controlling infection, including when, how PPE should be used, what type of PPE to use, and how to source it.

8. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

When the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

This can be achieved by a variety of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems – these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible, and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance (if possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if not, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply)
- natural ventilation – opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space). Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air
- natural ventilation – if necessary external opening doors may also be used (as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so)

Further advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak and CIBSE Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice.

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, the following measures should also be used as appropriate:

- opening high level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied (for example, between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused)
- providing flexibility to allow additional, suitable indoor clothing – for more information see school uniform
- rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct drafts

Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces.

Response to any infection

9. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Settings must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process. This means ensuring that staff members and parents and carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- Self isolate and book a test if they are displaying symptoms. The main symptoms are a high temperature, a new continuous cough and/or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. Staff and pupils must not come into the setting if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them when at the setting - all children and young people can be tested if they have symptoms, including children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents/carers if using a home testing kit.
- Provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace.
- Self-isolate if they or a member of their household is symptomatic, or if they have been in close contact with someone who develops symptoms and/or tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and they are advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the PHE Local Health Protection team.

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient. We will release more details on new testing avenues as and when they become available and will work with settings so they understand what the quickest and easiest way is to get a test.

All schools have been sent an initial supply of 10 home test kits and information about how to order to replenish this supply when they are running out. Schools should call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119 if these have not arrived.

Having a test at a testing site will deliver the fastest results. The test kits sent to schools are provided to be used in the exceptional circumstance that an individual becomes symptomatic and schools believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere. It is for schools to determine how to prioritise the distribution of their test kits in order to minimise the impact of the virus on the education of their pupils.

These kits can be given directly to staff or parents/carers collecting a child who has developed symptoms at school. In particular, these tests kits will also help ensure that symptomatic staff can also get a test and if they test negative, can return to work as soon as they no longer have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). Further information is provided in our guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19): test kits for schools and FE providers.

Settings should ask parents and staff to inform them immediately of the results of a test and follow this guidance.

1. If someone with symptoms tests negative for coronavirus (COVID-19), then they should stay at home until they are recovered as usual from their illness but can safely return thereafter. The only exceptions to return following a negative test result are where an individual is separately identified as a close contact of a confirmed case, when they will need to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of that contact, or if other members of their household are symptomatic.

2. If someone with symptoms tests positive, they should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and must self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to the setting

only if they do not have symptoms other than a persistent cough or loss of sense of smell or taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill if they have symptoms, or from the date the test was taken if asymptomatic. If they still have a high temperature, they should continue to self-isolate until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should all self-isolate for the full 14 days.

NHS COVID-19 app

The app is available to anyone aged 16 and over to download if they choose. For some young people, particularly some with SEND, parents will need to decide whether or not their use of the app is appropriate.

This will mean that some students in year 11, and the majority of students in years 12 and above will be eligible to use the app and benefit from its features. Staff members will also be able to use the app. The guidance for schools and further education colleges in England is intended to provide information to senior leaders in education settings about the app and how it works, and to set out guidance for its use within schools in England.

10. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school and college community

Settings must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Settings can contact the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. Settings will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform you what action is needed based on the latest public health advice. The advice service will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

If, following triage, further expert advice is required the adviser will escalate your call to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with settings to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on their advice, settings must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts – face to face contact with a case for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)

- proximity contacts – extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend settings keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes place between children, young people and staff in different groups (see section 6 of the system of controls for more on grouping pupils). This should be a proportionate recording process, sufficient to ensure contact tracing can take place. Settings do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

A template letter will be provided to settings, on the advice of the health protection team, to send to parents and staff if needed. Settings must not share the names of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others.

Where individuals who are self-isolating are within our definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer pastoral support, and check they are able to access education support.

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. They should get a test, and:

- if someone who is self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) starts to feel unwell and gets a test for coronavirus themselves, and the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period – this is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period) – their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

Settings should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children and young people or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

In the majority of cases, settings and parents will be in agreement that a child with symptoms should not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or guardian insists on a child attending the setting, the setting can take the decision to refuse the child if in their reasonable judgement it is necessary to protect pupils and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Any decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and the current public health advice.

The PHE local health protection team will also contact settings directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the setting – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

Further guidance is available on testing and tracing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

11. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If settings have 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, they may have an outbreak, and must continue to work with their local health protection team who will be able to advise if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole site or year group. If settings are implementing controls from this list, addressing the risks they have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole setting closure based on cases within the setting will not generally be necessary, and should not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

In consultation with the local Director of Public Health, where an outbreak in a setting is confirmed, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive. Testing will first focus on the person's class, followed by their year group, then the whole setting if necessary, in line with routine published health outbreak control practice.

Supporting children and young people in special residential settings

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

In the case of any localised outbreaks, we expect them to keep the residential provision open if at all possible. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. They will need to remain open to those who:

- have particular needs that cannot be accommodated safely at home
- do not have suitable alternative accommodation

Any necessary health and therapy support (including access to medical supplies) should continue to be provided if the child or young person returns to their family home.

If a child or young person returns to their family home, this should not be considered an unauthorised absence, assuming they return after the self-isolation ends.

It is important to maintain safe staff ratios, particularly for those pupils or students whose needs mean that they are safer remaining in the setting than returning home. If necessary, work with the local authority to draft in staff from other settings rather than close. This could include deploying staff from mainstream schools and colleges, or other special schools and colleges.

Settings should prioritise staffing towards the most vulnerable pupils and students, particularly those in residential provision. Settings that cannot remain open safely should aim to make closures temporary and reopen once they have drafted in additional staff. The local authorities which have commissioned places should be kept informed if there is a risk of a temporary closure, to ensure the children or young people continue to be supported. Local authorities should help with these staff movements as far as possible.

For residential special schools and colleges, local authorities should maintain a register of all pupils and students with education, health and care (EHC) plans, including any still under assessment for EHC plans who have been sent home from their residential educational setting. The local authority should also contact the family frequently as part of its monitoring duties to ensure that risks are being managed and to establish whether additional support is necessary and how that will be delivered.

Supporting children and young people receiving hospital education on hospital sites

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Pupils in hospital schools have returned to their setting full time from the beginning of the autumn term where it:

- if it is safe and feasible
- in line with hospital infection prevention and control (IPC) measures

Settings should work with their local NHS trusts to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for all patients as far as their health permits. We expect local NHS trusts to continue to work collaboratively with headteachers to enable students to receive their education, including through access to classrooms and space in which to teach.

Mainstream schools should continue to support their pupils in hospital, including through remote learning support, to minimise the impact of their hospital stay on their education.

Alternative provision

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

As with other settings, pupils in alternative provision (AP) settings (including pupil referral units, AP academies and AP free schools) have returned to school full-time from the start of the autumn term. To support this, AP settings must comply with health and safety law which requires employers to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. They should work through the system of controls outlined above, adopting measures that help them meet each control to the fullest extent possible, in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their setting, and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils.

When working through the system of controls, APs should take steps to minimise social contact and mixing as far as is practicable. All APs, especially larger AP schools, should consider whether pupils can be placed into smaller groups and still receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Due to the smaller size of many AP settings, and because APs are not typically organised by year groups, APs may wish to adopt whole school bubbles as part of their system of control and in order to best meet the needs of their students.

Section 2: school operations

If you are a specialist post-16 provider, you can also read the FE guidance for information relating to the following school operations.

Transport

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Social distancing has significantly reduced available transport capacity. This guidance sets out a new framework for transport to and from schools during the autumn term. Further information is set out in the transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020 guidance.

We are making a distinction between dedicated school transport and wider public transport:

- by dedicated school transport, we mean services that are used only to carry pupils to school - this includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry school pupils only
- by public transport services, we mean routes which are also used by the general public

Settings should encourage staff, parents and pupils to walk or cycle to school if at all possible. This will support people travelling to maintain social distancing. The government has announced a £2 billion package to promote cycling and walking, including to support pop-up bicycle lanes and widened pavements. For some families, driving children to school will also be an option.

Where children and young people rely on public transport to get to school or college, and cannot walk or cycle, the coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers will apply. If it is necessary for a childminder to pick up or drop off a child at school and walking is not practical, then a private vehicle for single household use is preferable. Use of public transport should be minimised.

Children and young people must not board home to school transport if they, or a member of their household, has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Dedicated school transport, including statutory provision

Local authorities remain under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible children and young people. Local authorities will need to work with special settings to ensure that children and young people can get to their setting. If a child or young person needs transport to get to the setting named in his or her EHC plan, the local authority will normally have to pay for it. [footnote 1]

Although the provision of transport for post-16 students is not a statutory duty for local authorities, it is often critical to those learners being able to access college provision. We ask local authorities to continue to provide transport if they had been doing so previously.

Pupils and students on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. Therefore, wider transmission risks are likely to be lower. During the autumn term, local authorities are not required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport on dedicated school or college transport. However, distancing should still be put in place within vehicles wherever possible. This will help to both minimise disease transmission risks and maintain consistent reinforcement of public health messaging to children and staff, particularly at the point where they are leaving school and heading back into the community each day. What is practicable is likely to vary according to local circumstances.

The approach to dedicated transport should align wherever possible with the principles underpinning the system of controls set out in this document and with the approach being adopted for the setting. It is important, wherever it is possible, that:

- social distancing should be maximised within vehicles
- children either sit with their 'bubble' on school transport, or with the same constant group of children each day
- children and young people clean their hands before boarding transport and again on disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles is put in place
- organised queuing and boarding is put in place where possible
- ventilation of fresh air (from outside the vehicle) is maximised, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents

Dedicated school services can take different forms and the precise approach taken will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the circumstances. It will require a partnership approach between settings, local authorities, trusts, dioceses and others. In particular, it is imperative that settings work closely with the local authorities that have statutory responsibility for 'home to school transport', as well as a vital role in working with local transport providers to ensure sufficient transport provision. The government has announced additional funding for local transport authorities for this purpose.

Local authorities, working with education settings and transport operators as necessary, should identify the risks arising from coronavirus (COVID-19) and must then work through the system of controls and adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and allows children and young people to attend their educational setting. Local authorities should take account of the particular needs of children and young people with SEND and, where necessary, be informed by the views provided by the parents and the setting.

The transport guidance for schools acknowledges that implementing bubbles will still bring benefits even if implemented partially, and that settings may need to allow mixing into wider groups in certain circumstances, including on transport. However, we know that vehicle capacity and the complexity of some home to school transport arrangements mean there will often be limits to the extent to which mixing can be minimised. Where it is not possible, the other measures in the system of controls become even more important.

In order to maximise home to school transport capacity, some local authorities have asked some parents to accept personal travel budgets or mileage allowances to take their child to their school or educational institution. This is permissible with the parent's consent but not something parents or local authorities can insist on. Local authorities should not expect parents to commit to accepting a personal payment or mileage allowance for a specified period of time, particularly in the current economic climate, and participation will not impact future eligibility on dedicated school transport. The local authority will need reasonable notice to put home to school arrangements back in place for the child or young person when required again.

Face coverings and PPE on dedicated school transport

In accordance with advice from PHE, children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school. This does not apply to people who are exempt from wearing a face covering on public transport. More information on this can be found at the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Settings should support local authorities in promoting the use of face coverings on school transport and help them to resolve any issues regarding use of face coverings where appropriate.

A face covering is a covering of any type which covers the nose and mouth. It is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of PPE.

Face coverings should not be worn by those who may not be able to handle them as directed, for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. Additionally, some children and young people may need to be able to lip-read, or see people's faces, in order to communicate, while others may be distressed if the people around them wear face coverings.

Children and young people will need to understand how to handle their face covering properly to ensure that any additional risks associated with their use are identified.

Transport operators should conduct a risk assessment for all their operations including dedicated school transport services. This will determine the most appropriate safety measures to put in place such as for social distancing and face coverings. The guidance for operators provides further advice for staff.

Fluid-resistant surgical masks, gloves, aprons and eye protection used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment (PPE) should continue to be reserved for people who need to wear them at work. Drivers and passenger assistants will not normally require PPE on home to school transport, even if they are not able to maintain a distance from the children and young people on the transport. However, where the care and interventions that a child or young person ordinarily receives on home to school transport requires the use of PPE, that should continue as usual. For more information, read:

- How should I care for children who regularly spit or require physical contact?
- guidance on the specific steps that should be taken to care for children with complex medical needs, such as tracheostomies (this includes aerosol generating procedures)

Attendance

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Attendance expectations

It is vital for all children and young people to attend their education setting to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils or students falling further behind. Pupil attendance has therefore been mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term. The usual rules on attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's attendance regularly at the education setting where they are registered (where they are a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)
- settings' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the option to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Self isolation and children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

A small number of children and young people will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because:

- they have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- they live with someone that has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Far fewer children should remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group in the future following their routine discussions with their clinician.

For individuals who are self-isolating and are within our definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer pastoral support, and check they are able to access education support. Our published definition of vulnerable children includes young people are defined as those who have a social worker or an education health and care (EHC) plan or those who are deemed otherwise vulnerable by the school or the local authority.

Children and young people who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group

The advice for children and young people who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should return to school from 2 December at all local restriction tiers unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting.

Those who remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - more advice is available from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

The government may reintroduce more restrictive formal shielding measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable in the worst affected areas, based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. This will only apply to some areas in tier 3 and the government will write to families separately to inform them if clinically extremely vulnerable children are advised to shield and not attend school.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity but this does not need to be formally recorded in the attendance register.

Where children are not able to attend school as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.

For residential special schools and colleges, local authorities should maintain a register of all pupils and students with education, health and care (EHC) plans, including any still under assessment for EHC plans who have been sent home from their residential educational setting. The local authority should also contact the family frequently as part of its monitoring duties to ensure that risks are being managed and to establish whether additional support is necessary and how that will be delivered.

Pupils and families who are anxious about attending their educational setting

All other pupils must attend their setting. Support should be put in place to address the potential concerns of pupils, students and families who may be reluctant or anxious about attending. This may include:

- pupils who were previously shielding but have been informed that this is no longer formally advised
- those living with someone who is clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable
- those concerned about possible increased risks from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or those with certain health conditions such as obesity and diabetes

If parents of pupils with possible risk factors are concerned, we recommend settings discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Settings should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, if the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

Some children and young people with EHC plans who have spent time away from their setting may need preparation for their return. This preparation might include visits to the setting, social stories, and any other approaches that they and local authorities would normally use to enable a child or young person with SEND who has spent some time out of education to return to full time attendance.

A reasonable adjustment for a child or young person with SEND who has found a period of restrictions exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally may involve a brief phased return to school but this decision should be taken in discussion with parents or carers and in response to the needs of an individual child, not applied as a blanket policy for all children or young people at a setting. Any phased return or part-time learning arrangements should always be temporary measures which are agreed with the family in advance, kept under review and removed as soon as possible. This will ensure that children and young people with SEND benefit as quickly as possible from attending school and accessing the support services that they need.

Actions for all settings and local authorities

There is separate guidance on recording attendance at addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020/2021 academic year. We are asking settings to work with families to secure regular attendance as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

We are asking settings and local authorities to:

i. Continue to communicate clear and consistent expectations about attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate).

ii. Identify pupils and students who are reluctant or anxious about attending or who are at risk of disengaging and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, those who were persistently absent before the outbreak and those who have not engaged with the setting regularly during the outbreak.

iii. Use the additional catch-up funding, existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and pupil premium funding to support the families who need additional support to secure pupils' and students' regular attendance.

iv. Work closely with other professionals, such as social workers, as appropriate to support the return to settings including, continuing to notify the child's social worker if they have one, of non-attendance.

Advice for schools and local authorities to support them to improve school attendance is available.

Workforce of settings

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and PHE to develop this specific guidance for school settings. PHE and DHSC endorsed system of controls outlined in this document sets out the measures that school leaders and all school staff should follow.

Where settings implement the system of controls outlined in this document, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, PHE and DHSC confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children, young people and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. As a result, on current evidence, PHE and DHSC advise that schools are not currently considered high risk settings when compared to other workplace environments.

Most school-based roles are not ideally suited to home working and settings may expect most staff to attend. Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and senior leaders should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

All staff should follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. This includes continuing to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene and maintaining social distancing in line with the provisions as set out in part 6 of the 'Prevention' section.

School leaders should explain to staff the measures put in place to reduce risks. We anticipate adherence to the measures in this guidance will provide the necessary reassurance for staff to attend settings. If staff are concerned, including those who may be clinically vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable or at possible increased risk from coronavirus, we recommend school leaders discuss any concerns individuals may have around their particular circumstances and reassure staff about the protective measures in place.

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Advice for those identified through a letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor as in the group deemed clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV or shielding list) was published on 13 October. The guidance provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take tailored to each local restriction tiers.

All staff can continue to attend school in all 3 local restriction tiers.

Under local restriction tier 3, staff and employers may wish to discuss flexibilities that support clinically extremely vulnerable staff, such as staggered start times to reduce travel during rush hour.

In the future, the government will only reintroduce formal restrictive shielding advice in some areas in tier 3 where this has been advised by the Chief Medical officer, and only for a limited period of time. The government will write to individuals to inform them if they are advised to follow formal shielding and not attend the workplace.

Further guidance to the clinically extremely vulnerable is available.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable staff can continue to attend school. While within the setting they should follow the sector-specific measures in this document to minimise the risks of transmission.

This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing in line with the

provisions set out in section 6 of the 'Prevention' section of this guidance. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from others, and where this is not possible, avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of others. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to socially distance from other adults including older children/adolescents.

People who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable can attend the workplace unless advised otherwise by an individual letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor.

Staff who are pregnant

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools. More guidance and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy is available from the Royal College of Gynaecologists. All pregnant women should take particular care to practice frequent, thorough hand washing and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home and/or workspace.

An employer's workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers (for example, from working conditions, or the use of physical, chemical or biological agents). Any risks identified must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment.

If a school is notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding or has given birth within the last six months, the employer should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. If risks are identified during the pregnancy, in the first six months after birth or while the employee is still breastfeeding, the employer must take appropriate, sensible action to reduce, remove or control them.

While it is a legal obligation for employers to regularly review general workplace risks, there is not necessarily a requirement to conduct a specific, separate risk assessment for new and expectant mothers. However, an assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

We recommend that schools follow the same principles for pregnant pupils, in line with their wider health and safety obligations.

Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report, which looked at different factors including age and sex, where people live, deprivation, ethnicity, people's occupation and care home residence. These staff can attend their setting as long as the system of controls set out in this guidance are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future.

People who live with those who may have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Employer health and safety and equalities duties

Employers have a legal obligation to protect your employees and others from harm. They should continue to assess health and safety risks in the usual way. Following the steps in this guidance will mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to pupils and staff and help settings to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm – see COVID advice from the Health and Safety Executive.

The Health and Safety Executive published guidance on first aid during coronavirus (COVID-19) which will support local risk assessments and provides guidance for first aiders. It is clear that treating any casualty properly should be the first concern. Where it is necessary for first aid provision to be administered in close proximity, those administering it should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

Settings should continue to meet their equalities duties. Guidance is available at Equality Act 2010: advice for schools.

Supporting staff

Employers should have regard to staff (including the headteacher) work-life balance and wellbeing. They should ensure that they have explained to all staff the measures that they are proposing putting in place and involve all staff in that process.

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. Settings will already have mechanisms to support staff wellbeing and these will be particularly important, as some staff may be particularly anxious about attending. DfE is providing additional mental health support for both pupil and staff wellbeing during the pandemic. Information about the extra mental health support for pupils and teachers and the Wellbeing for education return programme is available.

The Education Support Partnership provides a free helpline for school staff and targeted support for mental health and wellbeing.

Staff deployment

Settings may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff, and use existing staff more flexibly. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with the individuals.

We recognise that special settings will need to develop plans for the deployment of staff that account for the below factors.

Education and care for many children and young people with EHC plans often involves specific ratios and specific training, for staff. Many staff in special settings provide interventions or care involving close contact to children and young people who may not be grouped together under the system of controls adopted by a setting. Furthermore, some staff will work across settings. Where possible, these interventions and care should be provided as normal, because they will be important in enabling children and young people to access and benefit from education.

Staff who deliver these interventions will need to be particularly rigorous about hand washing and respiratory hygiene (catch it, bin it, kill it), but additional PPE compared to what they would normally use for those interventions, is not recommended, unless dealing with symptomatic children or young people.

The specialisation and the peripatetic nature of much staffing in special settings also makes the flexible deployment of staff more challenging. For example, in cases where only one member of staff is trained in a particular intervention and that member of staff needs to self-isolate due to coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, it will generally not be possible to move a staff member without the training into that role.

Settings and local authorities may wish to have discussions about these circumstances - for example, whether their usual supply staff avenues are available to them, whether an additional staff member could be trained, or whether several settings could work together to offer each other resilience.

It is important that planning builds on the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens. This could include a review of existing practices in this respect and settings may wish to draw on DfE's workload reduction toolkit.

DfE has also published a range of resources, including case studies to support remote education and help address staff workload. This includes case studies on managing wellbeing.

If having pursued all the immediate options available, settings still have concerns about their staffing capacity they should talk to their local authority or trust.

Deploying support staff and accommodating visiting specialists

Settings should minimise the number of visitors where possible, however, visiting specialists such as therapists, clinicians, peripatetic teachers and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual, including moving between settings as required. Such specialists will be aware of the PPE most appropriate for their role.

Where support staff capacity is available, settings may consider using them to support catch-up provision or targeted interventions. Teaching assistants may also be deployed to lead groups or cover lessons, under the direction and supervision of a qualified, or nominated, teacher (under the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012 for maintained schools and non-maintained special schools and in accordance with the freedoms provided under the funding agreement for academies).

Setting leaders should be satisfied that the person has the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work. Managers should discuss and agree any proposed changes in role or responsibility with the member of staff. This includes ensuring that:

- safe ratios are met
- specific training is undertaken if needed for any interventions or care for pupils with complex needs where specific training or specific ratios are required
- only those with appropriate checks are allowed to engage in regulated activity – full guidance is provided in part 3 of keeping children safe in education

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published guidance to help settings make the best use of their teaching assistants.

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual. The government's teaching vacancies service can help settings to list vacancies for both permanent and fixed-term teaching staff quickly. The free national service for searching and listing teaching roles will be directing newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and job seeking teachers to this service.

As DfE guidance advises limiting the number of visitors, it may be appropriate for schools to consider a flexible approach to interviews, with alternative options to face-to-face interviews offered where possible. Interviewing remotely may be a new experience for many schools. The DfE teaching blog provides some information on the experience of implementing interviews remotely. There is also advice that can be sent to candidates on how to prepare for remote interviews.

Where face-to-face meetings are arranged, schools should make clear to candidates that they must adhere to the system of controls that schools have in place. Schools will also have the discretion to require face coverings for visitors where social distancing cannot be managed safely.

When recruiting, settings must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks as set out in part 3 of the statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education. Initial Keeping children safe in education. Initial teacher training (ITT) providers have worked flexibly to ensure this year's NQTs are ready and prepared to enter the classroom.

They will also be supported by materials DfE is making available to all schools based on the early career framework reforms to support them as they start their teaching career. Settings in the early roll-out regions (Bradford, Doncaster, Greater Manchester, and the North East) will be able to benefit from the full support package being offered to some 2,000 NQTs from the autumn. In addition, around 3,000 NQTs will be offered a one-year version of the structured support package.

Supply teachers and other temporary or peripatetic teachers

Settings can continue to use supply staff during this period. We recommend that they consider using the Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal, because this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge. They can get direct support from Crown Commercial Services on how to use the agency supply deal by emailing supplyteachers@crowncommercial.gov.uk with the school's details and contact details.

Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between settings but school leaders should will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the setting if possible. Where it is necessary to use supply staff and to welcome visitors to the setting, such as peripatetic teachers, those individuals will be expected to comply with the settings arrangements for managing risk and minimising risk, including taking particular care where possible to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering your premises, and secure best value, schools may wish to use longer assignments with supply teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.

This advice for supply teachers also applies to other temporary staff working in schools such as support staff working on a supply basis, peripatetic teachers such sports coaches, and those engaged to deliver before and after school clubs.

Expectation and deployment of initial teacher trainees

We strongly encourage settings to consider hosting ITT trainees. Demand for teacher training is high this year and while it is understandable that settings will have prioritised other activity, there is a risk that not enough training places will be available. ITT trainees have the potential to play a significant role in supporting schools. Settings should consider how they could host ITT trainees, and discuss with relevant ITT providers how this can be done flexibly and innovatively to help meet both the needs of the setting and the trainee. Deployment decisions will need to take into account the skills and capacity of the trainees in question.

Trainees could:

- take responsibility, with the usual mentor oversight, for small groups of pupils, adapting resources, creating online education materials or delivering catch-up lessons
- be engaged in wider professional activity, for instance tackling pupil, family and school needs by learning about, identifying and addressing challenges such as vulnerability, mental health problems or safeguarding issues
- develop and engage in working groups to share best practice around resilience, commitment and team working
- work in pairs or groups to co-plan, co-teach and co-assess lessons with their mentors or other trainees - paired and group placements, where these are possible, benefit trainees, mentors and teaching staff, promoting a greater sense of team collaboration, ongoing professional learning and reductions in workload

This is not intended to be exhaustive and ITT partnerships will need to ensure they have identified and comply with all legislation and guidance relevant to ITT.

Performance management and appraisals

Maintained schools must continue to adhere to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD), which includes the requirement to ensure that all pay progression for teachers is linked to performance management. We would expect schools to use their discretion and take pragmatic steps to adapt performance management and appraisal arrangements to take account of the current circumstances. Schools must ensure that teachers are not penalised during the appraisal process or in respect of any subsequent pay progression decisions as a result of the decision to restrict pupil attendance at schools and where this has impacted on the ability of the teacher to meet fully their objectives.

Appraisals and performance management for support staff should be carried out in accordance with the employee's contract of employment. DfE does not specify pay or terms and conditions of employment for support staff.

Staff taking leave

The government has set a requirement for people returning from some countries to quarantine for 14 days on their return. The latest guidance on quarantine is available at coronavirus (COVID-19): how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK.

As would usually be the case, staff will need to be available to work in their settings during term time. We recommend that leaders discuss leave arrangements with staff to inform workforce planning.

There is a risk that where staff travel abroad, their return travel arrangements could be disrupted due to factors arising beyond their control in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), such as the potential for reinstatement of local restrictions in the place they are visiting.

Where it is not possible to avoid a member of staff having to quarantine during term time, school leaders should consider whether they could temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.

Other support

Volunteers may be used to support the work of the setting, as would usually be the case. It is important that they are properly supported and given appropriate roles. Where settings are using volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in the volunteer section in part 3 of keeping children safe in education. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity. Mixing of volunteers across groups should be kept to a minimum, and they should remain 2 metres from pupils and staff where possible.

Safeguarding

Settings should consider revising their child protection policy, led by their designated safeguarding lead, to reflect the return of more pupils. They must refer to the statutory safeguarding guidance, keeping children safe in education.

Designated safeguarding leads and deputies should have sufficient time, especially in the first few weeks of term to:

- provide additional support to staff, children and young people regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns
- handle referrals to children's social care and other agencies, if appropriate

Agencies and services should be working together to actively look for signs of harms.

Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) will be best placed to co-ordinate multi-agency working within a school, including communication with school nurses. This is important for safeguarding and supporting wellbeing, as school nurses have continued virtual support to pupils who have not been in their setting.

Health and safety

Emergency treatment, for example, provision of first aid, should be prioritised and given promptly in the event of an emergency. This means that people do not have to stay 2 metres apart if emergency assistance is required. People involved in the provision of assistance of others should pay particular attention to hygiene measures immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

The guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings explains the strategy for infection prevention and control, including the specific circumstances in which PPE should be used, to enable safe working during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It applies to staff working in education, childcare and children's social care settings in England as well as the children and young people who attend these settings and their parents or carers.

It includes guidance on:

- how to work safely in specific situations, including where PPE may be required
- what care should be taken in residential settings
- specific steps needed to care for children and young people with complex medical needs, including aerosol generating procedures (AGPs)
- caring for children and young people who regularly spit or require physical contact
- disposal of PPE and face coverings

Catering

We expect kitchens to be fully open during the autumn term and normal legal requirements will apply to the provision of food to all pupils who want it, including for those eligible for benefits- related free school meals or universal infant free school meals.

School kitchens can continue to operate but must comply with the guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

Estates

Settings should look to maximise the use of their site and any associated available space, such as rooms in an associated place of worship for schools with a religious character, if feasible. We do not consider it necessary for settings to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all children and young people back. We also do not think they will need to deliver any of their education on other sites because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use. Following a risk assessment, some settings may decide to make small adaptations to their site, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual settings, based on their particular circumstances.

It is important that, for the autumn term, all the usual pre-term building checks are undertaken to make the school safe. If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, water system stagnation can occur, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. Advice on this can be found in the guidance on legionella risks during the coronavirus outbreak.

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers' guidance on emerging from lockdown. Also see the guidance on keeping settings well ventilated in the system of controls section.

Educational visits

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Overseas educational visits

We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight and overseas educational visits at this stage. This advice remains under review.

Domestic (UK) overnight educational visits

We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight educational visits.

The department recognises the enormous benefits overnight residential educational visits can provide for children.

In February 2021, we will review the possibility of changing our advice for overnight residential education visits to resume from Easter 2021 on the provision the scientific evidence supports any such change.

This advice will therefore be reviewed and updated again in February 2021.

Non-overnight domestic educational visits

During the autumn term, settings have been able to take pupils on non-overnight domestic educational visits. These has included any trips or placements connected with a pupil or student's preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits or travel training).

Settings should make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support the delivery of the curriculum. As normal, they should undertake full risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they are planned and carried out safely and in line with relevant local and national coronavirus (COVID-19) restriction tiers guidance, protective measures, such as keeping children within their consistent group and any coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures on transport and at the destination.

Settings should consult health and safety on educational visits guidance when considering visits and make sure that the appropriate insurance arrangements are in place.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information on travel insurance implications following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. If settings have any further questions about their cover or would like further reassurance, they should contact their travel insurance provider.

School uniform

It is for the governing body of a setting (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to make decisions regarding uniform. Some settings may have relaxed their uniform policy while only certain categories of pupils were attending. We would, however, encourage all schools to return to their usual uniform policies during the autumn term. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a setting.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

Settings should consider how pupil non-compliance is managed, taking a mindful and considerate approach in relation to parents or carers who may be experiencing financial pressures.

Increased ventilation may make buildings cooler than usual over the winter months. While settings may want to maintain the benefits of any uniform, they may also wish to consider allowing additional, suitable indoor items of clothing to be worn during the winter period in addition to their current uniform. Where this occurs they should ensure that no extra financial pressure is placed on parents or carers.

Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Settings should be working to resume all their breakfast and after-school provision. Resuming this provision is important, to ensure parents and carers can continue to or return to work, as well as to provide enriching activities for children that improve their wellbeing or support their education. They should work closely with any external wraparound providers which their children and young people may use, to ensure that as far as possible they can be kept in a group with others from the same bubble they are in during the school day.

Where it is not possible, or it is impractical, to group children in the same bubbles as they are in during the school day, schools and external providers may need to group children with others from outside their school day bubble and / or from a different school. This may happen, for example, if only one or two children are attending wraparound provision from the same school day bubble and / or where multiple schools are attending provision. If schools or external providers need to do this, they should seek to keep children in small, consistent groups with the same children each time, as far as this is possible.

We recognise that settings may need to respond flexibly and build their wraparound provision up over time. This provision however will help to:

- ensure that pupils have opportunities to re-engage with their peers and with the setting
- ensure that vulnerable children and young people have a healthy breakfast and are ready to focus on their lessons
- provide enrichment activities
- support working parents

Settings can consult the guidance produced for providers who run community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children when planning extra-curricular provision. This includes advising parents to limit the number of different wraparound providers they use as much as possible. Where parents use childcare providers or out of setting extra-curricular activities for their children, settings should encourage them to assure themselves that the providers are carefully considering their own protective measures, and only use those providers that can demonstrate this. DfE has also issued guidance for parents and carers, which they may want to circulate.

Settings may also choose to open up or hire out their premises for use by external bodies or organisations, such as external coaches or after-school / holiday clubs or activities. In doing so, they should ensure that they work with providers to consider how they can operate within their wider protective measures and should have regard to any other relevant government guidance. For example, where opening up school leisure facilities for external use, ensuring that they do so in line with government guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities..

Settings should also read the local restriction tier their area is in and the additional restrictions that apply. Currently, supervised activities, training and education for children can continue to operate at all restriction tiers both inside and outdoors.

Parents or carers of disabled children may continue to access respite care to

support them in caring for their disabled child. Further information on this is available at guidance for children's social care services.

Section 3: curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support

Curriculum expectations

This section sets out the principles and expectations for curriculum planning to ensure that all pupils and students are given the catch-up support they need to make substantial progress by the end of the academic year. The key principles that underpin our advice on curriculum planning are:

- education is not optional: all pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life
- the curriculum remains broad and ambitious: all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment
- high-quality remote education: where needed, remote education is high-quality, safe and aligns as closely as possible with in-setting provision - settings should continue to build their capability to educate pupils and students remotely

Informed by these principles, DfE asks that special schools and other specialist settings meet the following key expectations if considering revisions to their school curriculum for the academic year 2020 to 2021.

Teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term, but make use of existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important missed content

Up to and including key stage 3, prioritising the most important components for pupils' progress within subjects is likely to be more effective than removing subjects that pupils may struggle to pick up again later. In particular, settings should consider how all subjects can contribute to filling gaps in core knowledge, for example through an emphasis on reading.

Aim to return to the normal curriculum in all subjects by summer term 2021

Substantial modification of the curriculum may be needed at the start of the year to address gaps in pupils' knowledge so teaching time should be prioritised to these. The aim should be to return to the normal curriculum content by no later than the summer term 2021.

Plan on the basis of the educational needs of pupils

Curriculum planning should be informed by an assessment of pupils' starting points and addressing the gaps in their knowledge. Avoid introducing unnecessary tracking systems and instead make effective use of regular formative assessment, such as quizzes, observing pupils in class, talking to pupils to assess understanding and scrutiny of pupils' work.

Integrate remote education into school curriculum planning

Remote education may be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some pupils alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of a local restrictions.

All settings are therefore expected to plan to ensure any pupils educated at home for some of the time are given the support they need to master the curriculum and so make good progress.

They may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils in exceptional circumstances. They should be able to show that this is in the best the interests of these pupils and this should be subject to discussion with parents during the autumn term. There should also be a coherent plan for returning to their normal curriculum for all pupils by the summer term 2021.

Relationships and health education (RHE) for primary aged pupils and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) for secondary aged pupils are now compulsory. Settings are expected to start teaching them by at least the start of the summer term 2021.

Specific points for early years foundation stage to key stage 3

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

For children in nursery and childminder settings and pupils in reception, the EYFS education and development requirements now apply as the original disapplications have been lifted (these were lifted on 25 September 2020). New regulations have been put in place to allow the EYFS disapplications to re-apply in the event of further coronavirus related restrictions imposed by government, for example a local lockdown.

Teachers and early years practitioners may consider focusing more on the prime areas of education, including communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development, if they think this would support their children to catch up following time out due to coronavirus (COVID-19). For pupils in reception, teachers should also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary. For nursery and childminder settings, and reception, consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor education

For pupils in key stages 1 and 2, staff should prioritise identifying gaps and re-establishing good progress in the essentials (phonics and reading, increasing vocabulary, writing and mathematics), identifying opportunities across the curriculum so children read widely and develop their knowledge and vocabulary. The curriculum should remain broad so that most pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, humanities, the arts, physical education, religious education and relationships and health education.

For pupils in key stage 3, the curriculum should also remain broad from year 7 to year 9 so that most pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, languages, humanities, the arts, physical education, religious education and relationship, health and sex education.

Specific points for key stages 4 and 5

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

As with earlier key stages, it is likely that pupils in key stage 4 and 5 will need extra support to catch up on any content they have missed, but the school curriculum is less flexible because of the qualification specifications.

To ensure exams and assessments next summer are as fair as possible, and to take into account any public health requirements and the wellbeing of students, Ofqual has consulted on proposed adaptations to exams. Their decisions are available at proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021.

We expect most pupils in years 10 and 11 to continue to study their examination subjects. In exceptional circumstances, it may be in the best interest of a year 11 pupil to discontinue an examined subject. Settings may decide that they would achieve better results in their remaining subjects, especially in English and mathematics.

School leaders should make these decisions in discussion with pupils and parents and informed by ongoing assessment of a pupil's progress and wellbeing, using the existing discretion that they already apply on these matters

Key stage 5 has less scope than key stage 4 to drop an examined subject because students take fewer qualifications. Discontinuing a subject is likely to limit choices for further study and employment, so we expect this to be rare.

Physical activity in schools

> The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.
>
> National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Settings have the flexibility to decide how to provide physical education, sport and physical activity while following the measures using their system of controls.

In considering what team sports can be offered, those whose national governing bodies have developed guidance under the principles of the government's guidance on team sport and been approved by the government are permitted. Schools must only provide team sports on the list available at return to recreational team sport framework.

Pupils and students should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups.

Settings can hold PE lessons indoors, including those that involve activities related to team sports, for example practising specific techniques, within their own system of controls. For sport provision, outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising natural ventilation flows (through opening windows and doors or using air conditioning systems wherever possible) distancing between pupils and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sports setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities.

Indoor swimming pools, used by settings for education and training, including hydrotherapy pools used for physical therapy, can continue to be used.

Settings should refer to the following advice:

- guidance on the phased return of sport and recreation and guidance from Sport England for grassroot sport
- advice from organisations such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust
- guidance from Swim England on school swimming and water safety lessons available at returning to pools guidance documents
- guidance on using changing rooms and showers safely

Settings can work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities if they are satisfied that this is safe to do so within their wider protective measures. Where appropriate for children and young people they can support them to be physically active while maintaining physical distancing with activities such as active miles, making break times and lessons active and encouraging active travel.

Music, dance and drama

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Music, dance and drama build confidence, help children and young people live happier, more enriched lives, and discover the joy of expressing themselves. There may, however, be an additional risk of infection in environments where singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments, dance and drama takes place.

Singing, wind and brass instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, including guidance provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for professionals and non-professionals in the performing arts. However, these studies have also indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in, and attending, events which is likely to create risk. DCMS is continuing to develop more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk but, in that context, organisations should follow the guidance set out below.

Minimising mixing groups and volume control

Settings must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing. The overarching objective should be to reduce the number of contacts between pupils/students and staff, including for rehearsal and performance. As set out in the systems of control: protective measures section, this can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in bubbles) and through maintaining a social distance between individuals where possible. These are not alternative options. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the age and needs of pupils, the layout of the building, and the feasibility of keeping groups separate from each other while offering a broad curriculum. If staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults.

Additionally, they should aim to keep any background or accompanying music to levels which do not encourage teachers or other performers to raise their voices unduly. If possible, using microphones to reduce the need for shouting or prolonged periods of loud speaking or singing. If possible, do not share microphones. If they are shared, follow the guidance on handling equipment.

Performances

Schools in local restriction tier 3 areas should not host performances with an audience.

Where schools are unable to put on live performances to parents, they may wish to consider alternatives such as the use of live streaming and recording, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and parental permission.

Schools in other local restriction tier areas planning an indoor or outdoor performance in front of an audience should follow the latest advice in the DCMS performing arts guidance, implementing events in the lowest risk order as described. If planning an outdoor performance they should also give particular consideration to the guidance on delivering outdoor events.

Peripatetic teachers

Settings can continue to engage peripatetic teachers during this period, including staff from Music Education Hubs.

Peripatetic teachers can move between settings, for instance, but they should consider how to minimise the number of visitors where possible. Staff will be expected to comply with arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils where possible. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the premises, and secure best value, consider using longer assignments with peripatetic teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.

If a teacher is operating on a peripatetic basis, and operating across multiple groups or individuals, it is important that they do not attend a lesson if they are unwell or are having any symptoms associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) such as fever, a new and sustained cough, loss of sense of taste or smell. In addition, they should:

- maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where appropriate
- avoid situations where distancing requirements are broken where possible, for example, demonstrating partnering work in dancing
- make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made

Further information on the Music Education Hubs, including contact details for local hubs, can be found at the Arts Council England Music Education Hub page.

Music teaching in special schools and other specialist settings, including singing, and playing wind and brass instruments in groups

When planning music provision, settings should consider additional specific safety measures. Although singing and playing wind and brass instruments do not currently appear to represent a significantly higher risk than routine speaking and breathing at the same volume, there is now some evidence that additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and with the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space. This is particularly evident for singing and shouting, but with appropriate safety mitigation and consideration, singing, wind and brass teaching can still take place.

Measures to take follow in the next sections:

Playing outdoors

Playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible. If indoors, consider limiting the numbers in relation to the space.

Playing indoors

If indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms; rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission. If playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance. It is important to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak.

Singing, wind and brass playing

Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles, or assemblies unless significant space, natural airflow (at least 10l/s/person for all present, including audiences) and strict social distancing and mitigation as described below can be maintained.

Social distancing

In the smaller groups where these activities can take place, schools should observe strict social distancing between each singer and player, and between singers and players, and any other people such as conductors, other musicians, or accompanists. Current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metres is appropriate.

Seating positions

Pupils should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible. Position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player.

Microphones

Use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly.

By considering and adopting these cumulative risk mitigation measures, the overall risk will be reduced.

Handling equipment and instruments

Measures to take when handling equipment, including instruments, include:

Handwashing

Requiring increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if being used by more than one person.

Avoiding sharing instruments

Avoid and equipment wherever possible. Place name labels on equipment to help identify the designated user, for example, percussionists' own sticks and mallets.

If instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly (including any packing cases, handles, props, chairs, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following government guidance on cleaning and handling equipment available at hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets.

Instruments should be cleaned by the pupils or students playing them where possible.

Handling scores, parts and scripts

Limit handling of music scores, parts and scripts to the individual using them.

Suppliers

Consider limiting the number of suppliers when hiring instruments and equipment. Settings should agree whose responsibility cleaning hired instruments is with the suppliers. Clean hired equipment, tools or other equipment on arrival and before first use. Equipment and instruments should be stored in a clean location if settings take delivery of them before they are needed, and they should be cleaned before first use and before returning the instrument.

Pick up and drop off points

Pick up and drop off collection points should be created where possible, rather than passing equipment such as props, scripts, scores and microphones hand-to-hand.

Individual lessons and performance in groups

Individual lessons in music, dance and drama can take place in settings and organisations providing out of school childcare. This may mean teachers interacting with pupils from multiple groups, so they will need to take particular care, in line with the measures set out above on peripatetic teachers.

If there is no viable alternative music lessons in private homes can resume, following the same guidelines in the government guidance for working in homes, and the guidance for out-of-school provision. In individual lessons for music, dance and drama, social distancing should be maintained wherever possible.

Specific safety measures for individual music lessons are set out in the following sections:

Social distancing

Measures should include specific social distancing between pupil and teacher (current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigations, 2 metres is appropriate), accounting for ventilation of the space being used. Pupil and teacher should be positioned side by side if possible.

Avoid sharing instruments

Avoid sharing instruments and equipment wherever possible and place name labels on equipment to help identify the designated user, for example, percussionists' own sticks and mallets.

If instruments and equipment have to be shared, they should be regularly disinfected (including any packing cases, handles, props, chairs, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following government guidance on cleaning and handling equipment. Instruments should be cleaned by the individuals playing them, where possible

Scores, parts and scripts

Limit the handling of music scores, parts and scripts to the person using them.

If there is no viable alternative, music lessons in private homes can resume, following the same guidelines, and additionally following the government guidance for working in homes, and the guidance for out-of-school provision.

During individual lessons for music, dance and drama, social distancing should be maintained wherever possible.

Catch-up support

We have announced a package worth £1 billion for schools to have the resources they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time, with extra support for those who need it most.

£650 million of universal catch-up premium will be allocated to schools to support all children and young people to catch up, with additional weighting for specialist settings, recognising the higher costs they face. It will be available for all state-funded mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision including maintained hospital schools and academies and independent special schools. Allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in years reception through to year 11.

Special schools, AP schools and hospital schools will be provided with £240 for each place for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

It will be up to school leaders to decide how to spend the money. The Education Endowment Foundation has published guidance on effective interventions to support schools.

For pupils with complex needs, we strongly encourage you to spend this funding on catch-up support to address their individual needs, including:

- speech and language therapy
- travel training
- education psychologist time
- other small group and individual interventions – this could be direct, with the specialist spending time with the pupil, or indirect, with the specialist spending time with school staff to design an intervention

This funding will be provided in 3 tranches. We will provide settings with an initial part payment in autumn 2020, based on the latest available data on pupils in mainstream schools and high needs place numbers in special schools, AP settings, hospital schools and special schools not maintained by a local authority. We will then distribute a second grant payment in early 2021, based on updated pupil and place data.

For specialist settings we will use:

- 2019 to 2020 academic year place numbers from the published local authority 2019 to 2020 financial year budget returns for local authority maintained schools
- the published high needs place numbers for the 2020 to 2021 academic year for academies and special schools not maintained by a local authority

The final payment will be in the summer term 2021.

Alongside this universal offer, we will roll out a National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million, to provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who need the most help which will increase access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers. It includes:

- a 5 to 16 programme that will make high-quality tuition available to 5 to 16-year olds in state-funded primary and secondary schools from the second half of autumn term 2020
- a 16 to 19 fund for school sixth forms, colleges and all other 16 to 19 providers to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16 to 19 students whose studies have been disrupted as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- a reception year early language programme that will make training and resources available at no-cost to schools where additional targeted support for oral language would be particularly beneficial

Extending provision set out in an EHC plan

We do not anticipate that children and young people will need to repeat a year of educational provision as a consequence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This also applies to those with EHC plans. Similarly, we do not anticipate that young people will need to remain in education any longer than originally set out in their EHC plan.

However, in a small number of individual cases, it may be appropriate for a child or young person to extend their current educational provision or have their EHC plan extended. In most cases, this would consist of an individualised programme for a term or half term.

In all circumstances, this would need to be decided by the local authority, following a review of the child or young person's needs and EHC plan.

Parents and young people can appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they disagree with certain decisions made by their local authority in relation to education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans.

Extending provision in a school setting for those aged 19 and over

School funding regulations do not allow for those aged over 19 to remain in a school setting unless given exceptional approval by the Secretary of State for Education.

In the exceptional circumstances that a local authority decides that a young person would be best served by remaining in a school setting after they have turned 19 years of age, the local authority must apply for a relaxation of the normal rules for continuing financial support to schools of all kinds for students aged 19 and over, under the established Education and Skills Funding Agency process.

Pupil wellbeing and support

Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions as a consequence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic such as anxiety, stress or low mood. This may be particularly acute for vulnerable children and young people, including those with complex needs. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. Some may need support to re-adjust to their educational setting; others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to attend; a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen to attend. Attending education settings allows social interaction with peers, carers and teachers, which benefits wellbeing.

The government has recently announced the wellbeing for education return, training andresources for teachers and staff in all state-funded schools to respond to the wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). The training provides practical examples to support staff, children and young people within a school. Local authorities have received funding to employ skilled staff to deliver the training to schools and provide ongoing advice and support from the autumn until March 2021.

Settings can prepare by nominating a lead to receive the training, and who will then have the capability to disseminate the learning and practice to staff and pupils within the setting. The training is available during the autumn term.

Additionally, DfE, PHE and NHS England hosted a free webinar for school and college staff in July to set out how to support returning pupils and students. This included experts discussing the impacts of the pandemic on pupils' mental wellbeing and recovery techniques, and education leaders discussing the actions they have been taking.

Whole School SEND (WSS) have co-produced 2 leaflets, funded by the DfE, to support young people with SEND and their families to have conversations with schools about successful returns following a period of absence such as this one, and about transition planning for post-year 11 destinations.

WSS have also produced resources to support the schools' workforce to prepare for the return, such as the COVID-19 SEND review guide which settings can use to reflect on their provision, and a handbook to support teachers to take a whole school approach to supporting pupils following a traumatic event. They can access WSS resources on the Whole School SEND Resource page of the SEND Gateway and staff can sign up to the Community of Practice to be kept up to date with further information.

We have published the first of the relationships, sex and health education training modules to support teachers to deliver content on mental health and wellbeing. The training module on teaching about mental wellbeing, which has been developed with clinical experts and schools, will improve teacher confidence in talking and teaching about mental health and wellbeing in the classroom. It was published early given the importance of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing at this time.

Settings should design pastoral and extra-curricular activities to:

- support the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement
- equip pupils to respond to issues linked to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- help pupils with approaches to improve their physical and mental wellbeing

They should provide more focused pastoral support where issues are identified, drawing on external support if necessary. They should consider the support needs of particular groups where they are already aware they need additional help, like those in need, and any newly vulnerable groups. Teachers may wish to access the free MindEd learning platform for professionals, which contains materials on peer support, stress, fear and trauma, and bereavement. MindEd have also developed a coronavirus (COVID-19) staff resilience hub with advice and tips for frontline staff.

Where there is a concern a child is in need or suffering or likely to suffer from harm the setting (generally led by the Designated Safeguard lead or deputy) should follow their child protection policy and part 1 of the statutory safeguarding guidance keeping children safe in education and consider any referral to statutory services (and the police) as appropriate.

Settings should work with school nursing services to support the health and wellbeing of pupils and students. School nurses as leaders of the Healthy Child Programme can offer a range of support including:

- support for resilience, mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, bereavement and sleep issues
- support for pupils with additional and complex health needs
- supporting vulnerable children and young people and keeping them safe

Settings and school nurses need to work together to ensure the delivery of the healthy child programme, which includes immunisation, working together to identify health and wellbeing needs.

Behaviour expectations

Attending education is vital for the education of all children and for their wellbeing – time out of school is detrimental for children's development, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. All children and young people value the structure and routine of regular attendance as well as the support and strong positive relationships provided by their school or college. It is important that all children can benefit from a full-time, 5 day a week, on-site education.

We recognise though, that any prolonged period of absence from schools or colleges may contribute to disengagement with education upon return, resulting in anxiety which could lead to an increased incidence in poor behaviour. Settings leaders should be mindful that disruptive behaviour might be the result of unmet educational or other needs and whether a multiagency assessment is necessary.

We know that some pupils and students have returned to their setting having been exposed to a range of adversity and trauma including bereavement, anxiety and in some cases increased welfare and safeguarding risks. This may lead to an increase in social, emotional and mental health concerns and some children, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children with a social worker, previously looked-after children who left care through adoption or special guardianship, and young carers, who may need additional support and access to services such as educational psychologists, social workers and counsellors. Additionally, provision for children who have SEND may have been disrupted during any partial school closure and there may be an impact on their behaviour. Settings will need to work with local services (such as health and the local authority) to ensure the services and support are in place for a smooth return.

Settings should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules or policies, and consider how to communicate any updates clearly and consistently to staff, pupils and parents. They should set clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour. Further details are available in the guidance on behaviour and discipline in schools. They should set out clearly at the earliest opportunity the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how they will enforce those rules, including any sanctions. This is particularly the case when considering restrictions on movement within the school and new hygiene rules. Settings will need to work with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that behaviour expectations are clearly understood and consistently supported, taking account of individual needs and should also consider how to build new expectations into their rewards system.

Adverse experiences or lack of routines of regular attendance and classroom discipline may contribute to disengagement with education upon return to school, resulting in an increased incidence of poor behaviour. Settings should work with those pupils who may struggle to re-engage in school and are at risk of being absent or persistently disruptive, including providing support for overcoming barriers to attendance and behaviour and to help them reintegrate back into school life.

To assist all school leaders and staff in welcoming back all pupils, we have published a tool for mainstream schools to support the re-engagement of pupils and the return to orderly and calm environments in which all pupils can achieve and thrive.

In the event that a pupil's behaviour warrants disciplinary action, the normal rules apply and the disciplinary powers, including exclusion, that schools currently have, remain in place. Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort and must be lawful, reasonable, and fair. Where a child with a social worker is at risk of exclusion, their social worker should be informed and involved in relevant conversations. Any disciplinary exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be consistent with the relevant legislation. Headteachers should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an education, health and care plan or a looked after child.

We have reiterated to schools that they should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an EHC plan or a looked-after child. Where a looked after child is at risk of exclusion, the virtual school head, working with others, should consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the school address the causes of the child's behaviour and prevent the need for exclusion, and make any additional arrangements to support the child's ongoing education in the event of an exclusion.

Where a child has been permanently excluded, this will include rapidly securing new educational provision in line with the child's needs and Personal Education Plan (PEP). Where a school has concerns about the behaviour of a previously looked after child which could result in the child being excluded, advice may be sought from the on strategies to support the child to avoid exclusion.

Ofsted will continue to consider exclusions, including the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusion and to look for any evidence of off-rolling.

Off-rolling is never acceptable.

Ofsted is clear that schools placing pressure on parents to remove their child from the school (including to home educate their child) is a form of off-rolling. Elective home education should always be a positive choice taken following a discussion between parents the school, and the local authority about how the needs of the child might best be met. This is particularly important where vulnerable children, children in need, and those at greater risk of harm are involved.

Section 4: Assessment and accountability

Inspection

Routine Ofsted inspections of state-funded settings will remain suspended for the autumn term. However, during the autumn term, inspectors will visit a sample of settings to discuss how they are managing the return to education of all their pupils. These will be collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations set out in this document. They will not result in a judgement. Ofsted will publish a brief letter following the visit. The insights that inspectors gather will also be aggregated nationally to share learning with the sector, the government and the wider public. In addition, Ofsted has the power to inspect a setting in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding or a breakdown in leadership and management.

Ofsted/the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) standard inspections of independent schools also remain suspended. During the autumn term, Ofsted/ISI will undertake non-routine inspections, as commissioned by us, where appropriate. For example, this may be a pre-registration inspection or an inspection to follow up on significant safeguarding concerns. These inspections will result in a judgement and a report, as usual.

Routine Ofsted and ISI inspections are expected to restart from January 2021. The exact timing is being kept under review.

Primary assessment

We recognise that pupils will have missed a critical period of their education due to restrictions in the 2019 to 2020 academic year. Maintaining national curriculum assessments in the 2020 to 2021 academic year (without amendment to the scope of the assessments or the expected standard) will allow the department to measure the remaining impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on this cohort of pupils nationally and help target support to local areas, settings and pupils that need it the most.

We are planning on the basis that statutory primary assessments will take place in summer 2021. The early years foundation stage profile and all existing statutory key stage 1 and 2 assessments should return in 2020 to 2021 in accordance with their usual timetables. This includes:

- the phonics screening check
- key stage 1 tests and teacher assessment
- key stage 2 tests and teacher assessment
- statutory trialling

For the 2020 to 2021 academic year only, schools will be required to administer a past version of the phonics screening check to year 2 pupils during the second half of the 2020 autumn term. Year 2 pupils who meet the expected standard in the autumn check will not be required to complete any further statutory assessments in phonics. Year 2 pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the autumn check will be expected to take the statutory check in June 2021. Further guidance for schools will be published by the Standards and Testing Agency in September 2020.

The statutory rollout of the reception baseline assessment has been postponed until September 2021. Settings had the opportunity to sign up (during the summer term 2020) to our early adopter year in 2020 to 2021.

In light of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the 2020 to 2021 academic year will be a transitionary year (subject to the necessary legislation being made) to allow settings time to prepare for, and start embedding, the engagement model. The engagement model is the new attainment framework (replacing P scales 1 to 4) for pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study.

The 2020 to 2021 academic year will be a transitionary year where schools that have prepared to implement the engagement model will be able to report against it and schools that need more time to implement this change will have the option to assess against P scales 1 to 4, for one final year. The engagement model will become statutory from September 2021. Further information can be found in the engagement model guidance.

Exams

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

For the summer 2021 exams, we recognise that pupils in years 11 and 13 will have missed a critical period of their education due to restrictions in the 2019 to 2020 academic year. It is vital that these pupils are able to catch up and access exams that lead to the qualifications they need to progress. We are, therefore, planning on the basis that GCSE's and A levels will take place in summer 2021 but with adaptations, including those which will free up teaching time. Ofqual has consulted on proposed adaptations to exams and published its decisions at proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021.

On Monday 17 August 2020, Ofqual and the government confirmed that, following the cancellation of summer 2020 exams, students will be awarded the centre assessment grade submitted by their school or college for A and AS level and GCSE (except in cases where the centre assessment grade is lower than the grade calculated by the exam board, where the calculated grade will stand).

Both final GCSE grades and revised A and A level grades were issued to schools and colleges in the week beginning 17 August 2020, and students will be able to use these grades to move onto their next step.

Where a student wishes to sit an exam or assessment for a vocational and technical or other general qualification in the spring, DfE's guidance on centre responsibility for autumn GCSE, AS and A level exam series still applies. .

Our exam support service launched at the start of the autumn term to support schools and colleges to manage this process. Further guidance on how schools can access this support and specific information on running exams during the pandemic is available.

Accountability expectations

Performance tables are suspended for the 2019 to 2020 academic year. No school or college will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020. Until the new data release is available, all those working with settings, including Ofsted and DfE regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data. We will continue to use 2019 data as a starting point for any conversation about support for settings with Ofsted judgements below good. More information is set out in the school and college accountability guidance.

Section 5: contingency planning for remote education

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Process in the event of local outbreaks

At all local restriction tiers the expectation is that education and childcare provision should continue as normal. The government has been very clear that limiting attendance at schools and other education settings should only be done as a last resort, even in areas where the local restriction tiers are 'high' or 'very high'. Decisions on any restrictions necessary in education or childcare settings are taken separately on a case-by-case basis in the light of local circumstances, including information about the incidence and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Contingency plans

For individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils, remote education plans should be in place. These should meet the same expectations as those for any pupils who cannot yet attend settings at all due to coronavirus (COVID-19). See section on remote education expectations.

We will update our guidance in the coming days to reflect how schools should operate under the strengthened tier system, and an updated contingency framework in the exceptional circumstances in which further restrictions on education are required in any area. The government will do everything possible to avoid enacting those contingency measures at any stage.

Remote education expectations

If a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate or a local restrictions requires pupils to remain at home, settings should have the capacity to offer immediate remote education. They should consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision. This planning will be particularly important in situations that present significant logistical challenges, for example, if large numbers of pupils are required to remain at home. We recognise that some pupils with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support and settings should work with families to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum.

In developing these contingency plans, settings should ensure that pupils and students can continue to engage in learning. They should explain to parents and carers the support that their children are receiving and discuss the plans for returning to settings, how they can support this and any additional help they might need.

Special schools and specialist settings have an experienced, expert workforce including:

- special educational needs co-ordinators
- educational psychologists
- speech and language therapists
- qualified teachers of sensory impairments
- other therapists
- teaching assistants, often with specialist knowledge

Designing at-home learning and support for children and young people with EHC plans could involve any or all of these professionals, to design or adapt interventions or learning materials. For example, it might involve designing a speech and language intervention that parents can deliver at home or adapting or selecting online learning materials.

When developing these contingency plans expect settings to:

- use a curriculum sequence that allows access to suitable high quality online and offline resources and teaching videos, and that is linked to the school's curriculum expectations give access to high quality appropriate remote education resources
- select the online tools that will be consistently used across the school in order to allow interaction, assessment and feedback, and make sure staff are trained in their use
- provide suitable printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks, for pupils who do not have suitable online access

When teaching pupils remotely, we expect settings to:

- set assignments so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects
- teach a planned and well sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practiced in each subject
- provide frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher in the setting or through high quality curriculum resources or videos
- gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum, using questions and other suitable tasks, and set a clear expectation on how regularly teachers will check work enable teachers to adjust the pace or difficulty of what they are teaching in response to questions or assessments, including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations more to ensure pupils' understanding
- plan a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in their setting and would ideally include daily contact with teachers

We expect schools to consider these expectations in relation to the pupils' age, stage of development or special educational needs, for example where this would place significant demands on parents' help or support. We expect schools to avoid an over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities.

We have now published a temporary continuity direction which makes it clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children unable to attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). This came into effect from 22 October 2020. The direction poses no additional expectations on the quality of remote education expected of schools beyond those set out in this guidance.

Vulnerable children

Our published definition of vulnerable children includes young people are defined as those who have a social worker or an education health and care (EHC) plan or those who are deemed otherwise vulnerable by the school or the local authority.

Where individuals who are self-isolating are within our definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them. When a vulnerable child is asked to self-isolate, schools should notify their social worker (if they have one). School leaders should then agree with the social worker the best way to maintain contact and offer support to the vulnerable child or young person.

Schools should also have in place procedures to check if a vulnerable child is able to access remote education support, to support them to access it (as far as possible) and to regularly check if they are doing so.

Remote education support

A range of resources to support settings in delivering remote education are available.

Schools may consider using some of their catch-up funding on remote resources in line with the access to technology section of the EEF's COVID-19 support guide for schools.

Oak National Academy have made available video lessons covering the entire national curriculum, available to any school for free. These are being in developed in partnership with a wide group of teachers and school leaders to develop lessons in the popular topics. The resources will be as flexible as possible, allowing schools to reorder topics and lessons, to match their own plans and curriculum.

Oak National Academy specialist content for pupils with SEND. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy. Their provision for next academic year will include an expanded range of content for the specialist sector.

Government-funded access to one of 2 free-to-use digital education platforms: Google for Education or Microsoft Office 365 Education. Schools can apply through The Key for School Leaders. The Key also provides feature comparison and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms.

A network of schools and colleges for help and support on effective use of tech for remote education that can be accessed through the EdTech Demonstrator Programme.

Laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers were made available to local authorities and academy trusts to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children (specifically, care leavers, children and young people with a social worker, and disadvantaged year 10 pupils) between May to July 2020. Local authorities and academy trusts will continue to own these devices.

Following pupils returning to school in the autumn term, laptops and tablets will be distributed directly to schools affected by a local coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. These will be available for disadvantaged pupils in years 3 to 11 and clinically extremely vulnerable children from all year groups unable to attend school. These devices will be owned by the school and provided to children and young people who would otherwise be unable to access remote education.

In addition to 4G routers provided to local authorities and academy trusts, DfE is working in partnership with BT to offer free access to BT WiFi hotspots for disadvantaged pupils. We are also working with the major telecommunications companies to expand this offer and provide access to free additional data to families who rely on a mobile internet connection while the response to coronavirus (COVID-19) requires pupils to learn from home and access social care services online. More information on increasing internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged children is available.

Support on delivering online remote education safely is available from:

- The National Cyber Security Centre, on which video conference service is right for you and using video conferencing services securely
- DfE advice on safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19), particularly annex C
- statutory guidance on online safety in annex C of keeping children safe in education
- expert advice at SWGfL safe remote learning and LGfL safe remote learning

Annex A

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific health and safety risk assessments

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means employers and leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff, pupils and young people face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). Employers must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable.

General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the HSE guidance on working safely.

Settings should undertake a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment by considering the measures in this guidance to inform their decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace, and the role of others in supporting that. The risk assessment will help education leaders and employers decide whether they have done everything they need to.

Employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time. It also makes good sense to involve pupils (where applicable), young people and parents in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place. Employers can do this by listening and talking to them about how the setting will manage risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that the setting takes their health and safety seriously.

Sharing your risk assessment

Settings should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce. If possible, they should consider publishing it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and pupils (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

Monitoring and review of risk controls

It is important that employers know how effective their risk controls are. They should monitor and review the preventive and protective measures regularly, to ensure the measures are working, and taking action to address any shortfalls.

Roles and responsibilities

All employers are required by law to protect their employees, and others, from harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum employers must do is:

1. Identify what could cause injury or illness in the organisation (hazards).
2. Decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk).
3. Take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

Given the employer landscape in special educational settings is varied, we have set out here what the existing DfE health and safety guidance states about the roles and responsibilities for health and safety in settings.

The employer is accountable for the health and safety of setting staff and pupils. The day-to-day running of the setting is usually delegated to the headteacher and the school management team. In most cases, they are responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This includes health and safety matters. Settings must appoint a competent person to ensure they meet their health and safety duties. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides more information on the role of headteachers and employers and a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of setting, under 'Who is accountable for health and safety within a school?'.

References to actions by employers in this guidance may in practice be carried out by headteachers in settings, but the employer will need to assure themselves that they have been carried out, as they retain the accountability for health and safety. If not already done, employers should ensure that a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment for their setting is undertaken as soon as possible. Where pupils are already attending their setting, the employer is likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that those employers use this document to identify any further improvements they should make.

Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

Health and safety risk assessments identify measures to control risks during education and childcare setting activities. Health and safety law requires the employer to assess risks and put in place measures to reduce the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law also requires employers to record details of risk assessments and the measures taken to reduce these risks and expected outcomes. Settings need to record significant findings of the assessment by identifying:

- the hazards
- how people might be harmed by them
- what they have in place to control risk

Records of the assessment should be simple and focused on controls. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring.

Risk assessments consider what measures settings need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff
- pupils
- visitors
- contractors

Settings will need to think about the risks that may arise in the course of the day. This could include anything related to the premises or delivery of its curriculum/activities, whether on-site or in relation to activities offsite.

Consulting employees (general)

It is a legal requirement that employers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff. As an employer, settings cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of staff creates a culture where relationships between employers and staff are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, staff should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer. Consultation does not remove the employer's right to manage. They will still make the final decision but talking to employees is an important part of successfully managing health and safety.

Resolving issues and raising concerns

Employers and staff should always come together to resolve issues. As providers widen their opening, any concerns in respect of the controls should be raised initially with line management and trade union representatives, and employers should recognise those concerns and give them proper consideration. If that does not resolve the issues, the concern can be raised with HSE. Where the HSE identify employers, who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Approach to risk estimation and management

Some types of control are more effective at reducing risks than others. Risk reduction measures should be assessed in order of priority as set out below; schools should not simply adopt the easiest control measure to implement. Controls should be practical to be implemented and, ideally, should be able to be maintained easily over time. It is critical to remember that it will only rarely be feasible to eliminate individual risks completely. The combination of controls introduced should aim to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable and prioritise structural, environmental interventions over individual level ones. This does not just mean considering risks of transmission, but also balancing these against risks to wider health and well-being and to education. Schools have the flexibility to respond to risks in a way that suits their circumstances whilst complying with their duties under health and safety legislation. Schools should work through the following steps to address their risks, considering for each risk whether there are measures in each step they can adopt before moving onto the next step:

1. Elimination: stop an activity that is not considered essential if there are risks attached.
2. Substitution: replace the activity with another that reduces the risk. Care is required to avoid introducing new hazards due to the substitution.
3. Engineering controls: design measures that help control or mitigate risk.
4. Administrative controls: identify and implement the procedures to improve safety (for example, markings on the floor, signage).
5. Having gone through this process, PPE should be used in circumstances where the guidance says it is required.

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1. Para 9.214 of the SEND Code of Practice states that, where parents want their child or young person to go to a school or college which is further from home than a school or college which could equally meet the child's or young person's needs, then the local authority can come to an agreement with the parents that the parents pay all or part of the costs of the transport if the local authority agrees to name the parents' preferred school or college. ↩

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