Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department
for Education

Guidance

Guidance for full opening: schools

Updated 26 November 2020

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

Main changes since this guidance was last updated

Amendments to the sections listed below are to reflect the local restriction tiers. There are no substantive changes here for schools.

- Face coverings
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Introduction

It continues to be the aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time throughout the autumn term.

This guidance is intended to support schools, both mainstream and alternative provision, to prepare for this. It applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), post-16 academies, infant, junior, middle, upper, school-based nurseries and boarding schools. We expect independent schools to follow the control measures set out in this document in the same way as state-funded schools. The guidance also covers expectations for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), including those with education, health and care plans, in mainstream schools.

Separate guidance is available for early years, further education colleges and for special schools.

This guidance is in 5 sections. The first section sets out the actions school leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school. This is public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

The rest of the guidance is focused on how the Department for Education (DfE) expects 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

This guidance has been prepared with input from school leaders, unions and sector bodies and in consultation with PHE and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

We will keep this guidance under review and update as necessary.

Welcoming children back to school

When we made the decision to ask schools to open only to a small number of children, this was done with the aim of reducing transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), to protect the NHS and save lives. As the situation improved, we began to consider how we could bring more children and young people back into schools. From 1 June, we supported primary schools to welcome some children back, focusing on specific year groups being educated in small 'bubbles', and from 15 June secondary schools welcomed back year 10 and 12 students to spend some time in school in small groups, with public health risk reduction measures in place. Since 15 June, primary schools have also had the flexibility to bring back other pupils where they have space to do so.

Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education, and children's future ability to learn, therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.

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

Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire lives. For many households school closures have 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.

In relation to working in schools, whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, 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 returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). This guidance explains the steps schools need to take to reduce the risks further.

For as long as coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, judgments will need to be made at a school 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 school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff, which also ensure that all pupils receive a high quality education that enables them to thrive and progress. During the autumn, schools are asked to minimise the number of contacts that a pupil has during the school day as part of implementing the system of controls outlined below to reduce the risk of transmission. If schools follow the guidance set out here and maximise control measures, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

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

Purpose of this guidance

The first section of this guidance sets out the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at school. This guidance has been developed with advice from PHE.

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 risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

The system of controls provides a set of principles and if schools 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 schools must cover them all, but the way different schools implement some of the requirements will differ based on their 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. School leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities and to make informed judgments 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 schools follow this advice and maximise the use of control measures, they will effectively minimise risks.

We expect schools and trusts to work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances. Where the personal circumstances of parents or staff create added concerns, schools and trusts should discuss these, and we have offered advice in this document about how to do this. We want all pupils and staff to be back in schools, and believe the conditions are right for this, but some people will understandably have worries that should be heard and addressed.

The rest of the guidance sets out more details on how DfE expects schools to operate in the autumn term. This covers:

- school operations, including attendance, workforce, estates, catering
- curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support
- assessment and accountability, including plans for inspection
- contingency planning in case of self-isolation of multiple pupils or staff or local outbreaks

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

Schools should have facilitated all pupils returning full-time from the start of the autumn term, including those in school-based nurseries. Schools should not put in place rotas.

Schools must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Schools should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments and plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using the system of controls. These are an adapted form of the system of protective measures that will be familiar from the summer term. Essential measures include:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning and ventilation arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise the potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:

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

Risk assessment

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.

Schools have remained open to some pupils since 23 March 2020, welcoming more pupils back from 1 June 2020. Schools should 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.

It is a legal requirement that schools should have revisited and updated their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed) before the autumn term began. Schools should have considered the additional risks and control measures to enable a return to full capacity during the autumn term. Schools should have also reviewed and updated their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls in respect of their conventional risk profile considering the implications of coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should also have ensured that they have implemented sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

School employers should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice

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 their risk, schools must work through the below system of controls, adopting measures to the fullest extent possible in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for their pupils, including full educational and care support for those pupils who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

If schools 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 schools must take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection' and are outlined in more detail in the following sections.

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, do not attend school.

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

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 keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

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

Number 6 must be properly considered and schools 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 school 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, do not attend school

Ensuring that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or have tested positive in at least the last 10 days and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

All schools must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

If anyone in the school 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 should 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, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) 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.

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, even while wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or pupils who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, even 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 arrange to have a test)
- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- 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 the 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).

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 schools. Schools that teach children in years 7 and above and which are in local restriction tier 1: 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, such as corridors and communal areas and it has been deemed appropriate in those circumstances. Primary school children will not need to wear a face covering.

In particular, schools 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 schools 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.

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 social distancing is not possible. Face coverings could have a negative impact on teaching and their use in the classroom should be avoided.

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 in primary schools and in early years settings.

In the event of an area moving into local restriction tier: high alert or very high alert, schools 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.

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 or mental illness or impairment or disability
- 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.

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 Public Health England has made available resources on how to make a simple face covering.

However, where anybody 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

Schools should have a process for removing face coverings when those who use face coverings arrive at school, and when face coverings are worn at school in certain circumstances. This process should be communicated clearly to pupils and staff.

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.

Pupils 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

- Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care provides
- Face coverings in education 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 running water or hand sanitiser. Schools must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement:

- whether the school 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 schools must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available in the school to support pupils and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, schools 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 school 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.

Face coverings are required at all times on public transport, except for children under the age of 11. Further information can be found in the face coverings guidance.

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 and shared areas that are used by different groups
  - 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 schools must consider how to implement this. Schools 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 and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining the 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 lay out of the school
- the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum (especially at secondary)

It is likely that for younger children the emphasis will be on separating groups and for older children, it will be on distancing. For children old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff where possible.

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

a. How to group children

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. They have been used in schools in the summer term in recognition that children, especially the youngest children, 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 keep that number as small as possible.

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

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

In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at key stage 4 and key stage 5, the groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and students to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended. At primary school and in the younger years at secondary (key stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Schools should assess their circumstances and if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around the school, they can look to implement year group sized 'bubbles'. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and older children should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction and the 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 may need to self-isolate. We recognise that younger children 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 schools may keep children 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 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 school timetable. This will be particularly important for secondary schools. Where 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. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger children and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.

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. It is strong public health advice that staff in secondary schools maintain distance from their pupils, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other, and from children. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger children, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many pupils who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These pupils' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

For children old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest children and some children with complex needs and it is not feasible in some schools where space does not allow. Schools doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

When staff or children cannot maintain distancing, particularly with younger children in primary schools, the risk can also be reduced by keeping pupils in the smaller, class-sized groups.

Schools 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 schools 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 school site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups).

Schools 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 school

> 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 to school patterns differ greatly between schools. If those patterns allow, schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. A staggered start may, for example, include condensing/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. Schools 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 school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.

The Department for Education will be supporting schools on how best to communicate with parents and pupils (and staff) on what to expect on their return and the procedures and expectations in relation to the control measures schools have put in place.

e. Other considerations

Some pupils with SEND (whether with education, health and care plans or on SEN support) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories. More information on pupils with education, health and care plans can be found in annex B.

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.

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff. Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual. Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, and ensure that the risks associated with managing contractors, visitors, catering staff and deliveries, as well as cleaning staff on site who may be working throughout the school and across different groups, are addressed. This will require close cooperation between both schools and the other relevant employers. Schools should have discussions with key contractors about the school's control measures and ways of working during the autumn term. Schools should ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school 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 routinely attends more than one setting on a part time basis, for example, because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and an alternative provision setting or special school, schools 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.

Equipment and resources are integral to education in schools. 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, art and science equipment should be cleaned frequently and meticulously and always between bubbles, or rotated to allow them to be left unused and out of reach for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different bubbles.

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 pupils limit the amount of equipment they bring into school 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 schools, 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 involve the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

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

Once the school 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 (e.g. 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

Schools must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process. Schools must ensure that staff members and parents/carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they or their child 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 school if they have symptoms and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them in school. All children 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 or carers if using a home testing kit
- provide details of anyone they or their child 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 have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), or if anyone in their household develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)

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 schools so they understand the quickest and easiest way 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 and 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 Coronavirus (COVID-19): test kits for schools and FE providers.

Schools 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 exception to return following a negative test result is 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.

2. If someone with symptoms tests positive, they should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/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 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 or over to download if they choose. For some young people, particularly some with special educational needs and disabilities (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 community

Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools 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. Schools will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform them of 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 the school's call to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with schools to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on their advice, schools 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 an infected individual 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 schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between children and staff in different groups (see section 6 of the system of control for more on grouping pupils). This should be a proportionate recording process. Schools 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.

Where 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.

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

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 coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and should 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

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

In the majority of cases, schools and parents will be in agreement that a child with symptoms should not attend school, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or guardian insists on a child attending school, schools can take the decision to refuse the child if in their reasonable judgement it is necessary to protect their pupils and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Any such 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 schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school - 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 schools have two 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 schools are implementing controls from this list, addressing the risks they have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole school closure based on cases within the school 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 school 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 school if necessary, in line with routine public health outbreak control practice.

Alternative Provision

It is our intention that all pupils in alternative provision (AP) settings (including pupil referral units, AP academies and AP free schools) will return to school full-time during the autumn term. To support this return, 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 controls and in order to best meet the needs of their students.

Section 2: School operations

This section covers guidance on matters related to transport, attendance, workforce, safeguarding, catering and estates.

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 framework for supporting transport to and from schools during the autumn term. Further guidance is set out in the transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020.

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

Dedicated school transport, including statutory provision

Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and pupil groups will tend to be consistent under return to school measures. Therefore wider transmission risks are likely to be lower.

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.

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 your school. 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 should 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
- through ventilation, fresh air (from outside the vehicle) is maximised, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents

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

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

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.

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

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

Further information on face coverings is set out in the transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020 guidance.

Dedicated school services can take different forms. Some journeys involve coaches regularly picking up the same pupils each day, others involve the use of a minibus whilst other services are used by different pupils on different days, or by pupils with SEND. The precise approach taken will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the different circumstances.

It will also require a partnership approach between local authorities, schools, trusts, dioceses and others. In particular, it is imperative that schools work closely with local authorities that have statutory responsibility for 'home to school transport' for many children, as well as a vital role in working with local transport providers to ensure sufficient bus service provision.

Given the pressures on public transport services, it may also be necessary to work with local authorities so that they can identify where it might be necessary to provide additional dedicated school transport services, including in places where these services do not currently operate. The government has announced additional funding for local transport authorities for this purpose, available at free school travel: funding allocations.

Wider public transport

In many areas, pupils normally make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses. Public transport capacity will continue to be constrained during the autumn term. Its use by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Schools have a critical role to play in supporting collaboration between all parties - providers, local authorities, parents and pupils. Further information on managing capacity and demand on public transport is set out in the transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020 guidance.

Schools should work with partners to consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours. We recognise that this option will be more feasible in some circumstances than others.

Schools should encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if at all possible. Schools may want to consider using 'walking buses' (a supervised group of children being walked to, or from, school) or working with their local authority to promote safe cycling routes. 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.

Families using public transport should refer to the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Pupils travelling from abroad

Where pupils travel from abroad to attend boarding schools, these schools need to plan for their collection and transfer from their point of arrival. Where they have travelled from, or have stopped at, a country or territory that is not on the travel corridors list, pupils will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they leave a non-exempt country or territory to travel to the UK. Where suitable, pupils can self-isolate at their boarding school.

Schools need to have plans in place for the collection and transfer of these pupils to school, which need to be explained to pupils and their parents before they travel. Advice to help schools, pupils and parents is provided in residential settings with international students guidance and in how to self-isolate when traveling to the UK guidance.

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 to attend school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance has therefore been mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

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

Self-isolation and shielding

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 pupils 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.

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. 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.

Pupils who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group

The advice for pupils 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.

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: very high alert, 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.

Pupils and families who are anxious about attending school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about attending school and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer formally advised, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, or those concerned about the possible increased risks from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

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

Action for all schools and local authorities

> There is separate guidance on recording attendance at addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

We are asking schools to work with families to secure regular school 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 schools and local authorities to:

1. Continue to communicate clearly and consistently the expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate).

2. Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about attending or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with the school regularly during the pandemic.

3. Use the additional catch-up funding, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance.

4. Work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support school attendance, 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.

School workforce

> 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. The

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 schools 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 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 schools may expect most staff to return to work in settings. Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and school 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 section 5 of the 'prevention' section.

School leaders should explain to staff the measures the school has put in place to reduce risks. We anticipate adherence to the measures in this guidance will provide the necessary reassurance for staff to attend school.

If staff are concerned, including those who may be clinically vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable or who believe they may be 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 tier.

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

Under local restriction tier 3: very high alert, 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 local areas in tier 3: very high alert 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 in school 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 and 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 practise frequent, thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home 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 6 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 6 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 school 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

Schools have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, including children, from harm and 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 children and staff and help schools to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

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.

Schools should continue to meet their equalities duties. Guidance is available in Equality act 2010 advice for schools.

Supporting staff

Governing boards and school leaders should have regard to staff (including the headteacher) work-life balance and wellbeing. Schools should ensure they have explained to all staff the measures 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. Schools already have mechanisms to support staff wellbeing and these will be particularly important, as some staff may be particularly anxious about attending school. DfE is providing additional support for both pupil and staff wellbeing in the current situation. Information about the extra mental health support for pupils and teachers and 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

Schools 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 individuals.

It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens. This could include a review of existing practices in this respect and schools 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, schools still have concerns about staffing capacity, representatives should talk to their local authority or trust.

Deploying support staff and accommodating visiting specialists

Schools should ensure that appropriate support is made available for pupils with SEND, for example by deploying teaching assistants and enabling specialist staff from both within and outside the school to work with pupils in different classes or year groups.

Where support staff capacity is available, schools may consider using this 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). Any redeployments should not be at the expense of supporting pupils with SEND. Headteachers should be satisfied that the person has the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work, and discuss and agree any proposed changes in role or responsibility with the member of staff. This includes ensuring that safe ratios are met and specific training undertaken, for any interventions or care for pupils with complex needs where specific training or specific ratios are required.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published guidance on making the best use of teaching assistants to help primary and secondary schools.

When deploying support staff flexibly it is important that headteachers consider regulated activity and ensure only those who have the appropriate checks are allowed to engage in regulated activity. Full guidance is provided in part 3 of keeping children safe in education.

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual. The government's Teaching Vacancies service can help schools 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, schools must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks set out in part 3 of the statutory guidance 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.

Schools 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

Schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this period. We recommend that schools consider using DfE's and Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal when hiring agency workers, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge.

Schools 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 schools, but school leaders will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the school where possible. Where it is necessary to use supply staff and to welcome visitors to the school such as peripatetic teachers, those individuals will be expected to comply with the school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the school 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 as sports coaches, and those engaged to deliver before and after school clubs.

Expectation and deployment of ITT trainees

We strongly encourage schools to consider hosting ITT trainees. Demand for teacher training is high this year and, while it is understandable that schools will have prioritised other activity, there is a risk that insufficient training places will be available. ITT trainees have the potential to play a significant role in supporting schools. Schools 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 school and trainee needs. 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 across or within years, adapting resources for such groups, creating online education materials, re-planning sequences of lessons 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 or 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 appraisal

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, such as where this has had an impact 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 can be accessed 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 school during term time. We recommend that school 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 lockdown measures 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 if it is possible to temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.

Other support

Volunteers may be used to support the work of the school, as would usually be the case. It is important that they are properly supported and given appropriate roles. Where schools 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

Schools should consider revising their child protection policy (led by their designated safeguarding lead) to reflect the return of more pupils. Schools must have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, keeping children safe in education.

Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be provided with more time, especially in the first few weeks of term, to help them provide support to staff and children regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns and the handling of referrals to children's social care and other agencies where these are appropriate. Agencies and services should be working together to actively look for signs of harm. Designated safeguarding leads 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 school.

Catering

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

School kitchens must comply with the guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

Estates

Schools 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, however, consider it necessary for schools to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all children back to school. We also do not think schools will need to deliver any of their education on other sites (such as community centres and village halls) 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 schools may determine that small adaptations to their site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual schools, 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) outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, 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. See also Keeping occupied spaces 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 overseas educational visits. 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 proviso 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 schools have been able to take pupils on non-overnight domestic educational visits. This should include visits for pupils with SEND connected with their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits or travel training). Schools should also make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support the delivery of the curriculum.

As normal, schools should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they are planned and carried out safely and in line with relevant national and local restriction tier guidance protective measures, such as keeping children within their consistent group and any coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures on transport and at the destination.

Schools should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits 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 schools 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 school (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to make decisions regarding school uniform. Some schools 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 in the autumn term. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

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.

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

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

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.

Schools 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. Schools should also work closely with any external wraparound providers which their pupils may use, to ensure as far as possible, children can be kept in a group with other children 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 - for example, if only one or two children are attending wraparound provision from the same school day bubble - schools and external providers may need to group children with others from outside their school day bubble or from a different school, where children from 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 schools may need to respond flexibly and build their wraparound provision up over time. Such provision will however help ensure pupils have opportunities to re-engage with their peers and with the school, ensure vulnerable children have a healthy breakfast and are ready to focus on their lessons, provide enrichment activities, and also support working parents.

Schools 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, as much of this will be useful in planning extra-curricular provision. This includes schools advising parents to limit the number of different out-of-school settings providers they access, as far as possible. Where parents use childcare providers or out of school extra-curricular activities for their children, schools should encourage parents and carers to seek assurance that the providers are carefully considering their own protective measures, and children should only attend settings that can demonstrate this. DfE has also issued guidance for parents and carers, which schools may want to circulate.

Schools 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 or holiday clubs or activities. In doing so, schools should ensure they work with providers to consider how they can operate within their wider protective measures and should also have regard to any other relevant government guidance. For example, where opening up school leisure facilities for external use, ensuring they do so in line with government guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for providers of grassroots sport and gym or leisure facilities.

Schools should also read the local restriction tiers guidance to find out what 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 alert tiers both inside and outdoors.

Section 3: Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support

Curriculum expectations

This section sets out some key principles and expectations for curriculum planning in school based nursery, mainstream, and special schools, and alternative provision (AP), so that all pupils – particularly disadvantaged, SEND and vulnerable pupils – are given the catch-up support needed to make substantial progress by the end of the academic year.

The key principles that underpin our advice on curriculum planning are as follows.

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.

Where needed, remote education is high-quality and safe, and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision. Schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate pupils remotely, where this is needed.

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

1. 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, prioritisation within subjects of the most important components for progression is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which pupils may struggle to pick up again later. In particular, schools may consider how all subjects can contribute to the filling of gaps in core knowledge, for example through an emphasis on reading.

2. Aim to return to the school's normal curriculum in all subjects by summer term 2021. Substantial modification to the curriculum may be needed at the start of the year, so teaching time should be prioritised to address significant gaps in pupils' knowledge with the aim of returning to the school's normal curriculum content by no later than summer term 2021.

3. 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 and skills, in particular making effective use of regular formative assessment (for example, quizzes, observing pupils in class, talking to pupils to assess understanding, scrutiny of pupils' work) while avoiding the introduction of unnecessary tracking systems.

4. Develop remote education so that it is integrated into school curriculum planning. Remote education may need to be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some pupils, alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of local restrictions.

All schools 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.

Schools may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils in exceptional circumstances. Schools 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. They should also have 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. Schools are expected to start teaching by at least the start of the summer term 2021.

Specific points for early years foundation stage (EYFS) to key stage 3

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 (COVID-19) 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, school leaders are expected to prioritise identifying gaps and re-establish good progress in the essentials (phonics and reading, increasing vocabulary, writing and mathematics), identifying opportunities across the curriculum so they read widely, and developing their knowledge and vocabulary. The curriculum should remain broad, so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, humanities, music and the arts, physical education and sport, 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 the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, languages, humanities, music and the arts, physical education and sport, citizenship, religious education and relationships, sex and health education. For pupils in year 7, it may be necessary to address gaps in English and maths by teaching essential knowledge and skills from the key stage 2 curriculum.

Specific points for key stages 4 and 5

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 may be less flexible given the requirements of qualification specifications.

To ensure exams and assessments next summer are as fair as possible, and 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.

The majority of pupils in year 10 and 11 are expected to continue to study their examination subjects. This will support them towards their preferred route to further study.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be in the best interests of a year 11 pupil to discontinue an examined subject because the school judges that, for example, they would achieve significantly better in their remaining subjects as a result, especially in GCSE English and mathematics.

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

Schools are expected to review any plans for early entry among year 10 pupils in summer 2021. It may be in the best interests of the pupil to take their exams and assessments the following year when they are in year 11, if the curriculum can be adjusted to provide further teaching and study time in the summer term and academic year 2021 to 2022.

Pupils in years 12 and 13 are more likely to undertake self-directed study, but may still need additional support. Compared to key stage 4, there is less scope to drop an examined subject as fewer qualifications are studied at this key stage. Discontinuing a subject is therefore likely to significantly limit choices for further study and employment, so is expected to be rare.

Music, dance and drama in school

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.

All pupils should have access to a quality arts education. Music, dance and drama build confidence and help children 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.

Additional mitigations, such as extended social distancing, were previously required for singing, and playing of wind and brass instruments given concerns that these were potentially higher risk activities. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has commissioned further scientific studies to be carried out to develop the scientific evidence on these activities, which has allowed the government to reconsider appropriate mitigations and further research is continuing.

Singing, wind and brass instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, including guidance provided by the DCMS for professionals and non-professionals, available at working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): 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 a more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should follow the guidance set out below.

Schools that offer specialist, elite provision in music, dance and drama should also consider this guidance alongside the DCMS guidance on the performing arts. Specialist provision delivered by further education (FE) providers or higher education (HE) providers should consider the respective Department for Education guidance for these sectors.

Minimising contact between individuals

Schools must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing. The overarching objective should be to reduce the number of contacts between pupils and students, and staff, including for rehearsal and performance. As set out in the system of controls: protective measures section, this can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in bubbles) and through maintaining the social distance between individuals. These are not alternative options. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the age 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.

Schools should take particular care in music, dance and drama lessons to observe social distancing where possible. This may limit group activity in these subjects in terms of numbers in each group. It will also prevent physical correction by teachers and contact between pupils in dance and drama.

Additionally, schools should keep any background or accompanying music to levels which do not encourage teachers or other performers to raise their voices unduly. If possible, use 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

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.

Schools in local restriction tier 3: very high alert 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 live streaming and recording performances, 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.

However, we would advise that schools restrict attendance by parents, and instead host audiences using alternative methods where possible, such as through live streaming or recording performances.

Peripatetic teachers

Schools can continue to engage peripatetic teachers during this period, including staff from music education hubs.

Peripatetic teachers can move between schools, for instance, but schools should consider how to minimise the number of visitors where possible. They will be expected to comply with arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the premises, and secure best value, schools could 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:

1. Maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where appropriate.
2. Avoid situations where distancing requirements are broken; for an example demonstrating partnering work in dancing.
3. 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 music education hub, published by the Arts Council England.

Music teaching in schools and colleges, including singing, and playing wind and brass instruments in groups

When planning music provision, schools 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. Pupils should use seating where practical to help maintain social distancing.

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 the following.

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 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. Schools should agree whose responsibility cleaning hired instruments is with the suppliers. Clean hire equipment, tools or other equipment on arrival and before first use. Equipment and instruments should be stored in a clean location if schools 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 resume in schools, FE colleges and organisations providing out of school childcare. This may mean teachers interacting with pupils from multiple groups, so schools 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, and additionally following 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, meaning teachers should not provide physical correction.

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.

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.

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided whilst following the measures in 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 should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups.

Schools 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.

Schools should refer to the following guidance:

- 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
- using changing rooms safely

Schools are able to work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities where they are satisfied that it is safe to do so. Schools should consider carefully how such arrangements can operate within their wider protective measures.

Activities such as active miles, making break times and lessons active and encouraging active travel help to enable pupils to be physically active while encouraging physical distancing.

Catch-up support

We have announced a package worth £1 billion to ensure that schools 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 will be spent on ensuring all pupils have the chance to catch up and supporting schools to rise to the challenge. This one-off grant funding will be paid to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. Whilst headteachers will decide how the money is spent, the Education Endowment Foundation has published guidance on effective interventions to support schools. For pupils with complex needs, we strongly encourage schools to spend this funding on catch-up support to address their individual needs. We will set out how this funding will be distributed between individual schools shortly.

Alongside this universal offer, we will roll out a National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million, which will deliver proven and successful tuition to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, accelerating their academic progress and preventing the gap between them and their more affluent peers widening. The evidence shows that tutoring is an effective way to accelerate education, and we, therefore, believe a targeted tutoring offer is the best way to narrow the gaps that risk opening up due to attendance at school being restricted.

Behaviour expectations

Schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules, and consider how to communicate their updated policies 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. Schools should set out clearly at the earliest opportunity the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules. They should also set out how they will enforce those rules including any sanctions. This is particularly the case when considering restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules. Schools 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. They 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 increased incidence of poor behaviour. Schools should work with those pupils who may struggle to reengage 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.

We acknowledge that some pupils will return to school 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 vulnerable groups such as children with a social worker, previously looked-after children who left care through adoption or special guardianship, and young carers, will 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 partial school closure and there may be an impact on their behaviour. Schools 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 to schools for pupils.

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.

The disciplinary powers that schools currently have, including exclusion, 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.

Schools, should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, or a looked-after child. Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, the designated teacher should contact the relevant authority's virtual school head as soon as possible to help the school decide how to help the child and avoid exclusion becoming necessary.

Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, the designated teacher should speak with the child's parent or guardian and seek advice from their virtual school head.

Pre-empting that a pupil may commit a disciplinary offence, and thus not allowing a pupil to attend school, is an unlawful exclusion.

Schools should have arrangements in place to support attendance and engagement which consider what additional support children and young people need to make a successful return to their full time education. For more information see annex B.

Any disciplinary exclusion of a pupil from a school, even for short periods of time, must follow the statutory procedure. This includes sending a pupil home for poor behaviour, whether or not remote education is provided. 'Informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending pupils home 'to cool off' for part of the day are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers.

Schools should be mindful that it is unlawful to punish a child for the actions of their parents, and to consider this when applying sanctions (for example refusing to allow a pupil to class because their parents did not attend a meeting or because the parents brought the pupils to school late would be unlawful).

Ofsted will continue to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable. Ofsted is clear that pressuring a parent 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 by parents without pressure from their school.

Pupil wellbeing and support

Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. This may particularly be the case for vulnerable children, including those with a social worker and young carers. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. Some may need support to re-adjust to school, others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return, a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school.

The return to school allows social interaction with peers, carers and teachers, which benefits wellbeing.

The government has recently launched the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which will provide training and resources 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.

Schools 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 school. The training will be available in the autumn term.

DfE, Public Health England and NHS England hosted a free webinar for school and college staff on 9 July 2020 to set out how to support returning pupils and students. A recording of this is available:

This includes experts discussing the impacts of the pandemic on pupils' mental wellbeing and recovery techniques, and education leaders discussing the actions they have been taking.

The Whole School SEND (WSS) consortium will be delivering some training and how-to ideas for mainstream school teachers (including free insets and webinars) on supporting pupils with SEND to return to their mainstream school after the long absence, and on transition to other settings.

WSS have co-produced 2 leaflets, funded by DfE, to support young people with SEND and their families to have conversations with schools about successful returns following a period of absence 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.

Schools can access WSS resources on the Whole School SEND Resource page of the SEND Gateway and professionals in the schools' workforce can sign up to the Community of Practice to be kept up to date with further information.

DfE has also published the first of the relationships, sex and health education training modules for teachers to support them in preparation 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 has been published early given the importance of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing at this time.

Schools should consider the provision of pastoral and extra-curricular activities to all pupils designed to:

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

Schools should also provide more focused pastoral support where issues are identified that individual pupils may need help with, drawing on external support where necessary and possible. Schools should also consider support needs of particular groups they are already aware need additional help (for example, children in need), and any groups they identify as newly vulnerable on their return to school. To support this, 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 school (generally led by the designated safeguarding 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.

Schools should consider how they are working with school nursing services to support the health and wellbeing of their pupils; school nursing services have continued to offer support as pupils return to school – 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 keeping children safe

Schools and school nurses need to work together to ensure delivery of the healthy child programme (which includes immunisation), identifying health and wellbeing needs which will underpin priorities for service delivery.

Hospital schools

There may be other reasons where any child or young person may be absent from school, including those with SEND. Where children and young people are receiving hospital education, on hospital sites, they should continue to be supported, including through remote education support as necessary, to minimise the impact of their hospital stay on their education.

Section 4: Assessment and accountability

This section covers assessment and accountability.

Inspection

For state-funded schools, the intention is for Ofsted inspections to remain suspended for the autumn term. However, during the autumn term, inspectors will visit a sample of schools 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 and will not result in a judgement. A brief letter will be published 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 school in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding.

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

It is intended that routine Ofsted and ISI inspections will restart from January 2021, with the exact timing being kept under review.

Primary assessment

We recognise that pupils will have missed a critical period of their education in the 2019 to 2020 academic year. Maintaining national curriculum assessments in the 2020 to 2021 academic year 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, schools and pupils that need it the most.

We are, therefore, 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
- the year 4 multiplication tables check
- key stage 2 tests and teacher assessment
- statutory trialling

For 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. During the summer term 2020, schools had the opportunity to sign up to the 2020 to 2021 early adopter year.

In light of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the 2020 to 2021 academic year will be a transitionary year (subject to the necessary legislation being made) to allow schools 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 and further information can be found at the engagement model.

Exams

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 lockdown 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 GCSEs 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 AS 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 and 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 schools, including Ofsted and DfE regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data. DfE will continue to use 2019 data as a starting point for any conversation about support for schools with Ofsted judgements below good. More information is set out at coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college accountability.

Section 5: Contingency planning for remote education

This section covers the process for local outbreaks, contingency plans and remote education.

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 school at all due to coronavirus (COVID-19). See the section on remote education support.

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

education are required in any area. The government will do everything possible to avoid enacting those contingency measures at any stage.

Remote education expectations

Where a class, group or a small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or local restrictions require pupils to remain at home, we expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education. Schools are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing curriculum, for example through technology, and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision. This planning will be particularly important to support a scenario in which the logistical challenges of remote provision are greatest, for example where large numbers of pupils are required to remain at home.

In developing these contingency plans, we expect schools to:

- use a curriculum sequence that allows access to high-quality online and offline resources and teaching videos and that is linked to the school's curriculum expectations
- give access to high quality 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 printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks, for pupils who do not have suitable online access
- recognise that younger pupils and some pupils with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support and so schools should work with families to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum

When teaching pupils remotely, we expect schools 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 practised in each subject
- provide frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher in the school 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 is being taught in response to questions or assessments, including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations to ensure pupils' understanding
- plan a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school, ideally including 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.

Special educational needs

For pupils with SEND, their teachers are best-placed to know how the pupil's needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress even if they are not able to be in school due to self-isolating. The requirement for schools to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place.

Schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education alongside their peers.

Where a pupil has provision specified within their EHC plan, it remains the duty of the local authority and any health bodies to secure or arrange the delivery of this in the setting that the plan names. However, there may be times when it becomes very difficult to do so, for example, if they are self-isolating. In this situation, decisions on how provision can be delivered should be informed by relevant considerations including, for example, the types of services that the pupil can access remotely, for example, online teaching and remote sessions with different types of therapists. These decisions should be considered on a case by case basis, avoiding a one size fits all approach.

Vulnerable children

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.

Delivering remote education safely

Keeping children safe online is essential. The statutory guidance keeping children safe in education provides schools and colleges with information on what they should be doing to protect their pupils online.

Support on delivering online remote education safely is available from:

- safe remote learning, published by SWGfL
- online safety and safeguarding, published by LGfL, which covers safe remote learning
- the National Cyber Security Centre, which includes which video conference service is right for you and using video conferencing services securely
- safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)
- annex C of keeping children safe in education

Remote education support

Read how you can get help with remote education for links to a range of support for schools.

This support has been co-designed with schools and will include a range of school-led webinars and resources intended to share good practice. This is in addition to the video lessons offered by the sector-led Oak National Academy and other providers of quality education resources.

Available support includes peer-to-peer advice and training through the EdTech Demonstrator programme, as well as guidance on how schools can order devices and get help with technology for remote education.

Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means school employers and leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff and pupils face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). School 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.

Schools 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 school 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) 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 school 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 school takes their health and safety seriously.

Sharing your risk assessment

Schools 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 schools is varied, we have set out here what the existing DfE Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools guidance states about the roles and responsibilities for health and safety in schools. The employer is accountable for the health and safety of school staff and pupils. The day-to-day running of the school 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.

Schools 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 in the guidance The role of school leaders - who does what and a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of school setting in its FAQs section, 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 schools, 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 school is undertaken as soon as possible. As some pupils are already attending school, 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 school 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, the measures taken to reduce these risks and expected outcomes.

Schools 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 schools need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff

- pupils
- visitors
- contractors

Schools 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 or 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, schools 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.

Annex B: education, health and care (EHC) plans

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. To ensure that children and young people receive the support they need to return to school, we will not be issuing further notices to modify this duty unless the evidence changes. Our focus is now 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 give local authorities and others who contribute to the relevant processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus (COVID-19), will expire as planned on 25 September

2020. Further information on the temporary changes to the law on EHC needs assessment and plan processes is available at changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

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 lockdown exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally. Settings should consider any challenging behaviours or social or emotional challenges arising as a response to the lockdown (following discussion with the parents or young person) and offer additional support and phased returns where needed, as a reasonable adjustment to support a disabled child to return successfully to school.

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

Following the partial closure of educational and childcare settings from March 2020, we asked local authorities to consider the needs of all children and young people with an education, health and care plan and to carry out a risk assessment. Local authorities were asked to work with schools and parents or carers, to determine whether children and young people would be able to have their needs met at home and be safer there than attending a school.

Risk assessments may prove useful now and over the autumn term, in identifying what additional support children and young people with education, health and care plans need to make a successful return to full education. Risk assessments may also prove useful if children and young people have to self-isolate, or if a local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) requires a school to return to more limited attendance, or temporarily close.

Whether individual risk assessments are used to help plan for the autumn term or not, schools should, in the spirit of coproduction, contact parents and involve them in planning for their child's return to their school from the start of the autumn term. They should also contact and involve young people over 16 who have education, health and care plans. That might include visits to the school, social stories, and other approaches that specialist settings normally use to enable a child or young person with SEND, who has spent some time out of education, to return to full provision.

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