



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

# Operational guidance for schools and settings

This guidance applies to schools and settings and sets out how schools and settings can continue to make their sites as safe as possible for staff and learners.

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## Overview

This guidance aims to support schools and local authorities to plan for the start of the 2021 to 2022 academic year. We want to provide as much certainty as is possible for schools and settings ahead of the school holidays so that operational arrangements can be clearly communicated.

The approach set out in this guidance includes some changes to the arrangements which have been in place for a significant proportion of the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This reflects the progress that continues to be made with the rollout of the vaccination programme, which will aim to ensure that everyone working in our education system will have been offered both vaccinations by the end of September, growing our defences against the virus. This coupled with emerging data on hospitalisations and severe illness suggests that from the beginning of the 2021 to 2022 academic year we can move beyond the very restrictive approach to dealing with COVID-19 that has been necessary to date.

It must, however, be recognised that the COVID-19 situation remains uncertain, and there may be a need to issue further updates in the event of any significant developments during the summer holiday period. In these circumstances, we will work with stakeholders to consider how best to provide schools and settings with the time required to make any necessary adjustments to mitigations at the start of term (including any enhancements should these be judged necessary and proportionate to ensure safety at that time).

We will publish a Local COVID-19 Infection Control Decision Framework at the start of the 2021 to 2022 academic year. This framework is being developed in partnership with schools, local authorities, public health experts and other stakeholders. It will enable schools and settings to tailor some measures to

reflect the level of risk identified locally. Schools and settings will not be expected to make these decisions in isolation - they will continue to be supported by local public health officials and their local authority to ensure measures are appropriate to their own circumstances. A transition period will be agreed for the introduction of this framework to enable schools and settings to move to this revised approach.

## Introduction

Opportunities to learn and develop are vital for children and young people's education and wellbeing, and time spent in school learning face to face with their peers is central to supporting our children to reach their potential. Time spent out of education settings can be detrimental for children and young people's cognitive and academic development, particularly for vulnerable children and our most disadvantaged.

Outside of school it will be important that all staff, children and their families continue to follow Welsh Government coronavirus guidance.

Alongside this guidance, we have also published updated **learning guidance** and set out **expectations and priorities** for learning. These provide a common set of priorities for learning throughout the response to COVID-19 and as we move to recovery.

Independent schools must continue to comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

## Public health advice to minimise COVID-19 risks

The system of controls, established by Public Health Wales set out in this section continue to provide a set of principles for infection control; if schools/ settings follow this advice and maximise the use of these control measures, they will effectively minimise risks of viral transmission. All elements of the system of

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controls are essential. All schools/settings must address each of these elements, but the way schools/settings implement some of the elements will differ based on their individual circumstances.

Local authorities, schools and settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Schools/settings, with their local authority, should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments to ensure they continue to address the risks identified in the system of controls, with which schools and settings will now be familiar.

Essential measures include:

- following the self-isolation
- instilling robust hand and respiratory hygiene in learners and staff members
- ensuring appropriate ventilation measures and cleaning regimes on school premises
- active engagement with **TTP strategy**
- introducing and maintaining physical distancing

Schools and settings should ensure the following:

- Encouraging staff to maintain physical distance from other staff
- Encouraging staff to maintain physical distancing from learners as much as possible, recognising this may not be possible with younger learners. This may not also be possible for some learners in special schools and some learners with SEN; in those cases you should refer to the **guidance on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners**.
- Making the most of the space available, including outdoor space.

Annex A includes a checklist tool that has been developed to support schools and settings when responding during these circumstances.

# Risk assessment

Local authorities, employers and schools must protect people from harm. This includes taking **reasonable measures** to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19 within the setting.

It is a legal requirement that schools/settings should revisit and update their risk assessments by building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed. This will enable them to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place. Schools and settings, working with their local authority health and safety adviser and trade unions, should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls considering the implications of COVID-19. A local authority working with their schools and settings should ensure that schools and settings implement sensible and proportionate control measures that follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls in Annex A to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level without negatively impacting on the well-being of learners and staff.

Local authorities working with their schools and settings and health and safety advice, should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

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

In addition to the advice and support available from local authorities and Public Health Wales, the **Health and Safety Executive** provides workplace advice and support to help ensure schools and settings are as safe as possible.

Local authorities, working with their schools and settings, should continue to ensure schools and settings are complying with their security plans and that any changes as a result of COVID-19 compliance do not impact negatively on their security plans. Further guidance is available in the Welsh Government and

WECTU booklet entitled **Protecting schools: An integrated security approach: Toolbox for headteachers (2017)**.

## The system of controls: protective measures

Having assessed their risk, schools/setting must work through the below system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school/setting and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the learners attending during this period where possible.

Schools and settings that review and update their risk assessments, following the guidance set out here will effectively reduce risks in their school/ setting and create an inherently safer environment.

### System of controls

This is the set of actions schools/settings must take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection' and are outlined in more detail in the following sections.

#### Prevention

- Ensure staff, learners and parents/carers fully understand that any staff member or learner who has any of the 3 cardinal symptoms of COVID-19 (new persistent cough, fever and/or loss of taste or smell) should not attend the school setting but should **self-isolate**, **arrange a COVID-19 test** and notify the school of this.
- Supporting the **Health Protection Regulations**, employers should allow or enable a person to self-isolate if they have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Employers should also allow or **enable a person to self-isolate as set out here**.
- Local Health Boards may make testing available for individuals who are

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experiencing a wider range of symptoms such as fatigue, myalgia (muscle ache or pain), a sore throat, a headache, a runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea. Individuals are asked to consider taking a test if they are experiencing any of these wider symptoms and they are new, persistent and/or unusual symptoms for them. Individuals who take a test because of these other wider symptoms are not legally required to isolate while they await their test result. However, Local Health Boards are encouraging the individual concerned to self-isolate while they await their test result, and children and adults with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should remain away from their school or setting until they are symptom free for 48 hours even if their COVID-19 test is negative. In addition - unless they develop one of the three main symptoms - the individual's household does not have to self-isolate. If individuals then receive a positive COVID-19 result, they and other members of their household who are over 18 and not fully vaccinated must then isolate. Household contacts who are fully vaccinated or under 18 do not need to self-isolate in this case.

- Where a staff member or learner becomes unwell at the school or setting with possible symptoms of COVID-19 they should be sent home immediately to **self-isolate** and arrange a COVID-19 test. Until they leave the school or setting (in the case of a learner, when they are collected by a parent/carer) their contact with all other individuals at the setting should be minimised. If possible, ensure they remain in a separate room until they are able to leave the setting.
- Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitiser if soap and water are unavailable.
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands' approach.
- Maintain appropriate levels of cleaning in line with other communicable diseases. There will, however, no longer be a need for schools and settings to set aside specific days for deep cleaning. However, if there is a confirmed cluster associated with one class in the school a deep clean of the immediate area will continue to be helpful in reducing transmission.
- Where necessary, in specific circumstances (set out later in the guidance), wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Schools and settings should do all they can to ensure adequate ventilation.
- Reduce close interactions between all individuals.

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- Support older learners to maintain **/physical distancing wherever possible**.
- All staff should adhere to the **physical distancing** measures as far as possible; however, we recognise that when working with younger learners this may not always be possible.
- Face coverings are not routinely recommended for use in classroom by staff or learners. Schools and settings may however wish to encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be more social mixing, such as in communal areas.

## Response to any infection

- Ensure you understand what is set out in the **TTP strategy**.
- Manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the school community and contain any outbreak by obtaining and following local health protection team advice.

The **guidance for independent boarding and residential schools** sets out the action to be taken if anyone within the boarding school has any symptoms. They should **self-isolate** for the appropriate period of time and apply for a **test** as soon as possible. Many children will benefit from self-isolating in their boarding house so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their home.

## Prevention

### **1. Minimise contact with individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 (whether they are unwell or not) or who have someone in their household who does, and ensure they do not attend school**

Local authorities, working with their schools and settings, should ensure they are communicating clearly that:

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- learners, staff and other adults should not come into a school/setting if they:
  - have COVID-19 symptoms
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 – unless they are fully vaccinated or are under 18
- learners, staff and other adults must not come into a school/setting if they:
  - have tested positive for COVID-19
  - have been contacted by the TTP service and told to self-isolate
- anyone developing COVID-19 symptoms during the school day should be sent home immediately

Both of these actions are essential to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of COVID-19.

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

If anyone in the school/setting becomes unwell with a new and persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of or change in their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), the school should continue to follow the arrangements they have in place and the individual must be sent home immediately and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection, i.e. the individual should begin to self-isolate and should arrange to have a COVID-19 test. Further information on **who else in the individual's household is required to self-isolate** is available.

If a child with COVID-19 symptoms is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on their age and needs, with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least two metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

As is usual practice, in an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or if their life is at risk. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should not

otherwise visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, even while wearing a face covering, and all other members of staff or learners who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, even if wearing a face covering, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should commence self-isolation immediately and arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by TTP

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell with COVID-19 symptoms. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the GOV.UK [COVID-19 cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home guidance](#).

The present advice continues to be that it is not necessary to screen temperatures. Learners' parents/carers can check for signs of a high temperature. In any case, screening will not identify all cases of COVID-19 and the means of checking temperature may put staff at greater risk of transmission, as well as cause worry or concern for learners.

## **2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual**

COVID-19 is an easy virus to remove when it is on skin. This remains true for the new variant. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. Schools must ensure that learners clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future.

Points to consider and implement include the following:

- Whether the school has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations'

available so that all learners and staff can clean their hands regularly.

- Supervision of hand sanitiser use, given risks around ingestion. Small children and learners with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly. Skin-friendly cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative.
- Building these routines into school culture, supported by behaviour expectations, and helping ensure younger children, and those with complex needs, understand the need to follow them.
- Automated soap dispensers being used where possible and hands being thoroughly dried. Paper towels should be disposed of in a lidded bin and not allowed to overflow. Bins should be emptied often and daily.

### **3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands’ approach**

The ‘catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands’ approach continues to be very important, so schools must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available in the school to support learners and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, schools must ensure younger children and those with complex needs are helped to get this right and all learners understand that this is now part of how the school operates. The e-Bug COVID-19 [website](#) contains free resources for schools, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Some learners with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good a respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not a reason to deny these learners face-to-face education.

### **4. Appropriate cleaning regimes**

Cleaning regimes need to be appropriate and in line with any other communicable disease. There will, however, no longer be a need for schools

and settings to set aside specific days for deep cleaning. However, if there is a confirmed cluster associated with one class in the school or setting **a deep clean of the immediate area** will continue to be helpful in reducing transmission.

Where possible, provide separate toilets for different groups of learners. Where this is not possible, ensure hand sanitiser is used before entering the toilet and that toilets are cleaned regularly. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly before and after using the toilet.

## **5. Minimise close interactions between learners and maintain physical distancing**

An integral part of the mitigating measures used to date has been the use of contact groups or 'bubbles'. Although these played an important role at the start of the pandemic, we have learnt that they are a very blunt tool in reducing onward transmission and, on occasions, have resulted in a disproportionate number of learners having to self-isolate when they have had no direct contact with the index case. We have also seen the reintroduction of organised activities, enabling children to mix with others on a broader basis. This has meant that many children now find themselves in several contact groups, across school, childcare and any extra activities they undertake. As a consequence, it is now appropriate for us to review the use of contact groups in schools and settings and adapt the approach as our public health response evolves.

Contact groups will not play a role in schools and settings from the start of the autumn term. This is consistent with the approach being taken in child care. The reliance on contact groups will be replaced by a stronger focus on contact tracing, in line with the general population. Test, Trace, Protect will lead on identifying the close contacts of staff and learners who have tested positive supported by discussions with schools and settings. Schools and settings will not be expected to make decisions about whether individuals need to self-isolate.

However, moving forward schools and settings should make sure plans cover

the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce contact groups for a temporary period, to minimise close interactions between learners mixing between groups. Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of contact groups would need to be taken in discussion with public health officials and the local authority.

We recognise that younger children will not be able to maintain social distancing, but for older children, they should be supported to maintain distance wherever possible. Schools and settings should consider using any additional space available to maximise the distance between learners and between staff and other people. Schools and settings should consider how they can reduce close interactions between learners and staff by adhering to physical distancing whenever possible.

## Measures within the classroom

Maintaining a distance between people while inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face-to-face contact lowers the risk of transmission. There is strong public health advice that staff in secondary schools should maintain distance from their learners, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain a two-metre distance from each other and from children, and any additional space available should be used, wherever possible, to maximise the distance between learners and between staff and others. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger children, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within one metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These learners' educational and care support should be provided as normal. It will also be important to undertake a risk assessment to identify any additional mitigating measures which may be needed, such as the use of well-ventilated space.

Secondary learners should be encouraged to maintain social distance from each other as well as staff members wherever possible, alongside other control

measures. Schools may wish to consider making use of available alternative and additional spaces in the school to support this. Schools should consider the impact of such arrangements on learners as well as staff.

Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating learners side by side and facing forwards, rather than face-to-face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space. Foundation Phase learners will be more active in their play based learning and seating and desk arrangements will not be required. In line with the Foundation Phase pedagogical approach outside learning should be should be used to promote independent, child-centred learning activities and should be considered wherever possible.

## Measures elsewhere

Movement around the school site should be kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools and settings may want to continue with one way systems for example.

Schools should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to encourage staff to maintain physical distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day. Schools should also consider how other shared spaces such as libraries and sixth form common rooms are organised and used by staff and learners to ensure social distancing can be maintained.

## Early years

We recognise some arrangements for our early years learners can present unique challenges for local authorities and providers. Additional thought and planning is required, especially where these arrangements support parents and need to blend seamlessly with childcare provision.

The evidence shows our youngest learners are in the least at risk group. We also know our early years' educational practitioners are experienced in caring for the needs of young children and will apply professional judgement doing the right thing for children, parents and staff. Continuing with a child centred approach means we will have a high-quality delivery of the Foundation Phase with personal and social development and well-being at the centre of our Foundation Phase philosophy for our youngest learners with a focus on play based learning.

## Nursery education

Younger learners are at a critical stage of cognitive development and it is essential their start in education is a positive one and provides a strong foundation for their future development. There is a need to ensure schools and funded non-maintained settings are provided with the right framework so that our youngest children get the very best start to their educational life, and one that they can build on for the future.

Non-maintained settings are advised to follow [operational guidance for childcare](#) settings.

## Transition

Schools and non-maintained childcare settings should follow their normal transition processes, where possible, to ensure a positive, and safe, experience for our youngest learners within the overall aim of all children accessing education as soon as is practical.

We know for some families, such as our critical workers, the use of out of school or wrap around childcare will be key to supporting children to return to school and parents to work. Wherever possible this should be kept to a minimum, but in some cases it will be unavoidable, and that is particularly so for early education depending on the delivery model in your area.

If the child is accessing both education and childcare, and this is taking place

across two settings or sites, it will be important to ensure schools and childcare settings all understand the transition arrangements and are clear on when the child will be in each setting and what collection and transport arrangements are in place.

Attendance at more than one setting will require close partnership working between schools, childcare settings and parents. If there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in either setting that impacts a child, both settings must be informed and work together to support the contact tracing process.

Schools and funded non-maintained settings will have the added responsibility of transition for new learners. In addition, existing learners will have a prolonged period of transition and may require additional support due to the length of time they have been away, and some learners will also transition from settings to schools.

## Parental involvement

Within nursery provision there is often a greater level of parental involvement than at any time in a child's educational journey. In addition to drop-off and collection of children, parents sometimes help their children to settle in and staff may well undertake home visits before children start. Schools and settings will need to balance this engagement with the need to minimise overall levels of contacts. Consideration should be given to how this is done when undertaking risk assessments.

## Resources

In addition to the guidance in this document about cleaning, having different sets of equipment and resources for different groups of children in nursery, if possible, will also help minimise transmission, particularly where more than one group of learners needs to access the same space during a single day; for example, in schools with morning and afternoon nursery provision. This would reduce the amount of cleaning needed to be undertaken during the change-over period with the focus then being on fixed furniture, larger equipment and high

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touch points.

## Optimising space

The time learners spend outdoors should be maximised. This has important physical, mental and educational benefits and helps combat transmission of COVID-19.

When inside practitioners should utilise all available space including areas usually set aside for older learners. We recognise some of this space will already be in use for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners.

## Physical distancing

In addition to the guidance earlier in this document about minimising contact, the level of physical distancing within indoor childcare settings with young children will be harder to maintain than in other settings. Settings should therefore implement the physical distancing and mixing in childcare settings measures set out in the '[Guidance for childcare and playwork: coronavirus](#)'.

Further information about [self-isolation](#) and booking tests for those showing symptoms and the process for contact tracing are outlined earlier in this guidance

## Organised activities for children

Attendance at organised activities for children, when they take place outside of the school day and away from the school estate, is not a matter schools or settings would be expected to police. However, it is likely that attendance at such activities would increase the number of contacts children have. Schools and settings will need to be mindful of this in their communications with parents. As with circumstances where children attend both schools and childcare, if there is a suspected case of COVID-19 at any such organised activity that impacts on a child, settings must be informed and work together to

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support the contact tracing process. Further information and [guidance regarding organised children's outdoor and indoor activities](#) is available.

## Physical education

Physical education (PE) plays an important role in developing and supporting learners' health and wellbeing. Schools and settings should follow the prevention and response measures in their system of controls when delivering PE lessons. Local authorities, schools and settings will understand best how the operational guidance can be applied in their settings and they should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of learners and staff.

PE lessons can take place outdoors and indoors. Outdoor activity should be prioritised wherever possible. Maximising time spent outdoors by learners has physical, mental and educational benefits. Additionally, the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is generally lower outdoors compared with indoors. Mitigating measures are still needed indoors.

Where activity cannot take place outdoors, indoor spaces can be used. In indoor spaces, ventilation should be maximised including using natural air flow through opening doors and windows due to enhanced aerosol generation during PE. Areas should be cleaned regularly and thoroughly as part of the cleaning programme across the school or setting.

Activities which minimise contact with others and enable physical distancing to be maintained will help minimise the risk of transmission.

Where learners are likely to be in close proximity (within two metres) or in contact, efforts should be made to limit this contact if it cannot be avoided altogether, and schools and settings should consider all reasonable measures to prevent the spread of the virus, including whether the activity really needs to proceed. In cases where such an activity does proceed, mitigating actions must be put in place to minimise risk and keep learners safe, taking note of any guidance published by the relevant National Governing Body for the sport in question.

Changing rooms present a higher risk of transmission. As part of the local risk assessment, schools and settings should consider their use and take reasonable and proportionate control measures to reduce the risk to the lowest practical level which will include as a minimum ensuring rooms are as well ventilated as possible and surfaces are cleaned after use.

Learners should wash and dry their hands thoroughly before and after the activity.

Activities should minimise the use of equipment to reduce risk of transmission. Activities where there is no sharing of equipment are safer. Any equipment used and shared should be carefully cleaned before next use and between lessons. Particular attention should be paid to any equipment which needs to be adjusted to ensure all touch-areas are kept clean between each use. There should be no sharing of water bottles.

Face coverings should not be worn whilst undertaking physical activity.

Schools and settings should only consider team sports where the relevant national governing body has developed guidance for their safe operation in respect of coronavirus, and schools and settings should consider this guidance in delivering lessons containing such sports.

Schools and settings should also consider [Welsh Government's guidance on Sport, Recreation and Leisure](#).

## Use of face coverings for health purposes

We no longer recommend the routine use of face coverings in the classroom for staff or learners. Schools and settings may wish to encourage their use in areas where there is likely to be more social mixing, such as in communal areas.

As part of their risk assessment process, schools and settings should decide whether the use of face coverings for staff or secondary learners is appropriate based on their own circumstances, supported by local public health officials, and

in discussion with local authorities.

Where a decision is made to use a face covering we would encourage that individuals use recyclable high quality three layered multi-use face coverings and use them correctly, covering the mouth and nose, ensuring hand hygiene before putting on and following removal. Schools and settings should also ensure adequate waste bins on premises for those who choose to use single-use face coverings.

**Face coverings** should be high quality three layered as set out by the World Health Organisation, but do not need to be medical-grade face masks. Face coverings or visors are not PPE and would not prevent an individual being identified as a close contact by TTP.

Face coverings should continue to be worn by learners in secondary schools and settings when travelling on dedicated school transport. This aligns with the requirement for all passengers aged 11 years and over to wear face coverings on public transport. This does not apply to younger children in primary schools and in early years settings.

If anyone wishes to wear a face covering for personal reasons anywhere in the school/setting they should be permitted to do so. This may help support their wider well-being, reduce anxiety and provide additional reassurance for some individuals alongside other mitigating measures.

Visitors to the school setting should use a face covering, including parents/carers when dropping off and picking up learners.

Schools and settings should take steps to encourage parents/carers to not remain on the premises/at the gates longer than necessary especially when dropping off/collecting children.

There are some risks and harms of **face coverings** to be considered, including:

- the potential for inadvertent virus spread when putting on or taking off face coverings
- the need for supply, safe wearing, storage and disposal of face coverings

- the risk of stigmatisation or bullying of those with medical exemptions (especially neurodiverse learners)
- problems for those who lip-read
- the adverse effects on learning, emotional engagement and communication of the masking of facial features

The overall interests of the young person must be given priority in these circumstances and no learner should be excluded from accessing education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. **Face coverings** may need to be provided to certain groups of learners who may be unable to obtain them through other means, if they are recommended locally.

Considering the well-being of learners is critical in any considerations around whether staff or older learners wear face coverings. Anyone who may be unable to handle face coverings as directed should not wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission e.g. young learners or those with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. How a learner is likely to respond to the use of face coverings by others should also be considered, as should any potential impact on the development of speech, language and communication.

There are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances, noting that some people may be less able to wear face coverings and the reasons for this may not be visible to others. Staff and learners may have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering if (for example):

- they are not able to put on or to wear a face covering because of a physical or mental illness, or because of a condition or impairment
- they are accompanying somebody who relies on lip reading where they need to communicate, or they need to communicate with someone who relies on lip reading
- they are escaping from a threat or danger and don't have a face covering

Anyone may remove their face covering temporarily to assist a person who is reliant on lip reading or seeing facial expressions to communicate. Physical distancing should be maintained in these circumstances.

# Face coverings and implications for deaf learners or learners with any level of hearing loss

The impact of wearing a face covering for a deaf learner or learners with any level of hearing loss should be carefully considered, as communication for many deaf people relies in part on being able to see someone's face clearly. **The National Deaf Children's Society** has provided the following **communication tips** that staff may find useful in this regard. **Further guidance and advice on use of clear face coverings** is available.

Advice on face coverings will be kept under constant review and will always follow the latest scientific advice.

## Other considerations

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and/or other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain physical distance from other staff and learners wherever possible. Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with SEN should provide interventions as usual and in accordance with the setting's risk assessment. Schools should:

- consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors
- ensure that site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival
- ensure that signage is used and prominently displayed on the premises

Where possible, visits should happen outside of school hours. A record should be kept of all visitors as this may be needed at a future point to assist the contact tracing process.

Local authorities, as education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) commissioners, will need to be assured that EOTAS providers have complied with health and safety law requiring them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Where a learner routinely attends more than

one setting on a part-time basis, e.g. because they are dual-registered at a mainstream school and either a PRU setting, a EOTAS setting or a special school, the settings should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified and allowing them to jointly deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the learner. During this time the settings should consider whether providing learning on one site may be feasible.

Schools and settings should ensure that outdoor playground equipment is more frequently cleaned. This would also apply to resources used inside and outside by wrap-around care providers. It is still recommended that learners limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, bags, hats, coats, books, stationery and mobile phones. Learners and staff can take books and other shared resources home, although unnecessary sharing should be avoided, especially where this does not contribute to learners' education and development. Similar rules on hand washing, cleaning of the resources and rotation should apply to these resources.

For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, it is recommended that staff and learners have their own items that are not shared. Classroom-based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared; these should be cleaned regularly. Resources that are shared between different groups/classes, such as sports, art and science equipment, should be cleaned frequently.

Materials such as play-dough and sand that are very difficult to clean can present particular challenges. In line with existing [Public Health Wales](#) guidance on infection prevention and control in early years settings during an outbreak of any infectious disease, it may be safest to avoid using these materials during the pandemic while increased preventative measures are in place. Where settings choose to use these difficult to clean items, based on a risk assessment, they should ensure that handwashing takes place before and after play with these materials. These should be risk assessed and the materials be changed in accordance with manufacturers guidance or sooner if thought to be contaminated. Water play can take place if steps are taken to avoid multiple children sharing water, change water regularly particularly between groups within the bubble and always between bubble groups. Particular care should be taken when children move between activities in a room to ensure that hand

washing takes place between each station and that materials that can be cleaned are cleaned. Sand, play-dough, water and other higher risk activities should not take place when there are one or more positive cases in the school or setting.

If non-symptomatic children present behaviours that may increase the risk of droplet transmission (such as biting, licking, kissing or spitting) or require care that cannot be provided without close contact, they should continue to receive care in the same way.

In these circumstances, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, no additional PPE is necessary as these are non-symptomatic children in a non-healthcare setting and so the risk of viral transmission is very low. However, additional space and regular cleaning of surfaces, objects and toys will be required. Cleaning arrangements should be proportionate and in line with any other communicable disease, with a specific focus on surfaces that are frequently touched.

## **Where necessary, wear appropriate PPE**

**PPE** is different to a face covering and will meet the required standards to protect the individual. The PPE required will depend on the exact tasks being undertaken and will vary between different work environments.

It is important to remember that **physical distancing**, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (catching a cough or sneeze in a tissue or covering the mouth and nose with an elbow or sleeve) remain strongly evidenced as the most effective ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

There is therefore no need to use PPE when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom/school settings.

The list below covers when PPE may be required.

## Routine activities

- No PPE is required when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom or school settings.

## Suspected COVID-19

- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn if a child or young person becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care.
- Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

## Personal care

- Gloves and aprons should continue to be used when providing personal care to a child or young person. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
- Fluid-resistant surgical masks should be worn and eye protection (if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting).
- Gloves, fluid repellent gowns, FFP3 masks and eye protection are indicated when undertaking aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs). A list of AGPs are included in this [guidance](#).
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions. Gov.UK [guidance](#) also sets out that gloves and an apron should be used when cleaning areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

The use of PPE by staff within settings should be based on a clear assessment of risk, taking into account each individual setting and the needs of the individual learner. Schools, settings and local authorities already have risk assessments processes in place which should be used to identify the need for the use of PPE. Following any risk assessment, where the need for PPE has been identified, it should be readily available and provided by the employer. Further information has been provided by the **Health and Safety Executive** (HSE).

All staff should have a clear understanding of how to put on or remove PPE in the right order, safely dispose of the waste and use correct hand hygiene steps to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection.

In any case, hand washing should always be practised before putting on and after removing PPE. Schools and settings should contact their local authority to obtain PPE to cover the above, and to discuss any relevant training requirements.

## **Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated**

Those in control of a premises – local authorities in the case of maintained schools and settings - have **a legal duty to provide adequate ventilation**.

The **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has updated and expanded its advice** to help employers provide adequate ventilation in their workplaces and premises during the pandemic. The guidance will help you to identify poorly ventilated areas and decide what action to take to improve natural and/or mechanical ventilation.

You should be maximising the fresh air in a space and this can be done by means of:

- natural ventilation
- mechanical ventilation
- a combination of natural and mechanical ventilation, for example where mechanical ventilation relies on natural ventilation to maximise fresh air

Read the updated [guidance on air conditioning and ventilation](#) and find out how you can provide adequate ventilation in your workplace, helping to protect staff, learners and other people from transmission of coronavirus.

There is also advice available for building services, particularly around ventilation of buildings, both in use and when returning to buildings which have been closed from the following:

- [The Building Engineers Services Association](#)
- [REHVA](#)

Check whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings or you are unsure, advice can be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

We recommend that you:

- Remove any fans from, for example, workstations, to avoid the recirculation of air in poorly ventilated areas.
- Fully or partially opening windows, air vents and doors where possible, and if it is safe to do so.

Good ventilation can be achieved by a variety of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems: these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible, and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance (if possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if not, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply)
- natural ventilation: opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation, and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space). Windows can also be

opened more fully before learners and teaching staff come in and at the end of the school day. Opening internal doors can also assist with increasing the throughput of air (as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so)

- natural ventilation: if necessary external opening doors may also be used (as long as they are not fire doors, and where safe to do so)

To increase the fresh air ventilation rate to ensure dilution, solutions schools could use would include seeking to undertake the following.

- Check if ventilation is functioning well: ensure windows, grids and airbricks are not obstructed; check for function and identify areas that are poorly ventilated.
- Take advice from competent heating and ventilation professionals.
- Start ventilation of rooms ahead of school day and allow it to continue throughout the day and after classes have finished.
- Set air handling units to maximise fresh outdoor air over recirculation.
- Ensure open windows and doors provide adequate ventilation while maintaining a comfortable workplace temperature (noise and fire restrictions dependent).
- Instruct teaching staff on how to achieve the most effective ventilation, e.g. opening top windows, moving obstructions such as curtains/blinds.
- Use ceiling fans or desk fans to prevent pockets of stagnant air only where the area is well ventilated.
- Air classrooms and other areas between classes and uses, for example by opening all doors (not fire doors) and windows wide.
- Consider a target maximum capacity for smaller rooms to ensure greater dilution.
- Consider the use of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to identify areas where there may be challenges in ensuring adequate ventilation.

Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces and meet the **relevant regulations**. Further information is provided in the section on estates.

# Response to any infection

## Ensure you understand the steps set out in the TTP strategy

The **TTP strategy** published on 13 May 2020 was implemented across Wales from 1 June 2020.

This strategy sets out the next phase of our approach to tackling coronavirus: testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus, and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating. Since September 2020 the TTP strategy has been supported by the **NHS COVID-19 app**.

TTP works by:

- testing those people who have coronavirus symptoms, and asking them to self-isolate from family, friends and their community while taking a test and waiting for a result. People can apply for a test for themselves or someone in their household with symptoms. This includes adults and children, including the under-fives. TTP **guidance** for staff and **how to apply for a test** can be found on **the Welsh Government website**
- tracing those people who have been in close contact with people that have tested positive for the virus and considering if they may be required to **self-isolate**. Further information on contact tracing and how it operates can be found **on the Welsh Government website**
- providing advice and **guidance to those that have tested positive**, particularly if the person who has symptoms or their contacts are in the '**clinically extremely vulnerable group**' or are in the **increased risk** group

Through reducing transmission in our communities, and quickly identifying and isolating those at risk of developing COVID-19 following their close contact with a positive individual (e.g. a known contact or family member) we will support the wider opening of schools, colleges and early years' settings.

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# Asymptomatic testing offer for schools and settings

In order to quickly detect asymptomatic adults, ask them to self-isolate as soon as possible, reduce the likelihood of clusters and outbreaks in settings and the disruption that brings to education, rapid-result coronavirus (COVID-19) tests are available to all staff working in schools/settings including school transport operators peripatetic teachers and supply staff. Test kits are also available for learners from Years 7 upwards, all FE college learners and learners on work-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship programmes. These tests are for use at home.

Testing is voluntary, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to further reduce the risk of asymptomatic transmission within the workplace.

Further information on the testing offer, including the latest guides and other resources, is available via the online document platform.

Anyone who tests positive using a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) must not attend a school / setting. They and everyone they live with must self-isolate immediately according to the [self-isolation guidance](#) whilst they undertake the following actions:

- Report the test result [online](#).
- Book a follow up PCR test through the [online booking portal](#).
- Notify their setting of the result.
- For staff - notify other organisations as per the guidance for the sector (Local authority or Care Inspectorate Wales).

They will be contacted by the local contact tracing team to identify contacts who will need to self-isolate – they must follow any advice given by the local contact tracing team. If a positive LFT test result is followed by a PCR test taken within 24 hours and the result is negative, the staff member or learner may return to school as normal. If the PCR test is taken after 24 hours of a positive LFT and the PCR is negative, the staff member or learner will need to continue to self-

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isolate for 10 days. A flow chart providing details of the regular testing process can be found on the Testing Offer Asset Bank.

A negative or void LFT test result must also be recorded via the [online results portal](#) but no further action is required, and the individual can continue their day as usual.

## **A negative test result does not remove the risk of transmission**

Schools and settings should reinforce these messages and in particular, remind all those who test negative that this does not mean they can relax their infection prevention measures and/or if they show any of the COVID-19 symptoms to [self-isolate](#) immediately and [book a test](#).

## **Manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the school community**

The fundamental principle remains that the most effective way to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in our schools and settings is to stop infection being brought into the setting. If a child or member of staff tests positive for coronavirus or has any of the COVID-19 symptoms they should self-isolate and not attend the school or setting.

A summary of the roles and responsibilities for the contact tracing process moving forward is outlined below. These will be refined over the coming weeks and confirmed prior to the start of the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Test, Trace, Protect teams will be responsible for contacting each positive case and collecting information about their close contacts both within and outside the school/setting. It is their role to identify which individuals meet the definition of a close contact and therefore need to self-isolate. They will work with the school to agree on communication with those who are required to self-isolate and those

who may return to school.

Schools and settings will need to ensure they have core information available which will support the TTP teams. This may include attendance records, seating plans or any intelligence the school has regarding a learner's immediate friendship group. It will not be the responsibility of schools/settings to make decisions about whether individuals need to self-isolate.

It is recognised that schools/settings may become aware of cases before contact tracing is formally undertaken, and that initial precautionary action may be required.

Parents/carers and learners will continue to play an important role moving forward. This may include providing information to TTP teams on who is in a learners' friendship group, or TTP teams having discussions with learners or a proxy to better understand who a learner may have had close interactions with.

Public Health Wales will be responsible for providing guidance to support the TTP teams and providing specialist advice to those teams to help resolve more complex queries.

A positive test on site does not require closure of that site. The process of testing and contact tracing is part of the 'new normal' and where schools and settings follow these guidelines carefully, there is no cause for alarm. The latest information can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#).

Where vulnerable learners are self-isolating it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer pastoral support, and check they are able to access education support.

Your coronavirus risk assessment should make provision for multiple cases and nominate a single point of contact for liaison. In some circumstances an Incident Management Team (IMTs) which includes representation from Health Protection/ Public Health Wales, local authorities, health boards and Test, Trace, Protect teams may be established in order to consider and advise on next steps.

A template letter has been developed for schools, on the advice of the health

protection team, to send to parents/carers and staff if needed.

Schools and settings should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before accepting learners or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

## Identifying clusters and incidents of COVID-19

Building upon the Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (2020) Public Health Wales (PHW) has provided specific [advice regarding the investigation and management of clusters and incidents of COVID-19](#). Full details can be found in that document.

## The NHS COVID-19 app

Staff and learners aged 16 and over are eligible to use the [NHS COVID-19 app](#). Schools should tell learners who use the app to tell a member of staff if they get an alert that they have had close contact with a person with symptoms.

If notified by the app, the learner should inform a trusted adult, usually a school staff member. The school should then follow its COVID-19 procedures as if that learner had been present in class with another learner who had shown symptoms.

Schools do not need to update policies on use of mobile phones.

## Vaccination

In Wales, we are working to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority schedule. The JCVI is the expert body which advises all four UK governments, and the priority schedule of vaccination we are working to is the same as the schedule for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Further information and updates on our [vaccination strategy](#) is available.

## Attendance during this time

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health have issued guidance indicating that very few children are clinically extremely vulnerable and as a result many of the children previously advised to shield are no longer required to do so. Where a parent/carer wishes their child to attend school, arrangements should be put in place to support attendance and the relevant information incorporated into risk assessments.

Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason for this to enable the school to record attendance correctly.

In many cases the anxieties will relate to health vulnerabilities, such as when where a child or family member is clinically extremely vulnerable within the household or wider family. In these circumstances schools and local authorities should work with the family to support a learner to access the curriculum and minimise disruption to the learner's education. If a learner is unable to attend the physical setting of the school due to self-isolation it is vital the school continues to engage regularly with the learner remotely. The Welsh Government [Learning guidance](#) may be helpful to support this.

Approved absence will not be penalised and schools may wish to use, a bespoke plan to support transition to face to face learning at the earliest opportunity.

We recognise some families will have greater anxiety about children's attendance at school during this time of uncertainty around the risks of COVID-19. Engagement should be ongoing with the family so that schools, settings and local authorities, understand any barriers to learners returning to school and identify any further support that may be needed to enable a full return to the educational setting at the earliest opportunity.

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Any concerns about engagement, or the welfare of a learner, should be followed up immediately by the school. Concerns should only be escalated to the Education Welfare Service after the school has made every attempt to engage the family. During these times a multi-agency approach is critical and if the school has any concerns about the harm, neglect or abuse of learners this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Person who will liaise with children's services and other agencies as appropriate.

Following consultation, the Welsh Government has revoked the School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011 (in force from 7 August 2020). As a result, schools are not required to set targets for future years or report on those previously set for 2019 to 2020 onwards. However, the annual attendance data collections will continue.

Under the current circumstances the Welsh Government's view is that punitive measures, including fines, would not be appropriate measures to take unless authorities deem it necessary to pursue a small number of cases relating to persistent absence, which are unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic; and there are concerns about the welfare of the child; or there have been extensive efforts to try and re-engage with the family by the school and / or the EWS. In such cases authorities should follow guidance set out in the [All Wales Attendance Framework](#).

Schools should record attendance and absence in keeping with the following codes; guidance on when they should be used follows the summary.

## What code should be used?

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
/	Attending school in the a.m.	Present

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Code	Meaning	Statistical category
\	Attending school in the p.m.	Present
[	Remote learning due to COVID-19 (where a learner is shielding or self-isolating)	Not required to attend
;	Illness due to COVID-19	Authorised absence
Y	School-directed absence due to COVID-19 (to include remote learning)	Not required to attend

All other codes apply as per the guidance on school attendance:

[Guidance on school attendance codes](#)

## **^ (code for learners who attend school)**

All children in the expected intake for that day or in a priority group (children of critical workers and vulnerable children) should be recorded as present / \ upon arrival at their school or setting.

## **[ (temporary code for remote learning due to COVID-19)**

This includes individual learners who are unable to physically attend school for reasons understood and agreed by the school. They should be recorded as **code [**.

This code will apply to learners who are self-isolating for COVID-19-related reasons as set out in the preventative section of this guidance. This includes

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learners with symptoms of COVID-19; someone in the household with symptoms/who is a positive case; or as a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 as notified through the TTP service. This code should not be used for groups of learners directed not to attend by the school; in those circumstances, code Y should be used.

This code could be used for learners who have medical or health reasons preventing them from physically attending or who may have exceptional circumstances such as caring responsibilities. This would also apply if shielding has been recommended for clinically extremely vulnerable learners through a letter from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales.

This code should not be used if the learner is unwell and has a confirmed case of COVID-19. In such a case the code ; should be used.

Schools must engage with parents/carers to understand why learners are not attending and ensure there are not any concerns about learners' well-being or alternative support options that could be arranged to enable them to attend. Any concerns should be followed up by the school or setting, and where relevant by the local authority. The school should review the situation with the learner and parents/carers on a regular basis to avoid any prolonged absence.

The temporary code will be used for analysis of our informal weekly data collection but [ will be mapped to the X code for the statutory primary and secondary attendance collections and statistical purposes.

## **; (code for a confirmed case of COVID-19)**

Code ; should be used if the learner has been notified they have a confirmed case of COVID-19. This would only apply when they have a positive test result and the school has been notified accordingly.

The temporary code ; is for school use only and schools should remind all SIMS users of their duty of confidentiality. The code will not be used for analysis of the Welsh Government's informal weekly data collection but ; will be mapped to the I code.

## Y (code for school-directed absence)

Code Y should be used for school-directed absence, rather than for individuals under code [, and will also involve remote learning. This would happen when the school identifies the need for learners to self-isolate due to a confirmed case in school. Code Y should also be used in event of partial or full closure due to COVID-19; this includes when the school does not have sufficient staff capacity, or a school is closed due to a lockdown. This code should also be used for staggered starts when learners are not required to be physically present in school. This code should not be used for inset days which should be recorded as code #.

## Using other authorised absence and attendance codes

In line with our guidance on school attendance codes an agreed family holiday authorised by the headteacher will be coded as H, and an agreed extended holiday will be coded as F. A family holiday not agreed by the head teacher, or in excess of what was agreed, will be coded as G. On return from the holiday some families will be **required to self-isolate if they have travelled from a non-exempt country**. This period of self-isolation should be recorded in accordance with the code used for the family holiday.

Where other specific authorised absence and attendance codes are more appropriate schools should use those as usual.

## Critical workers

Provision will need to continue to be made for children of critical workers to attend a school/setting from the third school day of a closure if a school/setting must temporarily close due to staff shortages as a result cases of coronavirus/self-isolation requirements.

A list of those parents and carers identified as critical workers has been published as part of **guidance on identifying children of critical workers**.

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We have strengthened the duties for LAs providing for the children of critical workers and vulnerable learners with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(No. 5\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#). LAs and proprietors of independent schools must have regard to the list when deciding who is a critical worker. These arrangements extend to 3-year-olds who would have taken up an education place in January 2021.

In deciding who are critical workers, LAs and proprietors of independent schools should consider the types of employment and associated impacts in their area. Schools and settings should speak to parents/carers to identify whether their work is critical to the COVID-19 response.

The law only requires one parent to be a critical worker for the obligation to make arrangements to apply. However, the guidance is clear that although children can have a place, it is not guaranteed.

## Vulnerable learners

Provision will need to continue to be made for vulnerable learners to attend a school/setting from the third school day of a closure if a school/setting must temporarily close due to staff shortages as a result cases of coronavirus/self-isolation requirements.

Parents/carers of vulnerable children and young people are strongly encouraged to take up the place. If vulnerable learners do not attend, schools should:

- work together with the LA and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent/carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing the school's concerns using supporting guidance considering the child's circumstances and best interests
- work together with the LA and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child or young person to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the child or young person's attendance would be appropriate

# School workforce

It is vital that staff have confidence that their school/setting have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the safety of everyone learning, working or visiting the site. We anticipate adherence to the measures in this guidance will provide the necessary reassurance for staff to attend school.

If staff are concerned, including those who may be clinically vulnerable or who believe they may be at possible increased risk from coronavirus, we recommend school leaders discuss any concerns individuals may have around their particular circumstances and reassure staff about the protective measures in place.

## Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Staff who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable should follow the published [guidance](#). Shielding advice for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable paused on 31 March. From 1 April, all clinically extremely vulnerable staff have been able to return to work. All staff should talk to their employers about how they will be supported when returning to work. Schools should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.

Those living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still attend work where home-working is not possible.

## Staff who are at increased risk

Staff who are at increased risk can continue to attend school. While in school they should follow the mitigating measures to minimise the risks of transmission and should have an individual workplace assessment.

This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining physical distancing in line with the provisions set out in the 'Prevention' section of this guidance. This provides that

ideally, adults should maintain a two-metre distance from others, and where this is not possible avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within the two metre of space. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to maintain physical distance from other adults, including older children and adolescents.

People who live with those who are **at increased risk** can attend the workplace but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

## **Staff who are pregnant**

Staff should work at home where possible. If home-working is not possible, pregnant staff and their employers should follow the advice in the **COVID-19: advice for pregnant employees**.

Pregnant women are in the people at increased risk category and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools and the advice to general public but in doing so be aware that they are at increased risk. All pregnant women should take particular care to practice frequent thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home or workspace, and follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. For vaccinations, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) updated their guidance on 16 April 2021, stating that all pregnant women should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine, based on age and clinical risk, as part of the UK rollout.

An employer's workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers (e.g. from working conditions or the use of physical, chemical or biological agents). Any risks identified must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. As part of their risk assessment, employers should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home-working may be appropriate to mitigate risks.

If a school is notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given

birth within the last six months, the employer should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. If risks are identified during the pregnancy, in the first six months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, the employer must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control them.

While it is a legal obligation for employers to regularly review general workplace risks, there is not necessarily a requirement to conduct a specific, separate risk assessment for new and expectant mothers. However, an assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Employers should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This is because, although pregnant women of any gestation are at no more risk of contracting the virus than any other non-pregnant person who is in similar health, for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill, and of pre-term birth, should they contract COVID-19.

This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (see the latest GOV.UK guidance [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for pregnant employees](#)).

## **Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from COVID-19**

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from COVID-19. Where possible these staff should work from home; however, in circumstances where this is not possible, these staff can attend schools as long as the system of controls set out in this guidance is in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future. Further information is available on the [UK Government website](#).

People who live with those who may have comparatively increased risk from COVID-19 can attend the workplace where it is not possible to work from home,

but should continue to adhere to the prevention and mitigating measures.

Staff should have confidence to discuss their safety at work and any concerns they may have with their line manager and consider the right actions to mitigate and manage that risk and ensure staff are as protected as much as possible.

Schools and settings will want to consider seeking advice from the local authority's health and safety adviser(s) regarding its stress risk assessment process. Staff may also wish to consider the need for an individual stress risk assessment, as a number of factors are important considerations in relation to staff well-being. The Health and Safety Executive provides a generic [stress risk assessment](#) for use.

## Supporting staff

Governing bodies and school leaders should have regard to staff (including the headteacher) work–life balance and well-being. Schools and settings should ensure they have explained to all staff the measures they are proposing putting in place and involve all staff in that process.

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. Schools and settings already have mechanisms to support staff well-being and these will be particularly important, as some staff may be particularly anxious about attending school. Welsh Government is providing additional support for both learner and staff well-being in the current situation.

## Staff deployment

Schools and settings may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff, and use existing staff more flexibly. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals. However, flexibility in deployment should not lead to individuals operating outside of the scope of their role. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals. It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and

unmanageable workload burdens. Every effort must be made to ensure classes and roles within classrooms are operating at their usual staff baseline despite absences.

If, having pursued all the immediate options available, you still have concerns about your staffing capacity, then a discussion with the local authority is recommended.

It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens. This could include a review of existing practices in this respect.

Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between schools where necessary. Supply staff, and visitors such as peripatetic teachers, will be expected to comply with the school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk; schools should ensure that all temporary staff are given access to the information on the safety arrangements in place as soon as possible after the booking is confirmed.

To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the school premises, and secure best value, schools should aim to use longer assignments with supply staff and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.

## Safeguarding

Schools must continue to have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, **keeping learners safe** in school.

Schools should review their child protection policy (led by their designated safeguarding lead) to reflect the move to remote education for most learners.

There should be no change to local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which remain the responsibility of the three safeguarding partners. We expect all local safeguarding partners to be vigilant and responsive to all safeguarding threats and ensure vulnerable children and young people are safe – particularly as more children and young people will be learning remotely.

# Catering and free school meals

The Welsh Government will continue to make funding available to local authorities so that they can make free school meal provision to eligible learners who are not required to attend school premises because they are self-isolating as a result of COVID-19.

Funding will be made available at the rate of £19.50 per learner per week (or £3.90 per day) in order that local authorities can continue to make provision for learners who are eligible for free school meals but who are unable to attend because of COVID-19 (i.e. if they are self-isolating). Local authorities can choose which method of provision best suits the needs of their communities (options include food parcels, supermarket vouchers or direct payments to parents'/carers' bank accounts) and we encourage local authorities to consider operating a number of systems in parallel in order to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable families can be met.

Local authorities will be able to claim from Welsh Government's COVID-19 hardship fund for additional costs incurred in respect of learners who are in receipt of free school meals and who are self-isolating.

The funding made available is based on the assumption that local authorities will, where possible, meet the first £2.50 per learner per day (£12.50 per week) of any costs incurred, with the Welsh Government paying costs in excess of this amount up to a maximum of £1.40 per learner per day or £7.00 per week. Local authorities are reminded to guard against double funding.

However, the Welsh Government is aware that local authorities will have fixed costs associated with the provision of free school meals. On this basis the Welsh Government accepts that the majority of the budgets for free school meals are likely to be committed. In these instances the local authority may experience difficulties in meeting our expectation that they will meet the first £2.50 per learner per day cost. In these cases we would expect local authorities to investigate if savings have been made in school catering budgets. If this is not possible, and where local authorities can demonstrate that no further budgetary offset is possible, then we will make reasonable exceptions and will pay in

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excess of £1.40 per learner per day. Local authorities are reminded that they will need to demonstrate that the arrangements they have put in place for the provision in lieu of free school meals represent the best possible value for money, taking account of any health and safety restrictions.

## **Catering provision for children attending school**

The Welsh Government's expectation is that school or local authority catering provision will revert to its pre-COVID arrangements, unless there are circumstances which might prevent this. Learners who are eligible for free school meals who are or transitionally protected should be provided with a free meal on each day they attend. Other learners will still be expected to pay for their meals.

Where children from families who have already been provided with FSM provision are repeatedly sent to school without lunch, when parents/carers have been requested to provide a lunch because catering facilities are not yet fully operational, schools will need to consider whether this is because of underlying child welfare issues, and take appropriate action.

## **Special diets**

Whether catering is provided in schools or if you chose to deliver food to pupils you will need to ensure that pupils with special diets or allergies are catered for. Care needs to be taken to check with families whether any pupils have allergies or special diets before food is issued to them.

## **Compliance with “The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013”**

It is recognised that in these exceptional circumstances compliance with the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations may cause increased challenges. The

recommendation in these circumstances would be that every effort is made to ensure that the food provided to pupils is as healthy and nutritious as possible, within the current constraints of the local and national supply chains.

## Free breakfasts in primary schools

The Welsh Government expects that breakfast clubs should operate as normal, unless it would be unreasonable for them to do so. We would remind local authorities that they are still under the same legal duty to provide a free school breakfast (section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013). The Welsh Government has produced [guidance](#) on the provision of free breakfasts in primary schools.

Local authorities are encouraged to discuss any decision not to re-open a breakfast club with their legal advisors. They are also encouraged to communicate decisions and the reasons for taking them with parents as soon as they can.

## Estates

Fire safety management plans should be reviewed and checked in line with operational changes.

Schools should check:

- all fire doors are operational at all times
- the fire alarm system and emergency lights have been tested and are fully operational

Carry out emergency drills as normal (following physical distancing and other safety measures as appropriate).

You should make adjustments to your fire drill to allow for physical distancing as appropriate. Refer to advice on fire safety in new and existing school buildings.

# School transport

Local authorities are responsible for the implementation of this section of the guidance, working with the operators with whom they contract to ensure necessary measures are put in place in line with risk assessments (which should involve appropriate consultation with trade unions and staff). Parents/carers and school staff should all play a role in educating children and young people on acceptable behaviour on school and public transport.

This guidance has been informed by the **scientific advice** of the Technical Advisory Cell Children and Education Sub Group, and with advice from Public Health Wales (PHW).

Local authorities are required to assess the travel needs of learners who are aged under 19 in their area. This includes those who they are legally required to provide transport for and those for whom they may wish to provide discretionary transport when assessing travel needs. An authority is also required to have regard to:

- the needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties
- any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a local authority
- the age of learners
- the nature of the route that learners could reasonably be expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training
- the likely distance the learner is to travel between home and the place where they receive education and training

In assessing the travel needs of learners, local authorities must take into account the fact that travel arrangements they make in light of the assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, take an unreasonable amount of time or be unsafe.

This section provides guidance on putting in place proportionate safeguards to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on dedicated home to school transport to ensure learners can attend school/settings.

This guidance applies to all dedicated home to school transport. By this, we mean services which exclusively carry learners travelling to and from school and/or settings. This includes:

- services commissioned or provided by local authorities, whether or not the service is provided free of charge
- services commissioned or provided by schools and settings
- services provided by transport operators (commercial travel routes) which cannot be boarded by members of the public at the same time as they are carrying learners to school or settings

Vehicles that provide transport to members of the public at other times are considered dedicated home to school transport when they are exclusively carrying children and young people travelling to and from school and settings; this includes taxis and minibuses.

During this time as far as it is safe to do so, the use of active travel routes by parents/carers, staff and learners should be encouraged. Walking and cycling, scooting, wheeling, etc. should be strongly encouraged. In view of the potential for capacity constraints on public transport to impact learner's ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.

## Key messages

- Local authorities remain under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible learners of compulsory school age over certain distances from their education centres (2 miles primary/3 miles secondary) as specified in the learner travel Wales measure) and to publish a **transport statement** (section 'Discretionary Transport Arrangements') detailing what travel assistance they will provide for young people over 16 which is discretionary.
- Local authorities, working with schools, settings and transport operators, and following consultation with their health and safety advisers and trade unions, should undertake a risk assessment for dedicated school transport journeys in their local area that takes account of the routes travelled and the users of the services; the nature of the transport used and the opportunity for

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adaption and local transport capacity, i.e. the opportunity to scale up provision. The risk assessment must be signed off by the appropriate local authority officer (e.g. Head of Service), advised by health and safety officers, passenger transport officers and other relevant officers and notified to contractors and operators in accordance with usual practice. They must then work through the system of controls set out in this section and adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and allows learners to attend their school/setting.

- Face coverings should be worn by pupils in year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary schools and settings.
- Wherever capacity allows, physical distancing should be implemented between learners, or groups of learners, and between drivers and passenger assistants. Where it is not possible, other measures from the system of controls set out below, should be put in place.
- There is no requirement to maintain contact groups on school transport providing a consistent group of learners travel on the same bus each day they attend. The use of dedicated school transport to serve several schools should be avoided where possible, particularly between school clusters.
- Local authorities should ensure that operators are aware of the safe use of face coverings, e.g. hand washing before and after putting on and removing face coverings, safe disposal or storage and that these are not a substitute for other control measures.

**Assets** are available in relation to dedicated home to school transport which local authorities, schools and settings may find helpful

## Specific considerations

A range of specific considerations and control measures may be adopted for specific groups or in response to particular circumstances. These will be for local consideration and adoption following a risk assessment.

## Taxis and private hire vehicles

Some learners, including those with additional support needs, rely on taxi or private hire vehicle transfers to get to and from school/setting. Where taxis are used solely for the purpose of transporting children and young people to and from school, as with dedicated school bus and coach services, physical distancing requirements are not required. It is however recommended that in taxis and private hire vehicles learners' travel in the back seat only.

There should be careful consideration of how learners with additional needs can be provided with safe, bespoke transport arrangements. This could include the introduction of cleaning protocols, driving with the windows open (when possible) or finding larger vehicles for transportation. Local authorities and schools should liaise with their local private hire providers on the measures they are putting in place to protect learners, including for the arrangements for carrying multiple learners.

Guidance for taxis and private hire vehicles is available.

When travel by taxi or private hire vehicle is necessary, learners should be advised to follow the advice of the driver. Appropriate cleaning and sanitising measures will also be necessary. Face to face seating where available should not be used.

Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers in Wales will be able to claim **a free pack of high quality PPE and vehicle cleaning materials**, funded by Welsh Government. The move is intended to increase confidence in travelling safely for drivers and passengers.

## Educational visits

High quality educational visits play an important role in enriching teaching and learning as well as support learner wellbeing. In line with the relaxation of other restrictions, such as the reopening of indoor and outdoor visitor attractions and the resumption of indoor and outdoor organised activities, schools and settings

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may wish to consider undertaking educational visits where visiting locations outside of the school or setting estate is integral to the learning experience.

Schools and settings wishing to undertake any types of educational visits should continue to undertake the usual risk assessment processes. This risk assessment should include arrangements for what will happen if a member of the group (a learner or staff member) develops COVID-19 symptoms during the visit. Travel time should be minimised wherever possible. Schools and settings should also consider the guidance set out elsewhere in this document, including but not limited to:

- minimising contact with others – schools should ask venue operators how this will be ensured
- whether face coverings or other precautionary actions will be required – schools should ask venue operators what measures are in place and build this into the planning of the visit
- maintaining physical distancing
- maintaining good hand hygiene

They should also consider other relevant Welsh Government guidance, including, but not limited to:

- [travel: coronavirus](#)
- [COVID-19 alert levels](#)

Further guidance regarding educational visits is available from local authority Education Visits Advisers, as well as the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel, which has developed [guidance which may be useful for schools and settings considering undertaking visits](#).

Visits must comply with the relevant regulations and restrictions in place at the time of the visit, including those regarding travel and use of shared accommodation. Schools and settings should be mindful that restrictions on the use of accommodation in other parts of the UK may differ to those in Wales.

Schools and settings considering travelling from Wales to another part of the UK or wider Common Travel Area (Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands) for

the purpose of an educational visit should be mindful of any restrictions in place at the destination of their visit and follow any related guidance as well as the guidance set out in this document.

**Updated guidance on international travel**, including the requirements for quarantine upon return to the UK, is available on our website.

We will continue to keep our advice under review.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information on travel insurance implications following the COVID-19 outbreak. If schools and settings have any further questions about their cover or would like further reassurance, they should contact their travel insurance provider.

## **Transition from one school or setting to another**

Moving from one school or setting to another can be a challenging and uncertain time for learners. This can be particularly true when learners are moving from primary to secondary school. Schools and settings provide a wide range of support during this period and to help build learners' sense of involvement and belonging to their new setting.

Schools and settings should continue to offer support to these learners and their families, but should consider how methods that have been used historically may need to be revised to take into account the measures set out within this guidance. Schools and settings may also wish to consider making use of alternative methods, including online methods, to support learners' transition. Arrangements for transition support should be fed into the school or settings risk assessment.

## **School uniform**

Decisions regarding the wearing of school uniforms are a matter for individual schools' governing bodies. However, we would encourage all schools to return to their usual uniform policies as uniform can play a valuable role in contributing

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to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

If a governing body decides to relax its uniform policy a poverty conscious approach should be taken, which bears in mind that some families may struggle to purchase specific or additional items of clothing. PDG-Access should be promoted to eligible families.

## Annex A: Approach to risk estimation and management

### Annex A: Approach to risk estimation and management<sup>10</sup>



This hierarchy of controls is a way to prioritise risk control measures based on how effective different types of control are in reducing risks. Risk reduction measures should be assessed in order of the priority given in the hierarchy; it is not a case of simply jumping to the easiest control measure to implement. Types of control higher up the hierarchy are more effective at reducing risks than those lower down.

Controls should be practical to be implemented and, ideally, should be able to be maintained easily over time.

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It is critical to remember that it will only rarely be feasible to eliminate the risk completely. The combination of controls introduced should aim to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable, prioritising structural and environmental interventions over individual level ones.

This of course does not simply mean considering risks of transmission, but also balancing these against risks to wider health and well-being and learning. Ultimately schools need the flexibility to respond to these risks as they are able to.

When considering reducing close interactions between individuals, we would advise schools to consider the following:

1. Elimination: redesign the activity such that the risk is removed or eliminated.
2. Substitution: replace the activity with an activity that reduces the risk. Care is required to avoid introducing new hazards from the substitution.
3. Engineering controls: design measures that help control or mitigate risk.
4. Administrative controls: identify and implement the procedures to improve safety.
5. Having gone through this process, PPE should be used where the guidance recommends this.

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