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[Department
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Guidance

Dedicated transport to schools and colleges COVID-19 operational guidance

Updated 27 September 2021

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Summary

This guidance explains the actions those responsible for the provision of dedicated transport should take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

Dedicated transport is that which exclusively carries children and young people to

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their place of education including mainstream and special schools, colleges and alternative provision settings. (In this guidance, references to colleges include all further education providers).

This guidance applies to all dedicated transport, regardless of whether it is provided free of charge, including transport commissioned or provided by local authorities, schools and colleges as well as commercial travel routes that cannot be used by members of the public when they are carrying children and young people to school or college.

We use the terms “must” and “should” in the guidance. We use the term “must” when the person in question is legally required to do something and “should” when the advice set out should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for those who are responsible for the provision of dedicated transport including:

- local authorities
- schools and colleges
- transport operators

Separate guidance is available for:

- [passengers on public transport](#)
- [operators of public transport](#)
- [help local transport authorities manage demand for public transport](#)

Local authorities should continue to promote cycling and walking. They can encourage active travel by:

- building on existing schemes such as the [Walk to School programme](#) and [Bikeability](#) training
- encouraging schools and colleges to communicate directly with the children and young people whose journeys are most appropriate to switch to active travel to encourage them to do so
- implementing ‘safe streets’ policies outside schools

Overview

Schools and colleges no longer need to:

- keep children and young people in consistent groups or bubbles
- be responsible for tracing close contacts of those who test positive for COVID-19 - close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace

Wearing face coverings is no longer a legal requirement on public transport but the government expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet.

On dedicated transport, we:

- recommend that children and young people aged 11 and over continue to wear a face covering when travelling to secondary school or college
- no longer recommend maximising distancing and minimising mixing, but unnecessary risks such as overcrowding should be minimised

Further information about [face coverings](#) is available.

Individuals are no longer required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.

18-year-olds will be treated in the same way as children until 6 months after their 18th birthday, to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Schools and colleges should have contingency plans outlining how they would operate if the number of positive cases substantially increases in their school or local area. The [contingency framework](#) describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare settings. If a particular setting has been advised to consider reintroducing bubbles to reduce mixing for a temporary period, you should consider whether it is possible to temporarily reinstate any measures you previously had in place to reduce mixing on transport.

We do not expect the additional dedicated school transport that was put in place to ease pressure on public transport during the 2020 to 2021 school year to be needed in the future but will keep this position under review.

We will keep this guidance under review and update it as necessary.

Risk assessment

Those responsible for the provision of transport must comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures, working with schools, colleges and transport operators as necessary. You must regularly review and update your risk assessments as the circumstances and the public health advice change. This includes having arrangements in place to monitor whether the control measures are effective and working as planned.

Control measures

1. Ensure face coverings are worn where recommended

Children and young people aged 11 and over should wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college.

Further information about [face coverings](#) is available.

2. Ensure good hygiene for everyone

Hand hygiene

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. You should continue to ensure that children and young people clean their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser.

Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important.

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Most staff will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. There is guidance on the [use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#).

3. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes using standard products such as detergents

You should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces.

4. Let fresh air into vehicles when occupied

It is important to ensure vehicles are well ventilated when occupied, particularly by opening windows and ceiling vents. You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

5. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test

Children, young people and adults should follow [public health advice](#) on when to self-isolate and what to do. They should not board dedicated transport or public transport if they have symptoms or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine).

If a child or young person develops [COVID-19 symptoms](#), however mild, while at school or college, they will be sent home.

They should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household. In exceptional circumstances, if parents or carers cannot arrange to have their child collected, and it is age-appropriate and safe to do so, the child should walk, cycle or scoot home. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements may need to be organised by the school. The guidance on the [use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) provides more information on organising transport for children with symptoms.

They and their household should follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection](#).

Asymptomatic testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. All secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home.

Testing is still widely available and kits can be collected from a local pharmacy or [ordered online](#).

Confirmatory PCR tests

People with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the [stay at home guidance](#). They will also need to get [a free PCR test](#) to check if they have COVID-19. Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the individual need no longer self-isolate, as long as they don't have COVID-19 symptoms.

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