Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department
for Education

Guidance

Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Updated 26 March 2021

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Main changes to previous guidance

The main changes include:

- Updated advice on group sizes for outdoor activities from 29 March
- New guidance on children with health concerns and shielding

Who this guidance is for

This guidance is for parents and carers of children who attend:

- after-school clubs
- holiday clubs
- tuition
- community activities
- other out-of-school settings for children and young people aged 5 and over

Who can attend after-school clubs and out-of-school activities

Out-of-school settings include:

- tuition and learning centres
- extra-curricular clubs
- uniformed youth organisations - for example, Scouts, Guides and cadet forces
- supplementary schools
- private language schools
- religious settings offering education - for example madrassahs, yeshivas and Sunday schools

The provider should follow the relevant protective measures guidance.

Until 29 March, out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers can offer indoor and outdoor face-to-face provision to:

- vulnerable children and young people, under any circumstances
- all other children, where the provision is one of the following:
  - reasonably necessary to enable their parents and carers to work, search for work, undertake education or training, or attend a medical appointment or address a medical need, or attend a support group
  - being used by electively home educating parents as part of their arrangements for their child to receive a suitable full-time education
  - for the purposes of obtaining a regulated qualification, meeting the entry requirements for an education institution, or to undertake exams and assessments

From 29 March, as set out in the COVID-19 response spring 2021 guidance, and in line with when schools close for the Easter holidays, out-of-school settings and wraparound providers will be able to offer the following provision.

Outdoor provision to all children, without restrictions on the purpose for which they may attend.

Indoor provision to:

- vulnerable children and young people, under any circumstances
- children on free school meals, where they are attending as part of the Department for Education's holiday activities and food programme
- all other children, where the provision is one of the following:
  - reasonably necessary to enable their parents and carers to work, search for work, undertake education or training, or attend a medical appointment or address a medical need, or attend a support group
  - being used by electively home educating parents as part of their arrangements for their child to receive a suitable full-time education
  - being used for the purposes of obtaining a regulated qualification, meeting the entry requirements for an education institution, or to undertake exams and assessments

The government's intention is then for out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers to be able offer provision, to all children, without any restrictions on attendance, from the start of the school summer term. This will be no earlier than 12 April, and will be confirmed as part of step 2 of the COVID-19 response spring 2021.

We will amend the relevant regulations to allow for each of these easing of restrictions to take place.

Evidence continues to confirm that children can be susceptible to coronavirus (COVID-19) infection although a range of analyses suggest that children's susceptibility to infection appears less than adults. The evidence is stronger that pre-school and primary aged children are less susceptible to infection than adults and more mixed for secondary-age and older children.

If your child is in one of the eligible groups and attends an out-of-school setting, the risk can be minimised by:

- sending them to a provider that has coronavirus (COVID-19) protective measures in place
- limiting the number of settings your child attends, ideally using one out-of-school setting in addition to school, as far as possible
- working with providers to try to ensure your child is grouped with children from their same school day bubble, and where this is not possible, ensuring they are grouped with other children from their school or with any siblings from the same household
- taking practical steps to reduce the risk of your child coming in close contact with someone who has the virus, such as encouraging your child to walk or cycle to the setting, or having them dropped off by a member of your household in your private car rather than taking public transport
- discouraging your child from mixing with different peer groups outside of the specific activity or group setting

Children with health concerns

It is now known that very few children are clinically extremely vulnerable. Read the latest guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Until 1 April, children deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend out-of-school settings while shielding advice applies nationally. The Department of Health and Social Care has published updated guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19.

Shielding advice is being paused nationally at midnight on 31 March. From 1 April, all clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people can attend wraparound childcare and out-of-school settings where they are eligible to do so, unless they are one of the very small number of children or young people under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

Children and young people whose parents or carers are clinically extremely vulnerable can continue to go to out-of-school settings, where they are eligible to do so. Read the section on who can attend after school clubs and out-of-school activities.

If parents of children with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend they discuss this with the provider.

Parents and carers may continue to look to holiday clubs and out-of-school settings to offer respite childcare for children with special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Further information on this is available in the guidance for children's social care services. We have also asked providers to ensure that provision is available and accessible to these children, as far as possible, and remains a priority in these current circumstances.

Choosing after-school clubs and out-of-school activities for your child

You should send your child to the same settings consistently and limit the number of settings they attend as far as possible, and ideally ensure they attend only one out-of-school setting in addition to school.

You should use settings local to your home or child's school, such as settings within walking or cycling distance.

You should also keep a record of when your child attends a setting and where it is. This is to help NHS Test and Trace identify people who may have been in contact with your child if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Check with the provider that they have put in place protective measures to reduce the risk of infection before you send your child to a particular setting. For more information on choosing a setting for your child, please read the guidance for parents and carers on safeguarding children in out-of-school settings.

Parent attendance at extra-curricular clubs, tuition and other out-of-school activities

Parents and carers should not be allowed into the setting unless it is essential. It is particularly important during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak that you ensure the provider has your most up-to-date contact details in case of an emergency.

Live performances of children's dance, music and drama should not take place at this time. The intention is that these will be permitted from Step 3 of the Roadmap (no earlier than 17 May). This is subject to review and further guidance will be provided in advance of step 3.

Protective measures

The type of protective measures providers put in place will depend on their individual circumstances, such as:

- the type of the activity they offer - for example whether children will be moving around rather than sitting at desks
- the size and layout of their premises
- whether the activity is being held indoors or outdoors

The key measures that every setting should have in place are:

- minimising contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting
- ensuring face coverings are used in recommended circumstances - read the section on face coverings for detail on the circumstances where this is recommended
- encouraging staff and children to clean their hands thoroughly and more often - soap or hand sanitiser should be readily available

- ensuring good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces more than usual
- increased cleaning of toilets and washrooms
- using social distancing to reduce contact and mixing between groups of children
- keeping children in the same bubbles they are in during the school day where possible, or otherwise in small, consistent groups
- keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
- promoting and engaging with the NHS Test and Trace process
- managing and reporting confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- containing any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Ask providers about any practicalities you need to be aware of such as collection and drop-off times and whether your child should bring their own water bottle or food to the setting.

Face coverings

Where children in year 7 and above, or equivalent age (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31 August 2020) are educated or cared for, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and children and young people when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings do not need to be worn by children and young people when outdoors on the premises.

In addition, we now also recommend in these settings, that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example during sports.

Where children in primary schools or of equivalent age (aged under 11 on 31 August 2020), are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas).

Children in primary school or of equivalent age should not wear face coverings.

Parents should ensure that their child brings a face covering to the setting where the use of one is recommended, as the provider may not have a contingency supply available.

Bubbles and group sizes

Where possible to do so, providers should try to work with you and the school or early years setting that your child attends to ensure they 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 for providers to group children in the same bubbles, they may need to group them with other children from outside their school day bubble, or from a different school. If this is the case and the activity is taking place indoors, providers should keep children in small groups of no more than 15 children and at least one staff member; and where possible, with the same children each time they attend.

We advise parents to work with providers to try and ensure their children are kept in consistent groups, ideally with children from their school, and in their school day bubble if possible; and to consider working with providers to keep siblings from the same household together (where relevant) to minimise mixing as far as possible.

From 29 March, in line with the widening of access to organised outdoor activities for children, if an activity is taking place outdoors, providers may keep children in groups of any size. This is because the risk of transmission is lower outdoors. However, it will still be important for providers to ensure the groups are consistent, as far as possible, which means the same children in the same group each time they attend.

Providers will need to regularly review groups to minimise the amount of mixing.

Asymptomatic testing

Asymptomatic testing will help to break the chains of transmission of coronavirus in education and childcare settings by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. This is important as up to 1 in 3 people who have the virus have it without symptoms (they are asymptomatic) so could be spreading the disease unknowingly.

If you're a member of a household, childcare or support bubble of a primary or secondary-age pupil or college student, you can get a twice-weekly test:

- through your employer if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online

For more information read the guidance on 'Households and bubbles of pupils, students and staff of schools and colleges: get rapid lateral flow tests'.

The asymptomatictesting programmedoes not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms.

What to do if your child is displaying coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

You should:

- book a test if you or your child has symptoms - the main symptoms are:
  - a high temperature
  - a new continuous cough
  - a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- self-isolate immediately and not attend the out-of-school or wraparound childcare setting if:
  - you or your child develops symptoms
  - you or your child have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - anyone in your household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - you or your child are required to quarantine having recently visited countries outside the common travel area
  - you or your child have been advised to isolate by NHS test and trace or the PHE local health protection team
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace

If your child becomes unwell while at a setting, the provider should call you immediately to collect them. When you collect your child, you should take them straight home. Do not use public transport or visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital unless your child is seriously unwell. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk.

Follow the NHS guidance on when to self-isolate and what to do, or contact NHS 119 by phone if you do not have internet access.

If your child tests negative, they can usually return to the setting and your household can stop self-isolating, subject to confirmation from local health protection professionals.

If your child tests negative but is unwell, they should not return to the setting until they have recovered.

If your child tests positive, NHS Test and Trace will speak directly to those that have been in contact with your child to offer advice.

Anyone contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate has a legal obligation to do so, but you may leave home, to avoid injury or illness or to escape the risk of harm. More information can be found on NHS Test and Trace: how it works.

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