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[Department  
for Education](#)

Guidance

# What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges

Updated 25 February 2022

## This guidance was withdrawn on 1 April 2022

This content is no longer current policy and you do not need to follow it.

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## Main messages

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 for schools, colleges, childminders and nurseries to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education and care to all children and young people. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, as well as mental and physical health.

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.

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The main messages from this guidance are:

- nationally, education and childcare settings are open, and attendance is mandatory (for schools) and strongly encouraged (at childminders, nurseries and colleges)
- the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#) has made it clear that the overwhelming majority of children and young people still have no symptoms or very mild illness only
- update to [tracing close contacts and isolation](#) section to reflect new public health guidance from 24 February
- update to the [symptoms and testing](#) section to reflect new public health guidance from 24 February
- update to the [testing](#) section to reflect that from 21 February, twice weekly testing in mainstream schools is no longer advised
- if the number of positive cases substantially increases in your nursery, school, or college, or if your nursery, school, or college is in an enhanced response area, you might be advised that additional measures should be introduced
- all children aged 12 and over are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations
- children and young people previously considered CEV should attend school and should follow the same COVID-19 guidance as the rest of the population
- face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in classrooms and communal areas
- updated advice for if an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test while attending boarding school
- update that education recovery programmes will continue to be delivered

Note: the use of the term 'college' relates to all further education providers throughout this content.

## Tracing close contacts and 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 pupils, staff and visitors in classrooms or communal areas.

Staff and pupils should follow [wider advice on face coverings](#) outside of school, including on transport to and from school.

## In circumstances where face coverings are recommended

Your nursery, school or college might advise you that face coverings should

temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms (by pupils, staff and visitors, unless exempt).

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.

Schools, as employers, have a duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010, which includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. They also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, to support them to access education successfully.

No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are, or are not, wearing a face covering.

## **Helping make nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges as safe as possible**

Nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges have their own health and safety risk assessments and keep them under review.

As part of this, there are certain control measures that we have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to continue to maintain to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their setting. You can ask your nursery, childminder, school or college for more information.

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. Your child should be encouraged to clean their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

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

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

Nurseries, schools and colleges should put in place and maintain an appropriate

cleaning schedule. This should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces.

It is important for settings to ensure they are well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

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

The government has provided funding for air cleaning units for poorly ventilated teaching spaces and staff rooms in SEND and alternative provision settings, and state funded education settings where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. An online marketplace enabling all schools, colleges and early years settings to purchase air cleaning devices has also been launched.

## **Regional and local safety measures**

All nurseries, schools and colleges will have outbreak management plans in place outlining how they would operate if the number of positive cases substantially increases in your nursery, school, or college, or in the local area. Central government may also offer local areas of particular concern an enhanced response package to help limit increases in transmission.

## **Symptoms and testing**

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.

### **If your child develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test**

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

You should follow public health advice on [when to self-isolate and what to do](#).

If you insist on your child attending nursery, school, or college when they have symptoms, they can take the decision to refuse your child if, in their reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. Their decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Pupils in boarding schools should usually self-isolate in their boarding school. Only in exceptional circumstances, where there is an overriding health or safeguarding issue, should a pupil self-isolate away from school.

## **Asymptomatic testing**

Since 21 February, staff and pupils in mainstream secondary schools have no longer been 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](#).

Children under 5 years who are identified as close contacts are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts. They are advised to take a PCR test if the positive case is in their household.

Staff and pupils in specialist SEND settings, Alternative Provision, and SEND units in mainstream schools are advised to continue regular twice weekly testing. For further information, see [Special schools and other specialist settings: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

In the event of an outbreak, a nursery, school, college or area may also be advised by their local health team or Director of Public Health (DPH) to increase testing for staff and students of secondary age and above for a period of time.

## **Financial support to care for a child who is self-isolating**

You may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from your local authority if your child has been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Further information on [claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#) is available.

This scheme is available until 31 March 2022.

## **Vaccinations**

We recommend all school staff and eligible pupils take up the offer of a vaccine.

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

## **NHS COVID Pass**

Childminders, nurseries, schools and colleges are not required to use the NHS COVID Pass.

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 is available in the guidance on [using your NHS COVID Pass for travel abroad and at venues and settings in England](#).

Education settings should not use the NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry for education or related activities such as exams and activities that are part of education or training.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. This means it's your legal duty as a parent to send your child to school regularly if they are registered at one.

If you have concerns about your child attending, you should discuss these with your school or college.

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](#). 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](#).

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.

## Holidays and travel abroad

You should plan your holidays within school and college holidays as usual. Avoid seeking permission to take your children out of school or college during term time.

You should refer to the [guidance on travelling abroad from England](#) before booking and travelling.

All pupils travelling to England must adhere to travel legislation, details of which are set out in the guidance on [travelling to England from another country](#).

Keep in mind that you and your children may need to quarantine when you return from a trip overseas. Any quarantine should also fall within the school or college holidays.

Where your child is abroad and facing challenges to return, local authorities and schools should continue to work with you to understand your circumstances and your plans to return. They should encourage your child to return where they are able and it is safe. Your child can only lawfully be deleted from their school's admission register on the grounds prescribed in [regulation 8 of the Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 as amended](#).

Where able, schools should provide remote education for pupils facing challenges to return from abroad due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, for the period they are abroad.

You will need to respond to the latest rules on international travel, even if you have already left the UK, while also minimising the impact on your child's education. You can [sign up for an email alert](#) to be notified when government travel guidance is updated.

## Boarding and residential schools and colleges

You will need to confirm if you or your child can travel to the UK under the current rules if they need to travel from abroad to attend a boarding school. Your school or college will explain the rules to you.

Your child should not travel if the school has not confirmed that it has arrangements in place that allow for transport, quarantine accommodation and testing that meet the requirements in the [guidance for boarding schools](#). Everyone travelling to England must follow the guidance on [travelling to England from another country](#).

All children and young people travelling to England should also follow the appropriate [quarantine and testing guidance](#), based on their age and country of residency. Additional guidance is provided on [quarantine arrangements for boarding school pupils travelling to attend a boarding school in England](#).

## **Remote education if your child cannot attend school or college**

### **Schools**

All state-funded schools must provide remote education for school-aged children who are unable to attend school due to following government guidance or law relating to COVID-19 (for example if they are self-isolating, or if they have tested positive but are well enough to learn from home).

Independent schools with pupils whose education is provided wholly through public funds also need to provide remote education in these circumstances.

Schools should provide remote education equivalent in length to the core teaching your child would usually get in school.

You can find out about your school's remote education offer on their website or by contacting your child's school directly.

Guidance is available to help you [support your child while they are learning from home](#).

You should talk to your child's teacher or headteacher if you have concerns about the amount or quality of the remote education they are receiving. If you have exhausted the school's complaints process and you still have concerns, you can raise them with Ofsted. Ofsted will consider the complaint and act where appropriate.

Schools should work collaboratively with you to put in place reasonable adjustments so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education.

### **Colleges**

FE providers are expected to provide remote education for students aged 16 to 19 who cannot attend on-site for COVID-related reasons (for example - because they need to self-isolate, or if they have tested positive but are well enough to learn from home).

Colleges will use their best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours as possible, recognising this may not be possible if your child's course involves practical teaching and training which involves:

- specialist equipment and supervision
- work experience and placements

You can find out more about your college's remote education offer on their website.

## **Help to get online**

Contact your child's school or college if your child:

- does not have access to a device
- needs support with internet access for remote education

Schools and colleges have been allocated a number of devices and are distributing these to the children who need them most.

## Online safety

Talk to your child about staying safe online and encourage them to talk to you if they come across something worrying.

Our [guidance for parents and carers to keep children safe online](#) explains how to talk about online safety issues.

The guidance about [staying safe online](#) includes information on setting up age appropriate controls, on-line fraud, privacy settings, and screen time recommendations.

## Education recovery

There is lots of support available to help your child catch up on any lost learning due to the pandemic, or boost their wellbeing.

Visit the [education catch up website](#) to find out more about what support is on offer and who is eligible. You can also speak to your child's school or college.

## Household Support Fund

Local authorities have local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those children and families most in need.

A £500 million Household Support Fund is being run by local authorities. It allows local authorities to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals with daily needs such as food, clothing and utilities.

## Mental health and wellbeing

Some children and young people may be experiencing feelings of anxiety, stress or low mood as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Support for children and parents

Encourage your child to talk to you or their teacher if they are feeling anxious or stressed.

Online resources to help you support your child with mental health and wellbeing, include:



- [MindEd](#) - a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health
- [Every Mind Matters](#) - an online tool and email journey to support everyone in taking action to look after their mental health and wellbeing
- [Bereavement UK](#) and the [Childhood Bereavement Network](#) - information and resources to support bereaved pupils, schools and staff
- the [DfE blog](#) - includes [mental health resources](#) for children, parents, carers and school staff

[Advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#) includes actions you can take to support your child and emphasises the importance of taking 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Youth Sport Trust and [Sport England](#) have advice and support on helping children and young people stay physically active.

NHS mental health services remain open and have digital tools to connect with people and provide ongoing support. Please use your local children and young people's mental health service when needed.

## Support for children and young people

Get free, confidential support at any time by:

- texting SHOUT to 85258
- calling Childline on 0800 1111
- calling the Mix on 0808 808 4994

Find help online through:

- [Young Minds](#) - information on COVID-19 and mental health
- [Think Ninja](#) - a free app for 10 to 18 year olds to help build resilience and stay well
- [Every Mind Matters](#) - building resilience and supporting good mental health in young people aged 10 to 16

[E-learning which can help parents and carers](#) to support their children and young people in emergency or crisis situations.

Barnardo's [See, Hear, Respond service](#), provides support to children, young people and their families who are not currently seeing a social worker or other agency, and who are struggling to cope with the emotional impacts of COVID-19. Use the See, Hear, Respond self-referral webpage or Freephone 0800 151 7015.

Report any safeguarding concerns you have about any child. Contact the [NSPCC helpline](#).

## School and college food

Schools and colleges, and some nurseries, will continue to provide free meals for eligible students, including those who are at home during term time due to COVID-19.

The guidance on [providing school meals during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) outlines how and when children eligible for benefits-related free school meals should be supported at home.

# Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity

More information on extra-curricular provision can be found in the [guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings](#) including community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children.

## Assessments, awards and results

### Assessments in primary schools

We are planning for a full programme of primary assessments to take place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. This will include the introduction of the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment and Multiplication Tables Check.

### Assessments in secondary schools and colleges

It is the government's intention that GCSE, A level and other exams will go ahead in summer 2022. Exams and assessments for vocational and technical qualifications will take place, in line with the latest guidelines, throughout the next academic year.

## Elective home education

If you are considering home education due to concerns around safety, you can discuss your concerns with your school, to see what safety measures have been put in place. If you would like to send your child back to school again, find out how to [apply for a school place](#).

Schools are not required to provide any support to parents who have withdrawn their child for elective home education. Local authorities can provide support and guidance to families who elect to home educate but this is discretionary.

For further information, refer to the [guidance on elective home education](#).

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