

COVID-19: Return to educational establishments

Home Economics Guidelines¹

Version 2.0

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Version	Date	Summary of changes
V 1.0	14/08/20	First version of the document.
V 2.0	02/11/20	Various updates in line with Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools document (30 October 2020). The revised text is highlighted in yellow.

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1. Overview and purpose

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#), Para 136 states: 'Practical, "hands-on" learning and activities, experiments and investigations are an important part of the curriculum across all subject areas'. This document focusses on the practical, experiential nature of learning in home economics. For teachers working with food in the primary and special setting, the above advice from COVID-19 Education Recovery Group should be carefully applied. The following advice applies specifically to home economics departments in secondary schools.

Home economics provides a critical learning opportunity for children and young people as they re-connect and adapt to the new learning environments in schools.

¹ This advice is current on this date. The advice is reviewed periodically and may change as evidence is published and more about the virus is understood

The practical and interactive nature of the subject will lend itself well to supporting nurturing conversations with learners following the period of school closure. This document will assist teachers and school leaders with risk assessment and decision making, leading to the provision of learning through home economics in a safe and considered way. The preparation needed to enable practical activities to continue will increase and schools will need to reflect on their own context to plan safe working environments for young people and staff.

This advice is a general set of broad guidelines in order to support the significant local variations in resource within home economics departments.

2. How to use these guidelines

This document reflects the latest scientific evidence and advice and the significant progress that Scotland has made in suppressing the virus. A risk-benefit approach to decision making can be helpful while understanding that no risk can be reduced to zero.

This document is designed to promote a consistent and equitable approach against the context of the current pandemic. Local authorities and schools will understand best how these guidelines can be applied in their settings. They should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and staff, and ensure that the risk mitigation measures are implemented effectively. It has been written to stimulate conversations about how home economics can be safely and effectively delivered. Consideration should be given to the costs of food provision within schools and the potential financial challenges that many families experience. Further discussions around supporting learners during this challenging time for many, are likely to be required.

3. Practical considerations

1	<p>Physical Distancing and Ventilation</p> <p>Physical Distancing</p> <p>Enhanced attention is required to observe and implement the current guidance on physical distancing in the classroom, reinforcing the importance of adults maintaining distance from pupils and of the precautionary approach encouraging distancing between young people, particularly in the senior phase.</p> <p>Ventilation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consideration should be given to ventilation in all indoor spaces. Staff should liaise with senior leaders and follow local/school guidelines.
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	<p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 50 – 54.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Use of classrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils should enter the room individually and make their way to their workplace. As a precautionary approach, physical distancing should be encouraged where possible, between adults, and between young people, particularly in the senior phase. • The teacher should have an assigned area to ensure 2 m spacing. This should be clearly marked. Staff should wear a face covering out with this designated area when interacting with young people or supporting practical tasks. Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 92: where adults cannot keep 2 m distance and are interacting face-to-face with other adults and/or children and young people, face coverings should be worn at all times. This applies to all staff including support staff and classroom assistants. • Outdoor coats should ideally be placed away from the teaching area. If this is not feasible, they should be carefully stored away from food areas. School bags and other personal belongings should also be kept away from food areas. If mobile phones are being used under instruction of the teacher, close attention should be paid to cleaning before and after use. • Use learner voice to reflect on how well protocols are being followed and how practice can be improved, for example, young people could be involved in making plans to overcome excess movement in a classroom and also to avoid sharing equipment. This is an important aspect of problem solving which young people can become involved in and will help support teachers in these efforts. • In textile rooms where possible, desks should be arranged to create a working area adjacent to the sewing machine to minimise movement around the room. Students should be allocated a machine and given instructions on cleaning of machines before and after use, paying particular attention to the balance wheel, presser foot lever and needle and any other touch areas.
<p>3</p>	<p>Purchase/ Storage / Retrieval of food items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School procurement systems are not always able to provide the appropriate items - often local shopping is essential for learning and teaching to continue. Arrangements need to be made to make sure that safe local

	<p>shopping can happen, for example, face coverings and care with storage of packaged items.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food items should be handled and stored carefully. A minimum amount of handling is preferable. • Food Packaging: Food Standard Scotland (COVID-19 and Food), point 7; ‘frequent hand washing will help to minimise the potential for indirectly spreading the virus from any surfaces that may have become exposed, including packaged and unpackaged foods...it is advised to wash your hands thoroughly after handling food deliveries or unpacking your food and drink... on returning from the supermarket’. <p>Point 8 states, ‘it (COVID-19) is not known to be transmitted by exposure to food or food packaging. However it is always important to follow good hygiene and preparation practices when handling and eating raw fruit, leafy salads and vegetables which have not been pre-washed. Wash in a basin of clean water or under the tap to remove any contamination on the surface. You should not use soap or disinfectant when washing food. Peeling the outer layers or skins of certain fruits and vegetables can also help to remove surface contamination’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing food across classrooms should be carefully managed. It is preferable that items are retained and stored within each food technology teaching area.
4	<p>Hygiene measures and safe equipment/resource management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders should ensure the home economics department is linked to the enhanced cleaning programme across the school. • Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 36 states: ‘Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment (for example, in practical subjects or for children with additional support needs), sensory rooms, practical subjects with specialist equipment... etc. to ensure safe use’. • Adjustments may have to be made to clean equipment, including any electronic technology and work surfaces following practical activities. Cupboard and door handles, sinks and taps should be carefully cleaned: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools Para 33 states: ‘Local authorities and schools should ensure that an enhanced environmental cleaning regime is in place. The regime put in

place should be in line with Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings'. This specifies in particular: 'Ensuring regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (for example, desks, handles, dining tables, shared technology surfaces etc)'.

- Para 35 states; 'Movement of children, young people and staff between classrooms should be minimised wherever possible. Where this cannot be avoided, the provision of appropriate cleaning supplies to enable them to wipe down their own desk/chair/surfaces before leaving and, especially, on entering the room should be considered as part of overall hygiene strategies for secondary schools'.
- The usual high expectations of cleanliness and hygiene in home economics classrooms should be applied. Hand washing facilities should already be available for each station and learners should carefully wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds on entry to classrooms and before and after practical activity. Paper towels need to be carefully placed in bins and these must be emptied at least daily. Paper towels and soap should be regularly replenished.
- Where possible all equipment required for the lesson should be made available for each station to minimise pupil movement around the room.
- Where possible dishes which are used daily could be carefully washed in a dishwasher at the end of each day. Cloths, aprons, drying towels and any fabric resources should only be used once, and should continue to be washed daily - as is normal procedure in most schools. Use the warmest water settings (60 degrees where possible) and dry items completely - [Core COVID-19 Information and General Guidance for General \(Non-Healthcare\) Settings 21 August 2020](#), Para 2.6 page 18. Some young people may bring their own apron from home, for their own use.
- The preparation of ingredients and materials could overflow into an empty room if there is one available.
- If young people usually collect food at the end of a day for taking home, some consideration will be required about how this can be done safely and with limited movement in corridors.
- In textile rooms, sets of basic equipment, for example, pins, scissors, quick unpick could be placed in a plastic tray on each desk with pupils taking responsibility for wiping down equipment at the end of the lesson. Where students require use of an iron etc., then a small area could be set up for this, with students asking permission to enter this area one at a time.

Other considerations

- Teacher demonstrations could be done from behind a Perspex screen, but they are not essential. Alternatively, the teacher could use a table at the front of the class and stay an appropriate distance from learners. The use of technology, for example, data projectors, digital cameras / visualisers to project what is being demonstrated may also be helpful.
- Where possible, recipes should be shared on the board. Alternatively, or where a young person requires additional support, individual recipe sheets/books may be used, protected in plastic envelopes and cleaned at the end of the lesson.
- The teacher should have an assigned area to ensure 2 m spacing. This should be clearly marked. Staff should wear a face covering out with this designated area when interacting with young people or supporting practical tasks. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#) Para 92: where adults cannot keep 2 m distance and are interacting face-to-face with other adults and/or children and young people, face coverings should be worn at all times. This applies to all staff including support staff and classroom assistants.
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#) Para 183: Every child and young person will have different levels of required support. It will be important as part of the risk assessments carried out to consider the individual needs of a child or young person. Where there is a need to work in close proximity with adults and children and young people the safety measures to protect adults and children and young people alike should be followed. Staff should wear a face covering or PPE (where appropriate), and regularly wash their hands before and after contact. [Guidance on supporting children and young people with additional support needs](#) is published by the Scottish Government.

4. Risk assessment

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#) Para 19: 'Specific risk assessments should be completed regarding school cleaning and the use of school kitchens, including those used for home economics. This does not replace the need for other risk assessments required by law, such as under fire safety legislation. All risk assessments should be proportionate to the relevant protection level of the local area, and reviewed and updated as appropriate as circumstances change.'

It is a legal requirement that local authorities and head teachers ensure that risk assessments are conducted or updated to reflect a full return to school. All risk assessments should be reviewed regularly as circumstances change to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults is not compromised.

5. Conclusion

Changes in incidence of COVID-19, and the potential impact on the practical, experiential learning in Home Economics will be kept under review and updated when necessary. Local authorities and schools will also need to be able to adapt to local issues, for example, outbreaks or community clusters in cases of COVID-19, and follow any locally-determined advice and guidance.

6. Appendix

These policy documents currently provide a frame of reference for Scottish education. More detail, particularly about wider school issues can be found in Scottish Government advice which can be found here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools](#)
30 October 2020

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#) 25 August 2020

Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC) produced guidance for school Science and Technology departments coming out of lockdown. Much of this guidance is of relevance in all practical subjects. There is also information on the safe use of hand sanitiser. [SSERC COVID-19- Back to school](#) 1 September 2020.