



Department
for Education

Out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID- 19) outbreak

Guidance for parents and carers

May 2021

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Main changes

- Added a new section on educational visits
- Updated guidance on parental attendance at settings
- Updated advice on indoor group sizes
- Updated advice on performances

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](#).

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers can offer provision to all children, without restriction on the reasons for which they may attend.

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 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 the same children each time they attend the setting, as far as possible
- 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

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](#).

Since 1 April, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are no longer advised to shield. Updated advice is for the group to continue taking extra precautions to protect themselves, and to follow the practical steps set out in the [CEV guidance page](#) (updated on 1 April) to minimise their risk of exposure to the virus.

Therefore, all clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people can attend wraparound childcare and out-of-school settings, 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. 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 if possible, such as settings within walking or cycling distance. However, you can use settings further afield provided that you follow the [COVID-19: safer travel guidance for passengers](#).

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

We continue to advise that parents and carers should not routinely be present during sessions in out-of-school settings or wraparound childcare provision. Out-of-school settings providers may not be able to accommodate parents and carers being present during a session due to restrictions on group sizes and the need to maintain social distancing. If you do attend a session, you should ensure you maintain social distancing in line with the current guidance on [\(COVID-19\) Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

It is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic that you ensure the provider has your most up-to-date contact details in case of an emergency. You should also keep an accurate record of when and where your child attends out-of-school settings to help NHS Test and Trace identify people who may have been in contact with your child should they test positive for COVID-19.

If you are unable to supervise your child during a session, you will want to satisfy yourself that a provider has put protective measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus, as well as having adequate health and safety and child protection procedures.

Performances

In line with Step 3 of the roadmap, providers can host sports events, performances and other events with an audience from 17 May.

If attending an indoor or outdoor face-to-face performance or event in front of a live audience, parents and carers should follow the measures which providers have put in place to manage audiences and carry out performing arts safely. Providers should follow the latest advice in the [COVID-19: Organised events guidance for local authorities](#) and DCMS [performing arts](#) guidance. If attending an event, you should also ensure you maintain social distancing in line with the current guidance on [\(COVID-19\) Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Educational Visits

Out-of-school settings can undertake educational day visits.

Until 17 May, we continue to advise out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers (such as supplementary schools, holiday clubs and out-of-school extra-curricular clubs) against undertaking residential educational visits.

From 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the Roadmap, out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers should undertake overnight stays or residential visits with children in groups of no more than 6 people or two households (including at least one member of staff).

International visits

Given the complexities attached to international travel at this stage of the pandemic, we recommend out-of-school settings do not go on any international visits.

This advice will be reviewed again in advance of step 4.

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 consistent groups and keeping groups separate from one another or socially distanced
- determining maximum group sizes depending on venue size and the ability to maintain social distancing between groups
- keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
- promoting and engaging with the NHS Test and Trace process
- managing and reporting confirmed cases of 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

From 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the roadmap, face coverings will no longer be recommended in classrooms or communal areas for children in year 7 (or of equivalent age i.e. who were aged 11 on 31 August 2020) and above. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms.

We continue to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas).

The reintroduction of face coverings for children or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. In all cases, any educational or wellbeing drawbacks should be balanced with the benefits of managing transmission.

The Local Action Committee structure (Bronze/Silver/Gold) should be used in such circumstances to re-introduce the use of face coverings. Immediate outbreak response (at the level of individual settings or a cluster of settings) remains for local Directors of Public Health to advise on.

Out-of-school settings (including private sector wraparound childcare providers) operating in community settings, such as village halls or community centres, must comply with requirements on the use of face coverings in these premises (and should have regard to relevant [COVID-19 sector guidance](#)).

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.

Where our guidance recommends face coverings, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. Transparent face coverings may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). However, the evidence to support this is currently very limited. Face coverings (whether transparent or cloth) should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

The main benefit from a transparent face covering is that they can aid communication, for example enabling lip-reading or allowing for the full visibility of facial expressions, but this must be considered alongside the comfort and breathability of a face covering which contains plastic which may mean that the face covering is less breathable than layers of cloth.

Face visors or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but they are not an equivalent alternative in terms of source control of virus transmission. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing the escape of smaller respiratory particles when used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

The use of face coverings may have a particular impact on those who rely on visual signals for communication. Those who communicate with or provide support to those who do, are exempt from any recommendation to wear face coverings in education settings or requirement in public places.

Out-of-school settings should consider whether they can make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people, to support them to access activities successfully.

The following is a non-exhaustive list which provides examples of possible adjustments:

- The provision and effective use of assistive listening devices, such as radio aids.
- An increased focus on the listening environment, minimising all unnecessary background noise. Steps should be taken so that children with hearing loss are taught in classrooms with the best possible acoustic conditions.
- Allowing the use of speech-recognition apps on mobile devices and tablets in classrooms, taking into account possible variations in the effectiveness of such apps in different classroom situations.
- Additional communication support, including remote speech-to-text reporters or sign language interpreters.

Where appropriate, out-of-school settings should discuss with children and young people and parents the types of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support an individual.

Bubbles and group sizes

If an activity is taking place outdoors, providers may keep children in groups of any size.

Until 17 May, if the provision is taking place indoors, and it is not possible to group children in the same bubble as they are in during the school day, providers should keep children in consistent groups of no more than 15 children and at least one staff member.

From 17 May, in line with the commencement of [Step 3 of the roadmap](#), where wraparound and other extra-curricular activities for children are taking place indoors, they may take place in groups of any number. However, it will remain important to continue to minimise mixing between children. This can be achieved by keeping children in separate consistent groups in these settings, or in smaller groups where it is not possible to do this. Multiple groups from the same provider can use the same shared space if necessary, provided that distancing between the groups can be maintained and there is adequate ventilation. Although, different groups sharing the same space should be avoided where possible.

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.

Anyone in England who does not have symptoms can now get regular rapid lateral flow tests to check for coronavirus. For more information see [Regular rapid COVID-19 tests if you do not have symptoms](#).

The asymptomatic testing programme does 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 COVID-19
 - anyone in your household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of 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 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](#).

Applications from parents and guardians who need to take time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating

If your child has been advised to self-isolate by their education or childcare setting (even where they have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace) and you are on a low income, unable to work from home and need to take time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating, you may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from your local authority. You do not require an NHS Test and Trace Account ID number in order to claim and your school is not required to register all children asked to self-isolate with NHS Test and Trace in the same way as staff.

To be eligible, you must be the parent or carer of a child that is aged 15 and under, or be aged 16 to 25 with an education health and care plan. The full eligibility criteria for the scheme, and further information on how you can apply, can be found at [claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#).

Your nursery, childminder or school should provide you with a template letter, detailing your child's name and the dates of their isolation period. You will need to use this letter as supporting evidence as part of your application to your local authority for a payment from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. You will not be able to apply for financial support without this letter.

When you apply to the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme because you need to care for your child who is self-isolating, your local authority will be required to contact your child's nursery, childminder or school via phone or email to verify the information you've supplied. This includes your child's name, age and dates of self-isolation. This is a standard check against fraudulent claims, and may take place before or after a payment is made.



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