Department for Education

Guidance

What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges

Updated 31 December 2020

Contents

- Attending nursery, childminders, school and college
- Return in January
- Attendance
- Helping make nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges as safe as possible
- Arriving and leaving nursery, the childminder, school or college
- Curriculum
- Performances
- Assessment and exams
- Ofsted inspections
- School admissions
- Behaviour
- School uniform
- School and college food
- Online safety
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Education, health and care (EHC) plans
- School and college trips
- Extra-curricular activities
- Managing cases in nurseries, schools and colleges, and local restrictions

Print this page

This guidance is for parents and carers of children at:

- registered nurseries and childminders[footnote 1]
- primary and secondary schools[footnote 2]
- further education colleges[footnote 3]

This update includes information on:

- returning to nursery, school and colleges in January 2021, including changes announced on 30 December
- testing
- advice for clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people in tier 4 local areas

Attending nursery, childminders, school and college

All children and young people, in all year groups, should have now returned to school or college full-time or their usual timetabled hours to benefit from their education and training in full.

Children attending nurseries and childminders were able to return from 1 June. From 20 July, nurseries were able to return to their normal group sizes.

The scientific evidence shows that coronavirus (COVID-19) presents a much lower risk to children than adults of becoming severely ill. There is also some limited evidence that children may play a lesser role in transmission than adults. However, there will still be risks while coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community. More information is available in a statement from the Chief Medical Officers on the risks and benefits to health from schools, colleges, nurseries and childcare opening fully. We continue to keep our guidance to schools under review.

Nurseries, schools and colleges in England will remain open in all local restriction tiers, including the newly announced tier 4.

To manage the risks, we have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to put in place a range of protective measures to increase.

Your child's nursery, childminder, school or college will be able to give you more information about the changes they have made.

Return in January

To support public health efforts during the return to school and college in January, secondary schools and colleges will prepare for a phased return to face-to-face provision at the start of the new term. Secondary schools and colleges will have access to additional coronavirus (COVID-19) testing from the start of January. This will help to keep as many pupils and students in school and college as possible beyond the start of the new term, and minimise the spread of the virus.

Nurseries, childminders and primary schools

You can continue to access childcare as normal from nurseries and childminders (though some school-based nurseries may restrict access in line with primary schools in areas with exceptional rates of incidence or transmission). The majority of primary schools will open as planned from their advertised first day of term and allow all pupils to attend.

A small number of primary schools have been asked to restrict access to children of critical workers and vulnerable children at the start of this term. If this applies to your school, you will only be able to send your child to school if you are a critical worker or your child is vulnerable. All other pupils will be provided with remote education. This position will be reviewed again before 18 January.

Secondary schools and colleges

Schools with secondary-age pupils (year 7 and above) and colleges will have access to additional coronavirus (COVID-19) testing from the start of January. Secondary-age pupils and younger age college students are being prioritised for testing in response to the recent high rates of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Secondary schools and colleges will prepare for a phased return to face-to-face provision. Schools and colleges will be able to prepare to test their pupils and students, reaching as many as possible, ahead of a full return to face-to-face education on 18 January.

In advance of 18 January secondary schools and colleges will ensure:

- vulnerable children (including those in special post-16 provision) and the children of critical workers can attend school or college for face-to-face teaching from the advertised first day of term
- pupils or students taking exams and external assessments in January or later this year will be prioritised for remote education in the week commencing 4 January, and can attend school or college for face-to-face teaching from 11 January
- all other pupils and students will be provided with remote education until 18 January when they should return to face-to-face education in school or college, though with remote education prioritised for exam years in the week commencing 4 January
- pupils and students will not need to have had a test to return to school or college on 18 January

For colleges, these additional groups should also return from the week commencing 11 January:

- those who are not able to access remote education, for example, because of the practical nature of study (that cannot be undertaken at a later point)
- those on technical programmes who need to access specialised equipment

All specialist settings and alternative provision schools and colleges should plan for full-time or usual timetabled on-site provision for all pupils and students in the first week of term, although special schools and colleges will have some flexibility on face-to-face attendance of pupils and students in the first week of term to enable them to appropriately mobilise the testing programme.

If your child is eligible to attend school or college during the first 2 weeks of term we expect you to send them to school or college. If you are concerned, you can talk this through with your school or college.

If your child is receiving remote education and is eligible for a benefits-related free school meal you will be offered a food parcel. Colleges will also support students who usually receive free meals.

It remains a priority that all pupils, in all year groups, attend school full-time, and students attend college beyond this exceptional period.

Wraparound childcare, out-of-school or college activities

Secondary-aged pupils (year 7 and above) or college students who are not eligible for on-site provision in the first 2 weeks of January should not attend out-of-school or college settings (such as extracurricular clubs or supplementary schools) or wraparound childcare (before and after-school clubs).

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare can continue to operate for face-to-face provision, from the start of term, in line with the local restriction tiers guidance for children who are:

- in early years settings
- in primary school (unless they are attending one of the small number of schools which have been asked to restrict access at the start of term)
- in the secondary school-age cohorts eligible for full-time on-site provision - vulnerable children, and children of critical workers and, from 11 January, those taking exams this year

Children who are home educated can also continue to attend wraparound childcare and out-of-school settings.

However, we are still recommending that you limit the number of out-of-school settings that you send your child to in order to minimise mixing between different groups of children.

Further advice on the precautions you should take if sending your child to these settings is available in the guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Testing

Schools and colleges will enable as many staff, pupils and students as possible to get tested at the start of term. This will help to identify and contain any asymptomatic cases and minimise the disruption to education caused by coronavirus (COVID-19).

This testing will involve 2 lateral flow device (LFD) tests ideally spaced 3 to 5 days apart (no fewer than 3 days), with preparations starting in the week commencing 4 January.

If your child tests positive on the first or second LFD test they will need to:

- immediately self-isolate in line with the stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
- take a confirmatory standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test (they take more time because they are usually processed in a laboratory)

If the first LFD test is negative, they should be tested again, ideally 3 to 5 days later (no fewer than 3 days). Vulnerable children, children of critical workers, and pupils and students taking exams this year will be prioritised for testing. In colleges, all students can access a test but younger students will be prioritised in response to the recent higher rates of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. Your school or college will be able to provide more information in the first week back on how testing of pupils and students who will not be attending face-to-face will work.

If your child is receiving remote education in the first 2 weeks of term and needs to go to school or college for their test, you should try to make sure they arrive at school or college at a scheduled time and return home following their test.

Regular rapid testing in schools and colleges

To help keep as many staff, pupils and students in school and college as possible, rapid-result coronavirus (COVID-19) tests will also be made available to schools and colleges. This is in addition to the testing at the start of January. This will help identify asymptomatic cases, which make up a third of all cases, limiting the spread of the virus.

A phased approach will begin in January. Rapid-result tests will be provided to schools and colleges, starting at first with secondary schools and colleges, as well as special schools and alternative provision settings. This will enable:

- weekly testing for the school and college workforce
- daily testing for pupils, students and the workforce where they have been identified as close contacts of individuals who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) - this will mean that they do not need to isolate if they test negative and do not have symptoms, and will be able to continue to benefit from high quality, face-to-face education

Testing is voluntary, and participation is ultimately optional, but we strongly encourage those who are eligible to take part to help reduce the risks of transmission in schools and colleges. This is a significant ask of schools and colleges, but an important step in our response to the virus. Please do what you can to support your school or college.

Testing, along with the other measures schools and colleges have already put in place, will help ensure pupils and students have the best chance of as much face-to-face education as possible.

Attendance

Please refer to the return in January section for information about attendance at the start of the spring term.

Attendance at nursery and childminders

Whether your child attends nursery, a childminder or another early years provider is your decision, but we do encourage you to take up a place for your child. Attending childcare can help provide a routine as young children develop their social skills.

All children should continue to attend education settings in tiers 1, 2 and 3 unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or other NHS care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting. Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4, so all children still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend settings.

You can check if your child is eligible for any of the free childcare entitlements on the Childcare Choices website. These are worth on average £2,500 a year to parents of some 2-year-olds and up to £5,000 a year to parents of 3- and 4-year-olds.

Attendance at school and college

It is vital that children and young people attend school and college, for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. School attendance is now mandatory again. This means that it is your legal duty as a parent to send your child (if they are of compulsory school age) to school regularly if they are registered at one.

There is not a corresponding legal duty for post-16 education but if a young person fails to attend, their college may believe they have left the course.

Local authorities and schools have a range of legal powers to enforce attendance if a child or young person misses school without a valid reason.

If you have concerns about your child attending school or college because you consider they may have particular risk factors, you should discuss these with your school or college. They should be able to explain ways they are changing things to reduce risks. There are resources to support you with these conversations, including this leaflet on returning to school after a period of absence.

Some parents choose to educate their children at home full-time (elective home education). Educating children at home works well when it is a positive choice and carried out with proper regard for the needs of the child. If you're considering elective home education for your child, you should read the advice on home-schooling and elective home education.

Self-isolation

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

- have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) and are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the Public Health England (PHE) advice service

If your child is unable to attend school or college for these reasons, ask your school or college what support they will provide for remote education.

If your child is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and is asked to self-isolate, you and other members of your household (including any other children in the same school) do not need to self-isolate unless your child, who is self-isolating, subsequently develops symptoms.

If your child has been a close contact of someone who has tested positive, and subsequently develops symptoms but has a negative test result, they will still need to self-isolate for the full 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive.

Shielding

You can read guidance for shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from 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.

The advice for pupils in local restriction tiers 1 to 3 who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should continue to attend school 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. Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4 areas, and so all children still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable should still attend school or college, in all local restriction tiers.

Further information for parents is available from the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health.

If children are not able to attend school or college because they are following clinical or public health advice, you will not be penalised and they will not lose their college place.

Holidays

As usual, you should plan your holidays within school and college holidays. Avoid seeking permission to take your children out of school or college during term time.

Keep in mind that you and your children may need to self-isolate when you return from a trip overseas. You can check whether there are any restrictions to travel in place for your local restriction tier.

Helping make nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges as safe as possible

Each nursery, childminder, school or college will have done their own health and safety risk assessment, and they will keep this under review.

As part of this, there are certain approaches that we have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to implement that are essential to reduce health risks.

Actions that nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will take

We have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to:

- manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the nursery, school or college, in line with current public health guidance - this means your child may be asked to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive by their nursery, childminder, school or college (based on advice from the PHE advice service or local health protection teams) if they have been in close, face-to-face contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus
- ensure that everyone cleans their hands more often than usual, including when they arrive, when they return from breaks, and before and after eating - this should be done for 20 seconds with soap and running water or hand sanitiser
- promote the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach, to ensure good respiratory hygiene
- enhance cleaning and ventilation, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often

Nurseries and childminders will also minimise contact between individuals where they can. This could mean using different rooms for different age groups and keeping those groups apart.

Schools and colleges will minimise contact and encourage maintaining distance as far as possible. They will decide how best to do this because it will be different for each school or college. This will involve asking children and young people to:

- stay within specified separate groups (or bubbles)
- maintain distance between individuals

We know that younger children may not be able to maintain social distancing. It is likely that for younger children the emphasis will be on separating groups, and for older children, it will be on distancing.

Actions you can take

Do not send your child to their nursery, childminder, school or college if:

- they are showing coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- someone in their household is showing symptoms

Arrange a test if you or your child develops symptoms. Inform your nursery, childminder, school or college of the results.

If the test is positive, follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

Your child does not need a test if they:

- have a runny nose, are sneezing or feeling unwell, but do not have a temperature, cough or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste
- are advised to self-isolate because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), for example, another pupil in their class, but are not showing symptoms themselves

It is really important that you help nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to implement these actions by following the advice set out here and wider public health advice and guidance.

Face coverings

Nationwide, we are not recommending face coverings are necessary in nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges generally. This is because the measures nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges are putting in place already reduce the health risks.

Schools and colleges with pupils in years 7 and above which are in tier 1 areas will have the choice to ask that pupils, staff and visitors wear face coverings in indoor areas outside the classroom where social distancing is not possible. Face coverings should be worn by pupils, staff and visitors when moving around the premises and when social distancing is not possible in schools and colleges with pupils in year 7 and above which are in tiers 2, 3 and 4.

In nurseries, childminders and primary schools teaching year 6 and below, it is not mandatory for staff and visitors to wear face coverings.

In situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible (for example when moving around in corridors and communal areas), nurseries, childminders and primary schools have the choice to ask that adults, including staff and visitors, wear face coverings.

Children in nurseries, at childminders and primary school children will not need to wear a face covering.

Based on current evidence, face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom. This is because the approaches schools and colleges are putting in place will sufficiently reduce risk in the classroom, and because they may have a negative impact on learning and teaching.

In colleges, students may also be asked to wear face coverings where:

- the teaching setting is more similar to, or is, a workplace environment (for example, a restaurant which may be open to the public)
- it is a requirement in the workplace or indoor environment and students are likely to come into contact with other members of the public

It is really important that face coverings are worn correctly. All schools and colleges should have a process for making sure face coverings are put on, removed, stored and disposed of properly. They should let you know what their process is.

Some pupils, students and adults may be exempt from wearing face coverings. These exemptions will apply in early years, schools and colleges, so any requirement to wear a face covering does not apply to children and young people who:

- have a disability that means they cannot wear or remove a face covering
- would find wearing a face covering severely distressing
- are with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

We expect people to be sensitive to these needs and to be aware that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Arriving and leaving nursery, the childminder, school or college

For information about travelling to school or college for a test in the first 2 weeks of term, please see the return in January section.

Some nurseries, childminders, schools or colleges may need to stagger or adjust start and finish times. This helps keep groups apart as they arrive and leave the premises. If schools or colleges choose to do this it should not reduce the amount of time they spend teaching - but it could mean that your child's start or finish times change.

Schools and colleges will work with any school transport and other transport providers to coordinate, as necessary.

Your nursery, childminder, school or college will be in touch to set out any changes they are making. This might also include:

- new processes for drop off and collection
- not allowing gathering at the school gates
- not being allowed onto the site without an appointment

Using public transport

Everyone needs to play their part in reducing the demand for public transport. If possible, you should look for alternative transport options, especially walking or cycling, particularly at peak times.

This will help to ensure that there is enough public transport capacity to allow those who need to use it to travel safely. It will also benefit your family's health. See the guidance from:

- Living Streets on walking to school
- Sustrans on keeping safe on the school run

If you and your child rely on public transport to get to their nursery, childminder, school or college, the safer travel guidance for passengers will

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Free home to school transport for eligible children

Local authorities' duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children is unaffected. This is set out in the statutory guidance and Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

Your local authority might ask you to accept a personal travel budget or arrange transport for your child in a different way. The legal duty is that they can ensure there is enough dedicated transport capacity for everyone who needs it.

We would ask you to accept that offer if you can. It will not affect your child's entitlement to free home to school transport. It will help your local authority make sure as much of it as possible is available for those who need it.

Local authorities should not expect you to commit to accepting a personal payment or alternative provision for a specified period. Yet, the local authority would need reasonable notice to reinstate home to school transport for your child.

Using dedicated school or college transport

Local authorities, schools and transport providers will not expected to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport, on dedicated school or college transport. This means they can:

- dedicate a school or college transport vehicle to serve the same group of young people on a regular basis
- children and young people can be dedicated a school or college transport do not mix with members of the public

Local authorities, schools and transport providers will do all that is reasonably practicable to maximise social distancing where possible and minimise the number of contacts between children and young people according to local circumstances. This might include:

- seating your child to use a regular seat on this transport
- making sure cleaning and disinfecting is being carried out regular and making sure vehicles are cleaned regularly
- ensuring that transport providers maintain the flow of fresh air

It's important that you follow any local advice provided and that your child knows and understands the importance of following rules that will apply.

Wearing face coverings when travelling to and from school or college

Most children and young people aged 11 and over are now required to wear a face covering on school buses. This includes children and young people who are exempt from wearing face coverings because they:

- have a disability that means they cannot wear a face covering
- would find wearing a face covering severely distressing
- are travelling with someone who relies on lip reading to communicate

As planned in Public Health England, if your child is aged 11 or over, they must wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to school or college. Your child should also wear a face covering if they are aged 11 and they comply with any exemptions they have for wearing a face covering. They need to ensure that they have a suitable face covering.

If your child needs this and can't, it is critical to engage with someone outside of their support bubble or household, they should:

- share with the same people each time
- open the windows for ventilation
- if they are aged 11 or over, wear a face covering

It is really important that face coverings are worn correctly. All schools and colleges should provide guidance on how to wear a face covering, how to remove, store and dispose of properly. They should let you know what their process is.

Curriculum

We have set out what we expect schools to teach. Schools will provide an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects.

Colleges are expected to continue delivery so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full.

There may need to be changes to some subjects, such as sport and performance subjects, so that schools and colleges can teach these subjects as safely as possible.

Schools and colleges will also make plans for providing remote education if needed. This means that if your child needs to stay at home, due to shielding or isolation, they can continue their education at home from their school.

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

Performances

Nurseries, schools and colleges may need to consider alternative arrangements for performances such as nativity plays and school concerts.

Attendance by parents, carers and others will need to be restricted, and performances may be streamlined or recorded instead. Subject to the safeguarding considerations and parental permission.

Schools and colleges will need to plan for providing remote education if needed. This means that if your child needs to stay at home, due to shielding or isolation, they can continue their education at home from their school.

Assessments and exams

Assessments in primary or junior schools

To recognise the challenges the pandemic poses for teaching, primary assessments in summer 2021 will focus on assessments in:

- phonics
- English reading and writing
- mathematics

We are also helping schools to take a more flexible approach if pupils are absent on the national dates of the key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check by extending the original timetable variation windows for a period of 2 weeks in May and June 2021 for these assessments.

The wider key stage 1 tests in English reading and mathematics, and key stage 1 and 2 tests for English grammar, punctuation and spelling, will not take place in 2021. We have also postponed the introduction of new 2 or 3 multiplication tables check, although some schools may still choose to run the check. We will not publish results from the optional key stage 1 assessments or other tests.

New regulations came into force on 26 September 2020 to allow temporary changes to the Key Stage 2 Tests. The Department for Education (DfE) is providing a dispensation to the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to provide a dispensation to comply with the STA's statutory framework in full. Details of the amendments can be found in the STA's coronavirus dispensations guidance.

GCSEs and A levels

On Thursday 3 December 2020, we confirmed changes to GCSE, AS and A levels in 2021.

Grading in 2021 will replicate as far as possible the overall profile of grades awarded in 2020, so that students who have worked hard and been taught to attain a qualification. To help students focus their revision, adjustments will be made to the 2021 exams including optional questions and a choice of topics in certain subjects. Students will be given more information and advice the government on differential learning and how exams will mitigate or minimise its impact.

The guidance to support summer 2021 exams provides more information.

This follows confirmation that exams will go ahead next year and most AS, A level and GCSE exams will be delayed by 3 weeks to give pupils more time to catch up on their learning.

The main exam series will start on 7 June 2021, just after the May half term, and finish on 30 June 2021.

Vocational and technical qualifications exams will also commence as of a planned start year. Both in the spring term and in the summer term. Subject to consultation with their sectors, the Department for Education, we expect that the majority of VTQ awarding organisations to make online changes to their exams or exam timetables for 2021 to ensure a pause for GCSE, AS and A levels.

Ofsted inspections

During the spring term (from January 2021), Ofsted inspectors will carry out monitoring inspections in schools and colleges most in need of support. These inspections will focus on how schools and colleges are supporting pupils with focus on matters that are particularly relevant at this time, such as curriculum and teaching (including remote education) and attendance. Routine, graded Ofsted inspections will not return until the summer term.

During the spring term, assurance inspections will take place in nurseries, childminders and other early years settings. Ofsted inspectors will contact you by text and ask you to fill in a parent survey to provide feedback and assurance that providers continue to meet registration requirements. Ofsted will publish a report of inspections.

Ofsted will also have the power to inspect any setting in response to any concerns they receive, including about safeguarding and quality of education (which could include remote education).

School admissions

Admission appeals

If you have applied to a school and it does not offer your child a place, you have the right to appeal this decision.

Admission appeals can now be held by telephone, video conference or in writing, instead of face-to-face hearings.

Entry tests for selective schools and colleges, such as grammar schools and performance colleges

Nearly every selective school [REDACTED] already have run their selection tests for September 2020 entry and have offered places to pupils.

If you are applying for a school or college which is yet to test, or you are applying for an entry point where pupils are expected to sit for your child to be tested, that travel is considered to be essential travel.

On arriving at an testing centre, your parent and children should take the 3 simple actions we must all take to keep on protecting each other – wash hands, cover face, make space.

Parents and children should not congregate around the test venue before or after the test. Parents should not wait for their children, they should let their kid if they are ready.

- showing symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- self-isolating

If you or your child are showing symptoms or self-isolating, contact the school, college or local authority. If it is urgent by text. The school, college or local authority will make alternative arrangements to assess your child the sooner as possible.

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Behaviour

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges may update their behaviour policies to reflect any new rules or approaches they are making. They will let you know what these changes are.

School uniform

Schools decide their own uniform policy.

We have encouraged all schools to return to their usual uniform policies.

You do not need to have uniform differently or any more often than usual because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

School and college food

For information about free schools meals during the first weeks of January, please see the Welcome back guidance.

School and college kitchens should be fully open.

They will provide food for pupils and students, including free school meals and universal infant free school meals as usual for those who are eligible.

Online safety

Most people, including children, have been spending more time online, whether that is in the classroom or at home.

We have the support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online and safeguarding guidance. It suggests resources to help keep children and young people safe online, including: Childnet, Internet Matters, Parentzone and others. Support for your child online includes information on security and privacy settings.

Mental health and wellbeing

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will understand that some children and young people may be experiencing bereavement, loss or anxiety stress or low mood as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

There are online resources available to help you and your child with mental health, including:

- Mind, a free educational resource from Health Education England on mindfulness and staying active and healthy
- Young Minds, a charity to help children and support good mental health in young people aged 0 to 25
- Every Mind Matters, which includes an online tool and email journey to help people take practical steps to improve their mental health and cope better with stress and anxiety
- Bereavement UK and the Childhood Bereavement Network, provide information and support to support bereaved children, schools and families

Barnardo's, Sea, Mind, Personal services, provides support to children, young people and families who are bereaved, including information and support for those who are grieving or dealing with the loss of a family member impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19). You can access the Year 7 New, Personal service self-referral process and Freephone 0800 151 7615.

It's also vital to expect any safeguarding concerns you have about any child. Contact the NSPCC helpline.

Education, health and care (EHC) plans

During the outbreak, we needed to make some of the specified special education and health provision written into EHC plans flexible.

This flexibility has now ended, which means that if your child has an EHC plan they could expect to receive the support they need as usual when they attend their school or college.

School and college trips

Schools and colleges can continue educational day trips in the UK. They should follow the guidance for safer travel, for example, on coaches, trains, and public transport for school and college trips in the UK. Schools may also take to reduce risks.

We currently advise against overnight trips in the UK and overseas educational visits.

We recognise the necessary benefits overnight residential educational visits can provide for children and young people.

In February 2021, we will review the possibility of changing our advice on domestic residential education visits to resume from Easter 2021, if the scientific evidence allows.

Extra-curricular activities

Please refer to the Sport England guidance for the guidance for information about out of school settings and wraparound childcare in the first 2 weeks of the term.

Schools and colleges should be working to resume all the before and after school activities they were providing before the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and as other out of school activities, as you normally would in all social/recreational terms. There are some legal gatherings and activities that are now permitted to take place. Some of these may include those who were clear in the Prime Minister's 10 August. Those students who have turned 18 during the course of the academic year are not subject to these additional restrictions.

Schools and colleges will still need to make sure any breakfast and after school provision they provide is consistent with the Public Health England's guidance. However, this means there no need for full school bubbles.

Take to your child's school to check whether they are running breakfast and after school or college activities.

Independent providers of after-school, holiday clubs and other out-of-school activities for children, must be able to open to take care of your child. Such settings provision. However, in areas at Tier 4 Lockdown, they will not be able to provide services, such as:

- necessary to deliver services or carers to work, seek, or undertake education or training
- for the purposes of employ care
- being cared by home educating parents as part of their existing arrangements, or for the purposes of providing childcare elsewhere
- for the purposes of delivering a regulated childcare provision, meeting the requirements for an education institution, or exams and assessments
- provision specified in an education, health and care plan

In tier 4 areas, children should not be accessing this provision except for these purposes.

Providers that offer face-to-face provision of any local restriction that should be closed, or restricted, should also provide remote provision. Providers that should put in place to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus.

It remains important that we also continue to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus due to increased mixing between different groups of people. Children and young people, their families, carers, and other out-of-school activities for your child, you should consider:

- sending your child to the same setting consistently
- the number of different people they meet

Before sending your child to a setting, you should also ask providers what measures they have put in place to keep children and their families and parents or carers safe.

There is further advice available for parents on the use of out-of-school clubs and activities. This includes details on the key measures that every setting should be putting in place to ensure it is safe for children to attend the out-of-school activity you plan to go to. The list of schools settings guidance also covers groups of home-educated children.

Managing cases in nurseries, schools and colleges, and local restrictions

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges will contact their local public protection team if they:

- have 2 or more confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) that are pupils or staff within 14 days
- see an increase in absence or staff absence rates due to suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Public protection teams will then decide what action is required. Usually, they will work with the school, college or local authority to agree a plan.

If an outbreak in a school or college is confirmed, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched. The local director of public health will contact you with the person who has tested positive. Testing will first focus on the person's close, followed by their year group, then the whole school or college.

At all local protection teams, the government's policy is that education settings will remain open. Local protection teams will only close up as a last resort and would only be initiated by the central government. In all circumstances, local protection teams will work closely with the government's Children of Education Secretary Taskforce and local authorities. Where circumstances relate to local restrictions, this is clearly set out in the coronavirus (COVID-19) contingency framework for local authorities and settings.

Your child's school or college will provide remote education if:

- they need to self-isolate
- stream of students or students need to self-isolate
- a larger restriction of attendance at school or college is needed
- they are shielding as per government guidance

1. Nursery and childminder or nurseries and childminders refer to registered nurseries, registered childminders, pre-schools, playgroups and maintained nursery schools.
2. Schools and colleges refer to this includes independent schools, maintained schools, academies/free schools, alternative provision, middle schools, and middle schools.
3. Colleges refers to sixth form colleges, general further education colleges, independent training providers, designated institutions, adult community learning providers, and local authority providers.
4. Selective schools include grammar schools (where all the children based on their high academic ability), partially selective or 'bilateral' schools which select a proportion of their intake by academic ability, and schools which select by other criteria such as aptitude in the performing or visual arts, sport, modern foreign languages, design and technology or IT.

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