



Department  
for Education

# **COVID-19: Actions for out-of-school settings**

**February 2022**

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## Changes to the previous version

Changes to the guidance since its 21 February 2022 publication include:

- Update to [Tracing close contacts and isolation](#) to reflect new public health guidance from 24 February
- Update to [When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test](#) to reflect new public health guidance from 24 February

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for out-of-school setting providers and their staff, who provide, for children (those who were under the age of 18 on 31 August 2021):

- community activities
- tuition
- holiday clubs
- breakfast and after-school clubs for children

It applies to:

- providers that fall within the government's definition of an [out-of-school setting](#)
- providers caring for children aged 5 and over and registered with Ofsted on either the compulsory or voluntary childcare register
- schools or colleges that offer extra-curricular activities or provision for children before and after school, during weekends or outside of term-time
- providers that offer breakfast, after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities in schools, who should also refer to the [guidance on actions for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- registered early years providers caring for children under the age of 5, who should refer to the guidance for [early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- providers of youth services and activities, who should also refer to the [National Youth Agency's guidance for managing youth sector spaces and activities during COVID-19](#)

There is separate [out-of-school settings COVID-19 guidance for parents and carers](#).

## About this guidance

This guidance explains the actions out-of-school settings should take to manage coronavirus (COVID-19) in their settings. This includes public health advice, endorsed by the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

We use the terms 'must' and 'should' throughout 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.

## Overview

On 21 February the Prime Minister set out the next phase of the Government's COVID-19 response.

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with, and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains.

Our priority is to support you to deliver face-to-face, high-quality provision to all children.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to revise this guidance.

## Staff and workforce

Out-of-school setting leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of the children who attend their settings.

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, people previously considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and high or higher-risk are not being advised to shield again. If staff were previously identified as being in one of these groups, they are advised to continue to follow the guidance contained in [Guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#). Staff with a weakened immune system should follow [Guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk from COVID-19](#).

In some circumstances, staff may have received personal advice from their specialist or clinician on additional precautions to take and they should continue to follow that advice. Whilst individual risk assessments are not required, employers are expected to discuss any concerns that people previously considered CEV may have.

Employers will need to follow this specific guidance for pregnant employees. [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding](#) contains further advice on vaccination. Your workplace risk assessment should consider any risks

to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. You should also consider the needs of pregnant young people who attend your setting.

Employers should be able to explain the measures they have in place to keep staff safe at work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance on [protecting vulnerable workers](#), including advice for employers and employees on [how to talk about reducing risks in the workplace](#).

## **Those formerly considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable**

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, people previously considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk are not being advised to shield again. Children and young people who were previously identified as being in one of these groups, are advised to continue to follow [Guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#). Children and young people over the age of 12 with a weakened immune system should follow [Guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk from COVID-19](#).

Children and young people previously considered CEV can continue to attend out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare and should follow the same [COVID-19 guidance](#) as the rest of the population. In some circumstances, a child or young person may have received personal advice from their specialist or clinician on additional precautions to take and they should continue to follow that advice.

## **Vaccination**

We recommend all staff and eligible children and young people take up the offer of a vaccine.

You can find out more about the in-school vaccination programme in [COVID-19 vaccination programme for children and young people guidance for schools](#).

## **Mandatory Certification**

Mandatory certification is no longer in place and so venues and events are not required by law to use the NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry, but some may do so voluntarily. Further information on this is available in the guidance on [using your NHS COVID Pass for travel abroad and at venues and settings in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

You should not use the NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry for education or related activities such as exams, teaching, or any other day-to-day activities that are part of education or training.

## Risk assessment

As a provider, you are likely to have a legal duty of care to try to ensure the environment is safe for people who visit or attend. This means you have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that people will be safe using the venue for the purposes for which they attend, including regularly reviewing and updating your risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents' - as the circumstances in your setting and the public health advice changes. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective and working as planned.

For more information on what is required of out-of-school setting leaders in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk see [Health and safety: advice for schools](#) and [Keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition](#).

## Tracing close contacts and self-isolation

Public health advice for [People with COVID-19 and their contacts](#) changed from 24 February. Contacts are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and contact tracing has ended.

## Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for children, staff and visitors in classrooms, during indoor activities, or in communal areas in out-of-school settings.

Staff and children should follow [wider advice](#) on face coverings outside of their out-of-school setting, including on transport to and from the setting.

## In circumstances where face coverings are recommended

A director of public health might advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms or during indoor activities (by children, staff and visitors, unless exempt). You should make sure your contingency plans cover this possibility. (See the [stepping measures up and down section](#)).

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



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

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

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

## **Stepping measures up and down**

You should have contingency plans outlining how you would operate if you need to take extra measures in exceptional circumstances. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education and childcare can have on children and young people, any measures in out-of-school settings should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible.

Information on what circumstances might lead you to consider taking additional action, and the steps you should work through, can be found in the [contingency framework](#).

## Control measures

You should:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

### 1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone

#### Hand hygiene

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

#### Respiratory hygiene

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

The e-Bug COVID-19 [website](#) contains free resources, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

#### Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Most staff in out-of-school settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. The [guidance](#) on the use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings provides more information on the use of PPE for COVID-19.

### 2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products, such as detergents

You should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, twice per day), with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces. UKHSA has published [guidance on the cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#).

### **3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated**

When your setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and that a comfortable childcare or learning environment is maintained.

You should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of your risk assessment and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas.

Mechanical ventilation is a system that uses a fan to draw fresh air, or extract air from a room. These should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance and that only fresh outside air is circulated.

If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if this is not possible, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply.

Where mechanical ventilation systems exist, you should ensure that they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Opening external windows can improve natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air. If necessary, external opening doors may also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).

You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

The Health and Safety Executive [guidance](#) on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak and [CIBSE COVID-19 advice](#) provides more information.

CO2 monitors have been provided to state-funded education settings, so staff can quickly identify where ventilation needs to be improved.

### **4. 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, staff and other adults should follow guidance on [People with COVID-19 and their contacts](#) if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

Children and staff can return to your setting as soon as they can, in line with guidance for [People with COVID-19 and their contacts](#).

## **Asymptomatic testing**

From 21 February, staff and secondary aged children will not be expected to continue taking part in regular asymptomatic testing and should follow asymptomatic testing advice for the general population. Further information is available in the [NHS get tested for COVID-19 guidance](#).

In the event of an outbreak, an out-of-school setting may also be advised by their local health team or director of public health to undertake testing for staff and to encourage children of secondary age and above attending their settings to test for a period of time.

## **Welcoming children back to your setting**

In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a child with the key symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend your setting, given the potential risk to others.

If a parent or carer insists on a child with symptoms attending your setting, where they have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, you can take the decision to refuse the child if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection with COVID-19..

# Activities in out-of-school settings

## Educational visits and trips

Educational visits should be subject to risk assessments as normal and reflect any public health advice or in-country advice of the international destination,. [General guidance](#) on educational visits is available and is supported by [specialist advice from the Outdoor Education Advisory Panel \(OEAP\)](#).

For international educational visits, you should refer to the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice](#) and the [guidance on international travel](#) before booking and travelling to make sure that the out-of-school setting group meets any entry and in country requirements, especially in relation to vaccinations.

You should speak to either your visit provider, commercial insurance company, or the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to assess the protection available. Independent advice on insurance cover and options can be sought from the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) or Association of British Insurers (ABI).

## Other activities and safeguarding

Further information on the measures providers should have in place to operate a safe setting, such as health and safety and child protection arrangements, is available in the [guidance for keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition](#).



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