



Department  
for Education

# **Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance**

**February 2021**

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This guidance explains the actions school leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school. This includes public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

It is for leaders and staff in:

- primary schools
- secondary schools (including sixth forms)
- special schools, special post-16 providers and alternative provision
- 16 to 19 academies
- infant, junior, middle, upper schools
- boarding schools

We expect independent schools to follow the control measures set out in this guidance in the same way as state-funded schools, and health and safety legislation applies equally to independent schools.

Where this guidance refers to schools, that does not include maintained nursery schools or pre-reception classes.

Separate guidance is available for:

- [early years and childcare settings](#)
- [further education colleges and providers](#)

Additional operational guidance is also available for [special schools, special post-16 providers and alternative provision](#).

Schools and trusts should work closely with parents and carers (future references to parents should be read as including carers), staff and unions when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances.

## Overview

From 8 March, all pupils should attend school. Secondary pupils will be offered testing from 8 March.

To prepare for this:

- review and where necessary, update your risk assessment
- make sure you are following the system of controls to minimise the risk of infection, including plan for asymptomatic testing.
- have a contingency plan in place for outbreaks in your school or changes in restrictions

- communicate any changes in your processes to parents

Much of the content in this guidance will be familiar to you, as it replicates what was in place for the autumn term. Specific changes include:

- use of face coverings in classrooms for secondary age pupils and staff
- mandatory attendance expectations in different school phases
- current expectations for clinically extremely vulnerable pupils and staff
- curriculum expectations
- elective home education
- exams

## Public health advice

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and PHE to develop this guidance. Based on the recent [ONS data](#), the risks to education staff are similar to those for most other occupations.

Implementing the system of controls, creates a safer environment for pupils and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. The way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants. We are further strengthening the measures, to provide more reassurance and to help decrease disruption the virus causes to education.

You must comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures. To meet these obligations you must:

- review your health and safety risk assessments in light of this refreshed guidance
- make any necessary changes to your control measures applying the [system of controls](#)

## Risk assessment

Employers have a legal duty to protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, pupils and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within your school.

You must implement sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. This hierarchy of controls is set out in [annex A](#).

You must regularly review and update your risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents' - as the circumstances at your school and the public health advice

changes. This is particularly relevant as you prepare to welcome back more pupils. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned

You must notify your staff and their health and safety representatives of review outcomes.

For more information on what is required of school leaders in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk, see [annex A](#).

## System of controls

We know that the predominant new variant of coronavirus (COVID-19) is more transmissible however, PHE advice remains that the way to control this virus is with the system of controls, even with the current new variants.

In this section where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by Public Health England (PHE), we have said ‘must’. Where there is a legal requirement we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

This is the set of actions you must take. They are grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection’.

If you follow the system of controls, you will effectively reduce risks in your setting and create an inherently safer environment.

These additional measures will be reviewed in partnership with health experts to decide whether evidence suggests that these measures can be eased ahead of the summer term.

### Prevention

#### You must always:

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the school.
- 2) Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.
- 3) Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual.

4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.

5) Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.

6) Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

7) Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.

**In specific circumstances:**

8) Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.

9) Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing, where available.

**Response to any infection**

**You must always:**

10) Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

11) Manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community.

12) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

## **System of controls - prevention**

### **1. Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the school**

#### **When an individual develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has a positive test**

Pupils, staff and other adults must not come into the school if:

- they have one or more [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#)
- a member of their household (including someone in their [support bubble](#) or [childcare bubble](#) if they have one) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms



- they are required to [quarantine having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area](#)
- they have had a positive test

They must immediately cease to attend and not attend for at least 10 days from the day after:

- the start of their symptoms
- the test date if they did not have any symptoms but have had a positive test (whether this was a [Lateral Flow Device \(LFD\) or Polymerase Chain Reaction \(PCR\) test](#))

You must follow this process and ensure everyone onsite or visiting is aware of it.

Anyone told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their public health protection team has a legal obligation to self-isolate, but you may leave home to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm. More information can be found on [NHS Test and Trace: how it works](#).

If anyone in your school develops a new and continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), you:

- must send them home to begin isolation - the isolation period includes the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days
- advise them to follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)
- advise them to [arrange to have a test](#) as soon as possible to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19)

Other members of their household (including any siblings and members of their support or childcare bubble if they have one) should self-isolate. Their isolation period includes the day symptoms started for the first person in their household, or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms, whether this was a [Lateral Flow Device \(LFD\) or Polymerase Chain Reaction \(PCR\) test](#), and the next 10 full days. If a member of the household starts to display symptoms while self-isolating they will need to restart the 10 day isolation period and book a test.

If anyone tests positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, they must restart the 10 day isolation period from the day they developed symptoms.

In non-residential schools, if a pupil displays coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or has a positive test, while at their school 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, if age-appropriate and safe to do so the child should walk, cycle or scoot home following a positive test result. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements may need to be organised by the school. The local authority may be able to help source a suitable vehicle which would provide appropriate protection for the driver, who must be made aware that the individual has tested positive or is displaying symptoms.

If a pupil is awaiting collection:

- they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the pupil, with appropriate adult supervision if required
- a window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if it is safe to do so
- if it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 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
- personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by staff caring for the pupil while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs) - more information on PPE use can be found in the [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings guidance](#)

In an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital, unless advised to.

If a pupil in a boarding school shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their residential setting household. Most 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.

The individual should not use public transport if they are symptomatic. If arranging their return to their family home to isolate, schools should follow advice on transport arrangements in the [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) guidance.

Public Health England (PHE) has good evidence that routinely taking the temperature of pupils is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further information is available on [how to manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) amongst the school community.

### **When an individual has had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms**

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, regardless of whether they are wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or pupils who have been in close contact with that person, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should self-isolate immediately and [arrange to have a test](#))
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the Public Health England (PHE) advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)
- they have tested positive from an LFD test as part of a community or worker programme

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. 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 guidance on the [cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#).

If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace or your local health protection team and told to self-isolate because you have been a close contact of a positive case, you have a legal obligation to do so.

## **2. Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances**

Where pupils in year 7 (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31 August 2020) and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings do not need to be worn by pupils when outdoors on the premises.

In addition, we now also recommend in those schools, that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons.

In primary schools, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). Children in primary school do not need to wear a face covering.

We are taking this additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point.

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. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings in schools or in public places.

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in reducing aerosol transmission 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.

## Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing [face coverings](#). This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education and childcare settings and you should be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

### **Access to face coverings**

Due to the increasing use of face coverings in wider society, staff and pupils are already likely to have access to face coverings. PHE has also published guidance on [how to make a simple face covering](#).

You should have a small contingency supply available for people who:

- are struggling to access a face covering
- are unable to use their face covering as it has become damp, soiled or unsafe
- have forgotten their face covering

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

### **Safe wearing and removal of face coverings**

You should have a process for when face coverings are worn within your school and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to pupils, staff and visitors and allow for adjustments to be made for pupils with SEND who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use

Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Staff and pupils may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day.

You must instruct pupils to:

- not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it
- dispose of temporary face coverings in a 'black bag' waste bin (not recycling bin)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- wash their hands again before heading to their classroom

Separate guidance is available on:

- preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE, in [education, childcare and children's social care settings](#)

### **3. Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser. You must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including:

- when they arrive at the school
- when they return from breaks
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating

Consider how often pupils and staff will need to wash their hands and incorporate time for this in timetables or lesson plans.

Staff working with pupils who spit uncontrollably may want more opportunities to wash their hands than other staff.

Pupils who use saliva as a sensory stimulant or who struggle with 'catch it, bin it, kill it' may also need more opportunities to wash their hands.

Continue to help pupils with complex needs to clean their hands properly.

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. You should consider:

- whether you have enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that all pupils and staff can clean their hands regularly
- if you need to supervise hand sanitiser use given the risks around ingestion – skin friendly skin cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative
- building these routines into school culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger pupils and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

### **4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach**

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. Make sure enough tissues and bins are available to support pupils and staff to follow this

routine. As with hand cleaning, you must ensure younger pupils and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all pupils understand that this is now part of how the setting operates. The [e-Bug coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#) contains free resources for schools, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Some pupils with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good 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 pupils and the staff working with them and is not a reason to deny these pupils face-to-face education.

## **5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products, such as detergents**

In line with the risk assessment and timetabling of the day, put in place and maintain an enhanced cleaning schedule. This should include:

- more frequent cleaning of rooms or shared areas that are used by different groups
- frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- cleaning toilets regularly
- encouraging pupils to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet
- if your site allows it, allocating different groups their own toilet blocks

PHE has published guidance on the [cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#). This contains advice on the general cleaning required in addition to the existing advice on cleaning when there is a suspected case.

## **6. Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible**

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and you must consider how to implement this. You must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between pupils and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- pupil's ability to distance
- layout of the building
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum

### How to group children

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group.

Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate and to keep that number as small as possible.

When using larger groups, the other measures from the system of controls become even more important to minimise:

- transmission risks
- the numbers of pupils and staff who need to self-isolate

Younger pupils and those with complex needs will not be able to maintain social distancing and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Using small groups can:

- restrict the normal operation of education
- present educational and logistical challenges

You will need to consider:

- the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as:
  - playgrounds
  - boarding houses
  - dining halls
  - toilets
- the provision of specialist teaching and therapies

Assess your circumstances and try to implement 'bubbles' of an appropriate size to achieve the greatest reduction in contact and mixing. Make sure this will not affect the quality and breadth of teaching or access for support and specialist staff and therapists.

Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible. Encourage pupils to keep their distance within groups. Try to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible.



Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options and will still bring benefits, even if partially implemented.

You may keep pupils in their class groups for most of the classroom time, but also allow mixing in wider groups for:

- specialist teaching
- wraparound care
- transport
- boarding pupils who may be in one group residentially and another during the school day

Siblings may also be in different groups.

All teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups to facilitate the delivery of the timetable and specialist provision. Where staff need to move between groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. Try to minimise the number of interactions or changes wherever 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 maintain distance from their pupils, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other and from children. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with pupils with complex needs, or those who need close contact care. Provide educational and care support for these pupils as normal, with other increased hygiene protocols in place to minimise the risk of transmission.

Where possible, for example with older pupils with less complex needs who can self-regulate their behaviours without distress, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers. This will not be possible for the youngest children, and some children and young people with complex needs. It may also not be feasible where space does not allow. Doing this where you can, even some of the time, will help.

When staff and pupils cannot maintain distancing, the risk can be reduced by keeping pupils in the smaller, class-sized groups.

You should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating pupils side by side and facing forwards, rather

than face-to-face or side on. It might also include moving unnecessary furniture out of the classroom to make more space.

### **Measures elsewhere**

You should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the school kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Consider staggered break times and lunch times. Make sure you allow time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups.

You should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other.

You should minimise the use of staff rooms, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

### **Measures for arriving at, and leaving the setting**

Consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave.

Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. A staggered start may include:

- condensing or staggering free periods or break time but retaining the same amount of teaching time
- keeping the length of the day the same but starting and finishing later to avoid busy periods

You should consider how to communicate any changes to parents. Remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, including not to:

- gather at the gates
- come onto the site without an appointment

### **Travelling to the setting**

Pupils and staff may use public transport where necessary, but we encourage them to walk, cycle or scoot to and from school wherever it is possible and safe to do so. Where pupils and staff need to use public transport, they should follow the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#).

The [transport to schools and other places of education](#) guidance requires those involved in the provision of dedicated transport to schools to identify the risks. You should adopt measures to address those risks in a way that works in the local circumstances. Distancing should be maximised and mixing of groups should be minimised where possible and practical.

People aged 11 and over must wear a face covering when travelling on public transport. In accordance with advice from PHE, they must also wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school. People who are [exempt](#) do not need to wear a face covering.

### **Other considerations**

Some pupils with SEND (whether with EHC plans or on SEN support) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that these measures will involve. Staff should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

To make sure pupils with medical conditions are fully supported, work with:

- local authorities
- health professionals
- regional schools' commissioners
- other services

Use individual healthcare plans to help pupils receive an education in line with their peers. In some cases, the pupil's medical needs will mean this is not possible, and educational support will require flexibility. Further information is available in the guidance on [supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#).

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual. They, as well as supply teachers, peripatetic teachers or other temporary staff, can move between settings. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff. Such specialists will be aware of the PPE most appropriate for their role. Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, catering staff and deliveries, as well as cleaning staff on site who may be working throughout the school and across different groups. This will require close co-operation between schools and the other relevant employers.

You should have discussions with key contractors about the school's control measures and ways of working. They should ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen safely outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all

visitors with sufficient detail to support rapid contact tracing if required by NHS Test and Trace.

As normal, you should engage with your local immunisation providers to provide routine immunisation programmes on site, ensuring these will be delivered in keeping with the school's control measures. These programmes are essential for children's health and wellbeing and can also provide benefits for staff.

Where a pupil routinely attends more than one setting on a part time basis, for example because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and a special setting, 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 pupil. Pupils should be able to continue attending both settings. While some adjustment to arrangements may be required, pupils in this situation should not be isolated as a solution to the risk of greater contact except when required by specific public health advice.

## **Equipment**

For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, staff and pupils should have their own items.

Classroom based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared within the bubble. These should be cleaned regularly, along with all frequently touched surfaces.

Resources that are shared between classes or bubbles, such as sports, arts, and science equipment should be cleaned frequently. When sharing equipment between different bubbles, you should either:

- clean it before it is moved between bubbles
- allow them to be left unused for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics)

You will need to assess the ability to clean equipment used in the delivery of therapies, for example, physiotherapy equipment or sensory equipment. Determine whether this equipment can withstand cleaning and disinfecting between each use before it is put back into general use. Where cleaning or disinfecting is not possible or practical, resources will have to be either:

- restricted to one user
- left unused for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different individuals

Outdoor playground equipment should be more frequently cleaned than normal. This also applies to resources used inside and outside by wraparound care and out-of-school settings providers.

Pupils should limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, including essentials such as:

- lunch boxes
- hats and coats
- books
- stationery
- mobile phones

Bags are allowed.

Pupils and teachers can take books and other shared resources home, although unnecessary sharing should be avoided. Similar rules on hand cleaning, cleaning of the resources and rotation should apply to these resources.

### **Parent pick-up and drop-offs**

We know that travel to school patterns differ greatly. If those patterns allow, schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school.

Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall time children spend in school. A staggered start may, for example, include keeping the length of the day the same but starting and finishing later to avoid rush hour.

Schools should consider how to communicate this to parents and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, including that gathering at the school entrance and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.

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

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risk from airborne transmission. This happens when people breathe in small particles (aerosols) in the air after someone with the virus has occupied and enclosed area.

When your school is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

These 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 and that only fresh outside air is circulated. 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). Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air
- 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)

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

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, consider:

- opening high level windows in colder weather in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied (for example, between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused)
- providing flexibility to allow additional, suitable indoor clothing – for more information see [school uniform](#)
- rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct draughts

Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces.

## **8. Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary**

Face coverings are not classified as [PPE \(personal protective equipment\)](#). PPE is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings. A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth.

Most staff in schools will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a pupil already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Additional PPE for coronavirus (COVID-19) is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when:

- a pupil becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, and only then if a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained
- performing [aerosol generating procedures \(AGPs\)](#)

When working with children and young people who cough, spit or vomit but do not have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, only any PPE that would be routinely worn, should be worn.

The guidance on [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) provides more information about preventing and controlling infection. This includes:

- when and how PPE should be used
- what type of PPE to use
- how to source it

## **9. Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing, where available**

Rapid testing remains a vital part of our plan to suppress this virus. Schools should follow the guidance set out for their settings:

- [Primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools](#)
- [Secondary schools and colleges](#)
- [Specialist settings](#)

## **System of controls - response to any infection**

### **10. Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process**

Staff members, parents and carers will need to:

- [book a test](#) if they or their child has symptoms - the main symptoms are:
  - a high temperature
  - a new continuous cough
  - a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- [self-isolate](#) immediately and not come to school if:
  - they develop symptoms
  - they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

- anyone in their household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- they are required to do so having [recently travelled from certain other countries](#)
- they have been advised to isolate by NHS test and trace or the PHE local health protection team, which is a legal obligation
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace

## **Polymerase Chain Reactions (PCR) tests for symptomatic testing**

### **Booking a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test through 119**

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests for symptomatic illness can be booked online through the [NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#), or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

All children and young people can be tested if they have symptoms. This includes children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents or carers if using a home testing kit.

### **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests contingency supply**

Separate to the asymptomatic testing regime, all schools were sent an initial supply of 10 PCR test kits before the start of the autumn term in 2020. You can replenish these kits when they run out by making an order through the online portal. You should call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119 if the kits that you have ordered have not arrived.

Having a test at a testing site will deliver the fastest results for symptomatic cases. These PCR test kits are provided to be used in the exceptional circumstance that an individual becomes symptomatic and you believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere.

You will need to decide how to prioritise the distribution of your test kits.

These kits can be given directly to:

- staff
- parents collecting a pupil who has developed symptoms at school



These PCR tests kits will also help ensure that symptomatic staff can get a test. If they test negative, they can return to work as soon as they are well and no longer have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further information on [test kits for schools and further education providers](#) is available.

Ask parents and staff to inform you as soon as they get their results.

### **NHS COVID-19 app**

The app is available to anyone aged 16 and over to download if they choose. For some young people, particularly some with SEND, parents will need to decide whether their use of the app is appropriate.

This will mean that some pupils in year 11, and most pupils in years 12 and above will be eligible to use the app and benefit from its features.

Staff members are also able to use the app.

The guidance for schools and further education colleges in England provides information about [how the app works and guidance for its use within schools in England](#).

## **11. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community**

You must take swift action when you become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) having developed symptoms and taken a PCR test outside of school.

If you would like support on the action you should take to respond to a positive case, you can contact the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. You will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform you of what action is needed based on the latest public health advice.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on their advice, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate immediately and for the next 10 full days counting from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive.

Close contact means:

- anyone who lives in the same household as someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) with a PCR or LFD test:
  - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within 1 metre
  - been within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer without face-to-face contact
  - sexual contacts
  - been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
  - travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will provide advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend you keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between pupils and staff in different groups (see section 6 of the system of control for more on [grouping pupils](#)). This should be a proportionate recording process. You do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

Where individuals are self-isolating and are within our definition of vulnerable, 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.

A template letter will be provided to you, on the advice of the health protection team, to send to parents and staff if needed. You must not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others.

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the pupil or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms, unless they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or their public health protection team, in which case they must self-isolate. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within the 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive, they should follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their school immediately, and

should isolate from the day of onset of their symptoms and at least the following 10 full days. Their household should self-isolate starting from when the symptomatic person in their household first had symptoms and the next 10 full days, following [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

You should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

Based on advice from Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Test and Trace, the testing programme initially included offering those who came into close contact with a positive case in schools the option of 7 days of daily contact testing (with self-isolation if a subsequent test was positive) as an alternative to self-isolation. PHE and NHS Test and Trace have now reviewed their initial advice in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of new variants. They have concluded that these changes in virus mutations warrant further evaluation work and that daily contact testing in place of self-isolation should be paused until this evaluation has taken place. We will update this guidance once this evaluation is complete.

Further guidance is available on [testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

### **Reporting actual or suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) through the education setting status form**

From 11 January, we asked you to resume completing a educational setting status form. The form will be amended to reflect wider opening. The data you supply helps the government monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on schools.

See guidance on how to submit the [educational settings status form](#) for more information.

### **Test and Trace Support Payments**

Some school staff may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500. This is payable in one lump sum from your local authority.

To be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment, you must:

- be on a low income
- be unable to work from home
- be at risk of losing income as a result of self-isolating
- be living in England
- meet the [eligibility criteria](#)
- have been formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, who will provide you with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID

The Department for Health and Social Care has launched the Self-Isolation Service Hub (020 3743 6715). The phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, allowing a school to provide contact details of those individuals who have been asked to self-isolate and are likely to be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment.

By providing these details, close contacts of positive cases identified at school will be formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and provided with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID. Individuals who have not been formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace will not receive an NHS Test and Trace Account ID and will not be able to claim from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

In order for any of your staff who may be eligible for a payment from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to be able to claim, you must follow these steps:

1. Ensure that you collate a list of appropriate close contacts for the person who has tested positive within your establishment and inform these close contacts that they now need to self-isolate.
2. Call the new Service Hub on 020 3743 6715 as soon as you have the eight-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID (sometimes referred to as a CTAS number) of the person who has tested positive.
3. Provide the details of the person who has tested positive, along with the details of the relevant close contacts you have identified. If you do not have NHS Test and Trace Account ID for the person who has tested positive, Hub staff will assist in tracing the person in order to register their contacts on the Test and Trace system (CTAS).
4. NHS Test and Trace will then contact individuals to formally advise them of their need to self-isolate and provide them with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID.
5. Following this, individuals who are employed or self-employed, on a low income, unable to work from home and losing income as a result may qualify for the [Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#) through their local authority.

## **12. Contain any outbreak by following PHE local health protection team advice**

If you have 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, you may have an outbreak.

You should call the dedicated advice service who will escalate the issue to your local health protection team where necessary and advise if any additional action is required. You can reach them by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. This could be the class or year group.

If you are implementing the system of controls, addressing any issues you have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole site closure will not generally be necessary. You should not close except on the advice of health protection teams.

### **Admitting children and staff back to the school**

The pupil or staff member who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) can return to their normal routine and stop self-isolating after they have finished their isolation period and their symptoms have gone or if they continue to have only a residual cough or anosmia. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. If they still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, you should advise them to stay at home and seek medical advice.

You should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting pupils or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

In the vast majority of cases, parents and carers will be in agreement that a pupil with symptoms should not attend the school, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect your pupils and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Your decision would need to be carefully considered in the light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

## **Asymptomatic testing**

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in schools**

Rapid testing using Lateral Flow Devices (LFD)s will support the return to face-to-face education by helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. For secondary school staff and pupils we are moving to a home testing model (for pupils, following the first 3 onsite tests). The lateral flow devices used have received regulatory approval from the MHRA for self-use. Home test kits will be available for all staff on return. Once pupils have been

tested 3 times at school, they will be provided with home test kits for regular testing. Testing remains voluntary but strongly encouraged.

## **Secondary school testing on-site through an Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS)**

Secondary schools should offer pupils testing at an on-site ATS from 8 March. Testing and return of pupils can be phased during the first week to manage the number of pupils passing through the test site at any one time. You should offer 3 tests, 3 to 5 days apart.

You have the flexibility to consider how best to deliver testing on a phased basis from 8 March, depending on your circumstances and local arrangements, but you should prioritise vulnerable children and children of critical workers, and year groups 10 to 13.

Pupils should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your phased return arrangements. Schools will have discretion on how to test students over that week as they return to the classroom.

Testing is voluntary. If consent is provided, pupils will be asked to self-swab at the on-site ATS and after 30 minutes they should be informed of their results.

Individuals with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#). Those with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend school unless they have individually been advised otherwise by NHS Test and Trace or Public Health professionals (for example as a close contact). They should continue to apply the measures in the system of controls to themselves and the wider school setting.

Schools should retain a small on-site ATS on site so they can offer testing to pupils who are unable or unwilling to test themselves at home. We will provide further information about funding available to support this.

## **Home testing**

Both pupils and staff in secondary schools will be supplied with LFD test kits to self swab and test themselves twice a week at home. Staff and pupils must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Staff and pupils should also share their result, whether void, positive or negative, with their school to help with contact tracing.

Pupils aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Adolescents aged 12 to 17 should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary. Children aged 11 attending a secondary school should be tested by an adult.

Staff or pupils with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. They will also need to arrange a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result if the test was done at home. Those with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend school and use protective measures.

## Primary schools

Staff in primary schools will continue to test with LFDs twice a week at home, as per existing guidance on [testing for staff in primary schools and nurseries](#).

Primary age pupils will not be tested with LFDs. Public Health England have advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils may find the LFD testing process unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. We will review this approach in the light of any emerging evidence.

All primary school pupils are expected to return to school on 8 March.

## Specialist settings

We recognise specialist settings will have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing and additional guidance will be published and circulated. We recognise that self-swabbing may cause significant concerns for some children and young people with SEND. Testing is voluntary and no child or young person will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.

## Symptomatic testing

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms (even if they recently had a negative LFD test result), should still self-isolate immediately according to government guidelines.

Those with symptoms are also expected to order a test online or visit a test site to take a lab-based [polymerase chain reaction \(PCR\) test](#) to check if they have the virus.



It remains imperative that the system of controls continues to be rigorously applied to enable the safest possible environment. The testing programme is an important addition to supporting leaders to maintain the continuity of education through the pandemic.

## Attendance

School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from 8 March.

The usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

As usual, you are responsible for recording attendance, following up absence and reporting children missing education to the local authority.

During the week commencing 8 March, pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in secondary schools. Pupils who consent to testing should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your phased return arrangements. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in secondary schools should continue to attend school throughout, unless they receive a positive test result. Testing is voluntary, but strongly encouraged.

You should not plan for rotas as there is no requirement to reduce occupancy in schools. Instead, everyone must follow the [system of controls](#).

## Self-isolation and shielding

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

We know from growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list (SPL) as appropriate, following review with a



clinician. The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally. All 16 to 18 year olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated.

You will be able to request from parents a copy of the shielding letter sent to CEV children, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school or other educational settings whilst shielding guidance is in place.

As normal, you should not encourage parents to request unnecessary medical evidence such as doctors' notes from their GP when their child is absent from school due to illness. This is already set out in [school attendance guidance](#)<sup>1</sup> but is especially important in the context of the pandemic and the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme. If evidence is required, it can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, text or email confirmation of appointments, etc. rather than a doctors' note. As usual, input from GPs should only be sought where there are complex health needs or persistent absence issues.

You are required to provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus (COVID-19), in the circumstances provided for in the [Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction](#). You should keep a record of this activity but do not need to record it in the attendance register.

You should offer pastoral support to pupils who are:

- self-isolating
- shielding
- [vulnerable](#)

Where pupils are not able to attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.

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<sup>1</sup> School attendance guidance:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/907535/School\\_attendance\\_guidance\\_for\\_2020\\_to\\_2021\\_academic\\_year.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf)

## Recording attendance

You should record attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) for all pupils.

During the week commencing 8 March secondary school pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site. Schools should use code Y for secondary pupils not expected to be attending school for lessons during this week due to the asymptomatic testing programme.

You should use code X if a child is self-isolating or quarantining because of coronavirus (COVID-19) in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC.

We will review and provide further advice to schools in due course on what should be included in pupils' attendance records in end of year reports.

## Pupils and families who are anxious about attending school

It is likely that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about attending school. This may include pupils who:

- have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised they no longer need to shield
- live in a household where someone is clinically vulnerable (CV) or CEV (including young carers)
- are concerned about the possible increased risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) such as those who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes

Discuss any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures you are putting in place to reduce any risks.

Remind parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.

Advice for schools and local authorities to support them to [improve school attendance](#) is available.

## Encouraging regular school attendance

You should continue to communicate clearly and consistently the expectations around school attendance to families and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate.

You should also identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about attending or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. You may want to put particular emphasis on:

- disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people
- pupils who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic
- pupils who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic

To support families who will need additional help to secure pupils' regular attendance, you can use the additional catch-up funding that has been provided, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and pupil premium funding.

You should also work closely with other professionals across the education and health systems, where appropriate, to support school attendance. Please do continue to notify the pupil's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

## Vulnerable children

Where pupils who are self-isolating are within our [definition of vulnerable](#), it is important that you put systems in place to keep in contact with them.

When a vulnerable pupil is required to self-isolate, you should:

- notify their social worker (if they have one)
- agree with the social worker the best way to maintain contact and offer support

You should have procedures in place to:

- check if a vulnerable pupil is able to access remote education support
- support them to access it (as far as possible)
- regularly check if they are accessing remote education

## Alternative provision

All pupils in alternative provision (AP) settings should attend school full-time, including:

- pupil referral units
- AP academies
- AP free schools
- independent AP schools

Where they are affected by the Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction, AP settings must provide remote education to pupils covered by the Direction whose attendance would be contrary to government guidance or law around coronavirus (COVID-19).

AP settings must comply with health and safety law which requires employers to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures.

When working through the [system of controls](#), AP settings should take steps to minimise social contact and mixing as far as is practicable.

All AP settings, especially larger AP schools, should consider whether pupils can be placed into smaller groups and still receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

Due to the smaller size of many AP settings, and because AP settings are not typically organised by year groups, AP settings may wish to adopt whole school bubbles as part of their system of controls.

## **School workforce**

School leaders are best placed to determine the workforce that is required in school, taking into account the updated advice set out in this section of the guidance for those staff who are CEV. The expectation is that those staff not attending school who are still able to work should do so from home where possible.

Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and you should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

All staff must follow the [system of controls](#) to minimise the risks of transmission. Following the system of controls will reduce the risks to all staff significantly.

You must explain to staff the measures you are putting in place to reduce risks and should discuss any concerns individuals may have.

## **Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable**

CEV staff are advised not to attend the workplace. Staff who are CEV will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this (no new letter is required), and there is [guidance for everyone in this group](#). It provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take.

Employers should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, including to work from home.

You should continue to pay CEV staff on their usual terms.

Those living with someone who is CEV can still attend work where home-working is not possible and should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

The shielding guidance is reviewed regularly. CEV individuals will be advised in advance of any extension or end date to inform them of changes or continuation of the guidance.

CEV individuals (over 18) have been prioritised for vaccination in phase 1 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Current DHSC guidance, informed by PHE, currently advises that CEV individuals should continue to shield even after they have been vaccinated. This may change as we get further data on the effects of vaccination.

## **Staff who are clinically vulnerable**

CV staff can continue to attend school. While in school they must follow the [system of controls](#) to minimise the risks of transmission.

Staff who live with those who are CV can attend the workplace but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and at home.

## **Pregnancy**

You will need to follow the specific [guidance for pregnant employees](#) because pregnant women are considered CV. In some cases pregnant women may also have other health conditions that mean they are considered CEV, where the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable staff will apply. [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding](#) contains vaccination advice.

Your workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. If you are notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, you should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. An assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Any risks identified at that point, or later during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. You must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control the risks.

As part of your risk assessment, you should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home working may be appropriate to mitigate risks.

You should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any point of gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19). This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recommend that schools follow the same principles for pregnant pupils, in line with their wider health and safety obligations.

Read more [guidance and advice on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Gynaecologists](#).

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

Current evidence shows that a range of factors mean that some people may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). Those at particularly high risk from a range of underlying health conditions should now have been included in the CEV group and will be receiving a letter to confirm this.

For others who feel they may be at increased risk, where it is not possible to work from home, these staff can attend school as long as the [system of controls](#) set out in this guidance are in place. You should continue with an equitable approach to risk management for your workforce, recognising that staff may have a variety of baseline risks. Work continues to build our understanding of what these baseline factors are and the increased risks they pose.

There is further [information available on who is at higher risk from coronavirus](#).

Staff who live with those who may have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace where it is not possible to work from home.

## **Employers' health and safety obligations**

Employers have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, including children, from harm. Employers should continue to assess and update health and safety risks in the usual way, especially in the light of any changing circumstances.

Following the system of controls will help you:

- mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to pupils and staff

- meet your legal duties to protect employees and others from harm

The Health and Safety Executive published guidance on [first aid during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) which:

- supports local risk assessments
- provides guidance for first aiders

## Equalities duties

You must continue to meet your equalities duties. See the [Equality Act 2010 advice for schools](#) for more information.

## Supporting staff

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health.

Make sure you have explained to all staff the measures you are putting in place. Discuss with all staff any changes in place as part of these measures.

Because some staff may be particularly anxious about returning, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing. Read about the:

- [extra mental health support for pupils and teachers](#)
- [Wellbeing for Education return programme](#)

[Education Support](#) provides a free helpline for school staff and targeted support for mental health and wellbeing.

## Staff deployment

You may need to alter the way in which you deploy your staff and use existing teaching and support staff more flexibly.

You should ensure that you continue to have appropriate support in place for pupils with SEND. Any redeployments of staff should not be made at the expense of supporting pupils with SEND.

You should discuss and agree any proposed changes in role or responsibility with members of staff, ensuring staff members have the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work, and all appropriate checks are made if they are engaging in regulated activity (see part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](#) for further information).

This includes making sure that for any interventions or care for pupils with complex needs:

- safe ratios are met
- specific training is undertaken

You should be satisfied that staff have the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work, and discuss and agree any proposed changes in role or responsibility with the staff.

Staff who are not teachers may be deployed to lead groups or cover lessons, under the direction and supervision of a qualified, or nominated, teacher. This is covered under the:

- Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012 for maintained schools and non-maintained special schools
- the freedoms provided under the funding agreement for academies

If, having pursued all the immediate options available, you still have concerns about staffing capacity, you should talk to your local authority or trust point of contact.

Further support on staff deployment is available including:

- a [workload reduction toolkit](#) to help review and minimise unnecessary burdens
- the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) guidance on [making the best use of teaching assistants](#)

## Supply staff and other temporary or peripatetic staff

You can continue to use supply teachers and staff. We recommend using the [Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal](#) when hiring agency workers. This offers a list of preferred suppliers, who must provide transparent charging rates. You can get support by emailing [supplyteachers@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:supplyteachers@crownccommercial.gov.uk) with your school's requirements and contact details.

Supply staff and other temporary or peripatetic staff can move between schools. Such staff and visitors must follow your school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk based on the [system of controls](#). They should also have access to information on the safety arrangements and be provided with this as soon as possible after the booking.

This also applies to other temporary staff and volunteers working in schools such as:

- support staff working on a supply basis
- peripatetic staff such as music tutors and sports coaches



- those working in before and after school clubs

## Other support

Volunteers may be used to support the work of the school, as would usually be the case. It is important that they are properly supported and given appropriate roles.

Where you are using volunteers, continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process in the volunteer section of [keeping children safe in education](#). Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Mixing of volunteers across groups should be kept to a minimum, and they should adhere to the system of controls in place.

## Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff. The [Teaching Vacancies](#) service can help schools to list vacancies for both permanent and fixed-term teaching staff quickly.

Schools should consider a flexible approach to interviews, with alternative options to face-to-face interviews offered where possible. The DfE teaching blog provides:

- information on the [experience of implementing interviews remotely](#)
- advice that can be sent to candidates on [how to prepare for remote interviews](#)

Where face-to-face meetings are necessary, you should share the school's control measures in advance and make it clear to candidates that they must follow the [system of controls](#) that you have in place. This includes any requirements for wearing face coverings where social distancing cannot be managed safely.

When recruiting, continue to adhere to the legal requirements on pre-appointment checks as set out in part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](#).

Initial teacher training (ITT) providers have worked flexibly to ensure this year's newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are ready and prepared to enter the classroom. NQTs will also be supported by materials based on the [early career framework reforms](#). Schools in the early roll-out regions (Bradford, Doncaster, Greater Manchester and the North East) will be able to benefit from the full support package.

## Deployment of ITT trainees and school engagement

ITT trainees can continue to go into their host school or college on placement.

Trainees who go to their placement should be offered coronavirus (COVID-19) testing in the same way other school staff are. They are expected to follow all control measures put in place by host schools.

## **Performance management and appraisal**

Maintained schools must continue to follow the [school teachers' pay and conditions document](#). All pay progression for teachers must be linked to performance management.

You should consider adapting performance management and appraisal arrangements to take account of the current circumstances, particularly where these have had an impact on the ability of the teacher to meet fully their objectives.

Teachers must not be penalised during the appraisal process or any subsequent pay progression decisions because of the decision to restrict pupil attendance at schools.

You should carry out any appraisals and performance management for support staff in accordance with the employee's contract of employment. We do not specify pay or terms and conditions of employment for support staff.

## **Staff taking leave**

Staff will need to be available to work in school during term time. Discuss leave arrangements with staff to inform workforce planning taking into account their individual contractual arrangements.

There is a risk that where staff travel abroad for a legally permitted reason, their return travel arrangements could be disrupted due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and they may need to quarantine on their return.

Guidance on [how to self-isolate when you travel](#) is available.

## **Transport**

### **Dedicated school transport, including statutory provision**

Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys. This helps limit the number of other people with whom they come into contact.

Local authorities are not required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines which are in place for public transport on dedicated school transport. However, social distancing should be put in place within vehicles wherever possible.

Dedicated school services can take different forms and may include:

- coaches regularly picking up the same pupils each day
- minibuses
- services which are used by different pupils on different days
- services for pupils with SEND

The precise approach taken will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the different circumstances.

Do speak to the local authority or transport provider so that you understand the approach they are adopting. You might wish to request a copy of their updated risk assessment. It is important, wherever it is possible, that:

- social distancing is maximised within vehicles
- pupils either sit with their 'bubble' on school transport, or with the same constant group of children each day
- pupils clean their hands before boarding transport and again on disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles is put in place
- organised queuing and boarding is put in place
- fresh air (from outside the vehicle) through ventilation, is maximised, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents

Pupils should not board home to school transport if they, or a member of their household, has had a positive test result or has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

As described in the [system of controls](#) and in accordance with advice from PHE, children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school. A [face covering](#) is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth. This does not apply to people who are [exempt from wearing a face covering](#) on public transport.

Do support local authorities in promoting the use of face coverings on school transport and help them to resolve any issues of non-compliance where appropriate.

Further guidance on face coverings and [transport to school and other places of education](#) is available.

In some circumstances, local authorities are providing additional dedicated school transport services to support capacity on public transport. Additional [funding for local transport authorities](#) is available for this purpose.

## Wider public transport

In many areas, pupils normally make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses. Public transport capacity continues to be constrained. Its use by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

If possible, consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Families using public transport should refer to the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#).

Encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school where possible.

## Pupils travelling from abroad

Where pupils travel from abroad to attend a boarding school you will need to explain the rules to pupils and their parents before they travel to the UK.

Anyone who is not a British or Irish national, or who does not have the right to reside in the UK, who has travelled from or through a [‘red list’](#) country in the previous 10 days, is not permitted to enter the UK and should be told not to travel.

Where pupils (and their parents or guardians or family member) meet the UK entry requirements and have travelled from or through a [‘red list’](#) country in the previous 10 days, they must [quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel for 10 days](#). Pupils travelling to England from other, non-red, list countries will need to quarantine at their place of residence or other suitable place and purchase a home testing package, with coronavirus (COVID-19) tests to be taken on days 2 and 8 after arrival to support the UK’s genomic sequencing programme.

Before travelling, everyone must:

- take a coronavirus (COVID-19) test and get a negative result during the 3 days before you travel
- book and pay for a travel test package, which will include coronavirus (COVID-19) tests to be taken on day 2 and day 8 of your quarantine
- complete a passenger locator form before arrival, with details of where you will quarantine when you arrive and the travel test package booking reference number.

Where arriving from a red list country, permitted travellers will be met on arrival in England and transported directly to their quarantine hotel. Further information is

provided in [what to expect in quarantine guidance](#). When they arrive at the managed quarantine hotel, they will be required to quarantine in their room for 10 days. You will need to explain to parents that they will need to put in place arrangements to ensure they or a guardian, or family member accompanies their child at all times, including whilst they are in quarantine. This may be a parent or guardian, or family member who has accompanied their child when travelling to England, or a different parent, guardian or family member who will need to join and stay with their child in quarantine. Where parents are unable to travel with their child or provide a guardian or family member to quarantine with their child you should advise them not to travel. The costs of isolating in a hotel will be borne by the parent and are currently set at £1,750. There are reductions for adults and children sharing a room.

Where pupils have travelled to England from a country from where travel is permitted, they are required to [quarantine in their own accommodation](#) for 10 days. You should have plans for the collection and transfer of these pupils from their point of arrival and put in place suitable arrangements for their self-isolation which may be in the school's boarding accommodation. You may also want to consider whether the [test to release scheme](#) is appropriate for these pupils.

## School meals

We expect kitchens to be fully open and normal legal requirements will apply to the provision of food for pupils, including ensuring food meets the [standards for school food in England](#). This includes for those eligible for:

- benefits-related free school meals
- universal infant free school meals

School kitchens should follow the [guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

You should also continue to provide free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are learning at home during term time.

More information on [providing school meals during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) is available.

## Remote education

Attendance will be mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age from 8 March. Schools affected by the [Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction](#) are still required to provide remote education to pupils covered by the direction where their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around

coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes, for example, where such guidance means that a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate or that clinically extremely vulnerable children are to shield. All such pupils not physically unwell should have access to remote education as soon as reasonably practicable, which may be the next school day.

Where secondary schools are operating a phased return of pupils in the week commencing 8 March to allow for testing that week, we expect schools to provide remote education for all pupils not yet expected to attend on-site.

Independent Schools (not including academies) are not all covered by the remote education temporary continuity direction. However, they are still expected to meet the [Independent School Standards](#) in full at all times. This includes the requirement to meet all of the education requirements set out in part 1 of the Independent School Standards.

The remote education provided should be equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school and should include recorded or live direct teaching time, as well as time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently. As a minimum you should provide:

- Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children
- Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day
- Key Stages 3 and 4: 5 hours a day

Online video lessons do not necessarily need to be recorded by teaching staff at the school: Oak National Academy lessons, for example, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content.

In developing remote education, we expect you to:

- teach a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practised in each subject so that pupils can progress through the school's curriculum
- select a digital platform for remote education provision that will be used consistently across the school in order to allow interaction, assessment and feedback and make sure staff are trained and confident in its use. If schools do not have an education platform in place, they can access free support at [get help with technology](#)
- overcome barriers to digital access for pupils by:
  - distributing school-owned laptops accompanied by a user agreement or contract

- providing printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks, to structure learning, supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils on track or answer questions about work
- have systems for checking, daily, whether pupils are engaging with their work, and work with families to rapidly identify effective solutions where engagement is a concern
- identify a named senior leader with overarching responsibility for the quality and delivery of remote education, including that provision meets expectations for remote education

When teaching pupils remotely we expect schools to:

- set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects
- consider how to transfer into remote education what we already know about effective teaching in the live classroom by, for example:
  - providing frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources
  - providing opportunities for interactivity, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion
  - providing scaffolded practice and opportunities to apply new knowledge
  - enabling pupils to receive timely and frequent feedback on how to progress, using digitally-facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate
  - using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' needs and addresses any critical gaps in pupils' knowledge
  - avoiding an over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities

We expect you to consider these expectations in relation to the pupils' age, stage of development or special educational needs, for example where this would place significant demands on parents' help or support.

Younger children in Key Stage 1 or Reception often require high levels of parental involvement to support their engagement with remote education, which makes digital provision a particular challenge for this age group. We therefore do not expect that solely digital means will be used to teach these pupils remotely.

We also recognise that some pupils with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support and so expect schools to work with families to deliver an ambitious curriculum appropriate for their level of need.

A previous expectation for schools to publish information about their remote education provision on their website has now become a [legal duty](#). The legal duty does not require schools to provide any more information than they were previously expected to under the guidance relating to remote education. An [optional template](#) is available to support schools with this requirement.

Our [get help with remote education](#) guidance provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available. We have published a [review your remote education provision](#) tool, to support school leaders in reviewing and self-assessing their current remote education offer.

Peer-to-peer advice and training is available through the [EdTech Demonstrator programme](#).

Find guidance on how schools can order devices and access support to get set up with a digital platform at [get help with technology](#).

## Delivering remote education safely

Keeping children safe online is essential. The statutory guidance [keeping children safe in education](#) provides the information on what you should be doing to protect your pupils online. The guidance includes a collection of resources which includes support for:

- safe remote education
- virtual lessons
- live streaming
- information to share with parents and carers to support them in keeping their children safe online

[Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) provides guidance to help schools and teachers support pupils' remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19).

For schools delivering their remote education through live and recorded lessons, the following support is available through third-party resources:

- information portals to help schools, parents and staff deliver safe remote education:
  - [Safe Remote Learning knowledge base](#) by SGWfL
  - [Safeguarding during remote learning and lockdowns](#) by LGfL
- [live remote lessons](#) – SGWfL article answering questions asked of the Professional Online Safety Helpline addressing key concerns from teachers



- the National Cyber Security Centre, which includes which [video conference service](#) is right for you and using video conferencing services securely

## Special educational needs

If pupils with SEND are not able to be in school their teachers are best placed to know how the pupil's needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress.

The requirement for schools within the [2014 Children and Families Act](#) to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place.

You should work collaboratively with families and put in place reasonable adjustments so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education. In this situation, decisions on how provision can be delivered should be informed by relevant considerations including the types of services that the pupil can access remotely.

You can access further information on [supporting pupils and students with SEND](#) to access remote education.

## Estates

There is no need for class sizes to be adjusted from the usual size.

## Ventilation systems

Where mechanical ventilation systems exist, you should ensure they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations. Good ventilation with fresh air is essential at all times in classrooms and particularly during this period.

Refer to the [system of controls](#) for guidance on keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

## Fire safety

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

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

Carry out emergency drills as normal (following social distancing as appropriate). You should make adjustments to your fire drill to allow for social distancing as appropriate. Refer to [advice on fire safety in new and existing school buildings](#).

## Opening after reduced occupancy

It is important that you undertake all the usual building checks to make the school safe. If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use. This can increase the [risk of Legionnaires' disease](#).

Advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers' guidance on [emerging from lockdown](#).

## Educational visits

We advise against all educational visits at this time. This advice will be kept under review.

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

## School uniform

We would encourage all schools to maintain their usual uniform policies. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned:

- more often than usual
- using different methods

Think about how you will manage pupil non-compliance. Taking a mindful and considerate approach may help parents who have difficulty obtaining uniform items or are experiencing financial pressures.

Increased ventilation may make school buildings cooler than usual over the winter months. Consider allowing pupils to wear additional items of clothing in addition to the school's current uniform. Where this occurs, no extra financial pressure should be placed on parents.

## Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity

From 8 March, you should work to resume all your before and after-school educational activities and wraparound childcare for your pupils, where this provision is necessary to support parents to work, attend education and access medical care, and is as part of pupil's wider education and training. We will amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow for this. Vulnerable children can attend these settings regardless of circumstance.

You should advise parents that where they are accessing this provision for their children, that they must only be using this, where:

- the provision is being offered as part of the school's educational activities (including catch-up provision)
- the provision is as part of their child's efforts to obtain a regulated qualification or meet the entry requirements of an education institution
- the use of the provision is reasonably necessary to support them to work, seek work, undertake education or training, attend a medical appointment or address a medical need or attend a support group

You should also continue to work closely with any external wraparound providers which your pupils may use to try to keep children in the same bubble they are in during the school day, as far as possible. The guidance for [providers who run community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children](#) may help you to plan extra-curricular provision.

Where parents are using external childcare providers or out of school extra-curricular activities for their children, you should also:

- advise them to limit their use of multiple out-of-school settings providers, and to only use one out-of-school setting in addition to school as far as possible.
- encourage them to check providers have put in place their own protective measures
- send them the link to the [guidance for parents and carers](#)

If you hire out your premises for use by external wraparound childcare providers, such as after-school or holiday clubs, make sure these organisations have:

- considered the relevant government guidance for their sector
- put in place protective measures

## Curriculum

You should ensure that all pupils – particularly disadvantaged, SEND and vulnerable pupils – are given the support needed to make good progress.

The key principles that underpin our advice on curriculum planning are as follows:

- **Education is not optional.** All pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and equips them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- **The curriculum remains broad and ambitious.** All pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.

Informed by these principles, you should meet the following key curriculum expectations:

- **Teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects.** Where appropriate, teaching time should be prioritised to address the most significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. You should ensure that curriculum planning is informed both by an assessment of pupils' starting points and gaps in their knowledge, and an understanding of what is the most critical content for progression. To achieve this, you may need to make substantial modifications to your curriculum and should make effective use of regular formative assessment while avoiding the introduction of unnecessary tracking systems. You can use existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important content in which pupils are not yet secure.
- **You may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils in exceptional circumstances.** Up to and including Key Stage 3, prioritisation within subjects of the most important components for progression is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which may deprive pupils of the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. If you choose to suspend some subjects for some pupils (where the subject is not one that is statutorily mandated) you should be able to show that this is in the best interests of these pupils and this should be subject to discussion with parents.

### Early years foundation stage (EYFS) to Key Stage 3

For pupils in Reception, [disapplications of specific EYFS requirements](#) can be used where coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions prevent settings delivering the EYFS in full.

You may consider focusing more on the prime areas of learning in the EYFS, including communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development, if you think this would support your children following time out due to coronavirus (COVID-19). For pupils in Reception, teachers should also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary. For Reception, consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor education.

## **Key Stages 1 and 2**

For pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, you are expected to prioritise identifying gaps and re-establishing good progress in the essentials (phonics and reading, increasing vocabulary, writing and mathematics), identifying opportunities across the curriculum so they read widely, and developing their knowledge and vocabulary. You should ensure your curriculum offer remains broad, so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, humanities, music and the arts, physical education and sport, religious education and, at Key Stage 2, languages.

## **Key Stage 3**

For pupils in Key Stage 3 you are expected to consider whether any modification to your curriculum offer is needed to address the most significant gaps in English and mathematics. You should ensure the curriculum remains broad from year 7 to year 9 so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including sciences, languages, humanities, music and the arts, physical education and sport, religious education, and citizenship.

## **Key Stages 4 and 5**

The majority of pupils in years 10 and 11 are expected to continue to study mandatory non-examination subjects like PE, alongside their examination (teacher assessment) subjects. This will support them towards their preferred route to further study.

Pupils in years 12 and 13 are more likely to undertake self-directed study, but you may still need to ensure they receive additional support. Discontinuing a subject is likely to significantly limit choices for further study and employment, so is expected to be rare.

## Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE)

Schools are required to provide some relationships, sex and health education to all secondary age pupils in the academic year 2020 to 2021, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary age pupils.

You are also required by law to publish a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to consult parents on this. You must engage with parents on the school's RSE policy. You can do this online and do not necessarily need to do so in person.

You may choose to focus this year's RSHE teaching on the immediate needs of your pupils, such as health education, introducing a more comprehensive RSHE programme in September 2021.

You should prioritise RSHE content based on the needs of your pupils, with particular attention to the importance of positive relationships, as well as mental and physical health.

## Music, dance and drama in school

You should continue teaching music, dance and drama as part of your school curriculum, especially as this builds pupils' confidence and supports their wellbeing. There may, however, be an additional risk of infection in environments where singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments, dance or drama takes place.

Singing, wind and brass instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, including guidance provided by the DCMS for professionals and non-professionals, available at [working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): performing arts](#).

Schools can continue to engage peripatetic teachers during this period, including staff from music education hubs. Further information on the music education hubs, including contact details for local hubs, is available at [music education hubs](#) published by the Arts Council England.

Schools that offer specialist, elite provision in music, dance and drama should also consider this guidance alongside the DCMS guidance on the performing arts. Specialist provision delivered by further education (FE) providers or higher education (HE) providers should consider the respective DfE guidance for these sectors.

## Minimising contact between individuals

The overarching objective should be to reduce the number of contacts amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff, including for rehearsal and performance. As set out in the [system of controls](#), this can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in bubbles) and through maintaining social distance between individuals. These are not alternative options. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the age of pupils, the layout of the building, and the feasibility of keeping groups separate from each other while offering a broad curriculum.

If staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults.

You should take particular care in music, dance and drama lessons to observe social distancing where possible. This may limit group activity in these subjects in terms of numbers in each group. It will also prevent physical correction by teachers and contact between pupils in dance and drama.

Additionally, you should keep any background or accompanying music to levels which do not encourage teachers or other performers to raise their voices unduly. If possible, use microphones to reduce the need for shouting or prolonged periods of loud speaking or singing. If possible, do not share microphones. If they are shared, follow the guidance on [handling equipment and instruments](#).

## Performances

You should not host any performances with an audience. You may wish to consider alternatives such as live streaming and recording performances, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and parental permission.

## Singing, and playing wind and brass instruments in groups

Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles, or assemblies unless significant space, natural airflow and strict social distancing and mitigation can be maintained.

When planning music provision, you should consider additional specific safety measures. There is some evidence that additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and with the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space. This is particularly evident for singing and shouting, but with appropriate safety mitigation and consideration, singing, wind and brass teaching can still take place. Measures to take follow in the next sections. Government has published advice on [safer singing](#).

## Playing outdoors

Playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible. If indoors, consider limiting the numbers in relation to the space.

## Playing indoors

If indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms; rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission. If playing indoors, limit the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance. It is important to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on [air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

## Social distancing

In the smaller groups where these activities can take place, schools should observe strict social distancing between each singer and player, and between singers and players, and any other people such as conductors, other musicians, or accompanists. Current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metres is appropriate. Pupils should use seating where practical to help maintain social distancing.

## Seating positions

Pupils should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible. Position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player.

## Microphones

Use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly.

## Handling equipment and instruments

Measures to take when handling equipment, including instruments, include the following.

### Handwashing

Require increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if being used by more than one person.



## **Avoiding sharing instruments and equipment**

Avoid sharing equipment wherever possible. Place name labels on equipment to help identify the designated user, for example, percussionists' own sticks and mallets.

If instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly (including any packing cases, handles, props, chairs, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following [government guidance on cleaning and handling equipment](#).

Instruments should be cleaned by the pupils playing them, where possible.

## **Handling scores, parts and scripts**

Limit handling of music scores, parts and scripts to the individual using them.

## **Suppliers**

Consider limiting the number of suppliers when hiring instruments and equipment. You should agree whose responsibility cleaning hired instruments is with the suppliers. Clean hire equipment, tools or other equipment on arrival and before first use. Equipment and instruments should be stored in a clean location if you take delivery of them before they are needed, and they should be cleaned before first use and before returning the instrument.

## **Pick up and drop off points**

Pick up and drop off collection points should be created where possible, rather than passing equipment such as props, scripts, scores and microphones hand-to-hand.

## **Individual lessons**

Individual lessons in music, dance and drama can continue in schools and organisations providing out of school childcare. This may mean teachers interacting with pupils from multiple groups, so you will need to take particular care, in line with the measures on peripatetic teachers.

If there is no viable alternative, music lessons in private homes can resume, following the same guidelines, and additionally following the government guidance for [working in homes](#), and the guidance for [out-of-school provision](#).

In individual lessons for music, dance and drama, social distancing should be maintained wherever possible, meaning teachers should not provide physical correction.

## Physical activity in schools

You have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided while following the measures in your system of controls.

Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups.

You can hold PE lessons indoors, including those that involve activities related to team sports, for example practising specific techniques, within your own system of controls.

For sport provision, outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising natural ventilation flows (through opening windows and doors or using air conditioning systems wherever possible), distancing between pupils, and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sport setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities.

Where you are considering team sports you should only consider those sports whose national governing bodies have developed guidance under the principles of the government's guidance on team sport and been approved by the government i.e. sports on the list available at grassroots sports [guidance for safe provision including team sport, contact combat sport and organised sport events](#). Competition between different schools should not take place until wider grassroots sport for under 18s is permitted.

Refer to:

- guidance on [grassroot sports for public and sport providers](#), [safe provision](#) and [facilities](#), and guidance from [Sport England](#)
- advice from organisations such as the [Association for Physical Education](#) and the [Youth Sport Trust](#)
- guidance from Swim England on school swimming and water safety lessons available at [returning to pools guidance](#) documents
- [using changing rooms safely](#)

You can work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities. You must be satisfied that it is safe to do.

Activities such as active miles, making break times and lessons active and encouraging active travel can help pupils to be physically active while encouraging physical distancing.

## Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

You should, along with the local authority and health partners (where applicable), work with families to co-produce arrangements for delivering all therapies and support that would normally be in place for children with EHC plans. There may be times when it becomes more difficult to do so than usual, particularly if children and young people are isolating. Decisions should be considered on a case-by-case basis which takes account of the needs of, and circumstances specific to, the child or young person, avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach. The statutory duties and timescales remain in place for EHC needs assessments and reviews. At all times it is important that these continue to ensure that the child or young person, and their parent and carer, is at the centre of the process and can engage with the process in a meaningful way.

It is important that you co-operate in supporting timely consultations over potential placements for September, and in providing families with advice and information where requested.

## Catch-up support

You will decide how the catch-up premium provided by Government is spent in your school. To help schools make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a [support guide for schools](#) with evidence-based approaches to catch up and a further [school planning guide: 2020 to 2021](#).

The National Tutoring Programme will continue to offer tuition as normal and schools should continue to sign up and engage with the programme.

## Behaviour, discipline and wellbeing

Your policies should set clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour. Further information on [behaviour and discipline in schools](#) is available.

Set out clearly the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules. You should also set out how you will enforce those rules including any sanctions, especially for any restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules.

Lack of routine, and classroom discipline may contribute to disengagement for some pupils returning to school. This could result in an increase in poor behaviour. Consider what sanctions or consequences are appropriate for poor behaviour and whether additional support should be put in place for these pupils including those who:

- may struggle to reengage in school
- are at risk of being absent or persistently disruptive

Some pupils may return to school having suffered from:

- bereavement
- anxiety
- in some cases, increased welfare and safeguarding harms

This may lead to an increase in social, emotional and mental health concerns, particularly for vulnerable groups such as:

- pupils with a social worker
- previously looked-after children who left care through adoption or special guardianship
- young carers

These pupils may need additional support and access to services such as educational psychologists, social workers and counsellors.

Additionally, provision for pupils who have SEND may have been disrupted during the period of restrictions on attendance and there may be an impact on their behaviour. Work with local services (such as health and the local authority) to ensure the services and support are in place for a smooth return to schools for pupils.

## **Disciplinary actions**

The disciplinary powers that you normally have, including suspension and expulsion<sup>2</sup>, remain in place.

Expulsion should only be used as a last resort and must be lawful, reasonable, and fair. Where a pupil with a social worker is at risk of suspension or expulsion, inform their social worker and involve them in relevant conversations.

Try to avoid expelling any pupil with an EHC plan, or a looked-after child. Where a looked-after child is at risk of suspension or expulsion, the designated teacher should contact the relevant authority's virtual school head as soon as possible. This will help you to decide how to help the child and avoid an expulsion becoming necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms 'suspension' and 'expulsion' are what legislation refers to as an 'exclusion'

Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of expulsion, the designated teacher should speak with the child's parent or guardian and seek advice from their virtual school head.

Pre-empting that a pupil may commit a disciplinary offence, and not allowing the pupil to attend school, is an unlawful suspension.

You should already have arrangements in place to support attendance and engagement. Consider what additional support pupils may need to make a successful return to full-time attendance.

Any disciplinary suspension or expulsion of a pupil from a school, even for short periods of time, must follow the statutory procedure. 'Informal' or 'unofficial' suspensions, such as sending pupils home 'to cool off' for part of the day are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers.

It is unlawful to punish a child for the actions of their parents. For example, refusing to allow a pupil to class because their parents did not attend a meeting or because the parents brought the pupils to school late would be unlawful.

Ofsted will continue to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable. Ofsted is clear that pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school (including to home educate their child) is a form of off-rolling. Elective home education should always be a positive choice taken by parents without pressure from their school.

## **Pupil wellbeing and support**

Some pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. This may particularly be the case for vulnerable children, including those with a social worker and young carers. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation.

Consider using pastoral and extra-curricular activities to:

- support the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement
- address and equip pupils to respond to issues linked to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- support pupils with approaches to improving their physical and mental wellbeing

You may also need to provide more focused pastoral support for pupils' individual issues, drawing on external support where necessary and possible. Our ['Every interaction matters'](#) webinar can help with offering pastoral support for wellbeing.

Where there is a concern a pupil is in need or suffering or likely to suffer harm, follow your child protection policy and part 1 of [keeping children safe in education](#). Consider any referral to statutory services (and the police) as appropriate.

Work with school nurses, where they are in place, to:

- ensure delivery of the [healthy child programme](#) (which includes immunisation)
- identify health and wellbeing needs
- provide support for resilience, mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, bereavement and sleep issues
- support pupils with additional and complex health needs

## Wellbeing for Education Return Programme

The [Wellbeing for Education Return programme](#), provides training and resources to help school staff respond to the wellbeing and mental health needs of pupils. The training provides practical examples to support staff and pupils within a school.

Local authorities have received funding to employ skilled staff to:

- deliver the training to schools
- provide advice and support until March 2021.

## Support and resources

Teachers can access the free [MindEd learning platform for professionals](#), which contains materials on peer support, stress, fear and trauma, and bereavement. MindEd have also developed a [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) staff resilience hub](#) with advice and tips for frontline staff.

The training module on [teaching about mental wellbeing](#) will help improve teacher confidence in talking and teaching about mental health and wellbeing in the classroom.

A recording of the [free webinar for school staff](#) DfE, PHE and NHS England hosted to set out how to support returning pupils is available.

You can access Whole School SEND consortium resources on the [Whole School SEND Resource page](#) of the SEND gateway. They have also produced:

- a leaflet about successful returns following a period of absence
- a leaflet on [transition planning for post-year 11 destinations](#)
- a [COVID-19 SEND review guide](#)
- a [handbook](#) to support teachers to take a whole school approach to supporting pupils following a traumatic event

## Safeguarding

Schools must continue to have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance [keeping children safe in education](#).

You should consider revising your child protection policy to reflect the return of more pupils. This should be led by your designated safeguarding lead.

As children return try to give designated safeguarding leads and their deputies more time to:

- support staff and pupils with new safeguarding and welfare concerns
- handle referrals to children's social care and other agencies where appropriate

The designated safeguarding lead should continue to co-ordinate with children's social care, the local three safeguarding partners and other agencies and services to identify harm and ensure children are appropriately supported. They should speak to school nurses who have continued virtual support to pupils who have not been in school.

## Elective Home Education (EHE)

You should encourage parents to send their children to school, particularly those who are vulnerable.

EHE does not automatically put children at greater risk of harm. You should consider whether a parent's decision to educate at home gives greater cause for concern compared to remaining in school.

If you feel there is additional cause for concern, you should follow your own organisation's child safeguarding policy and refer this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will then consider making a referral to the local authority in line with existing procedures. This should happen as soon as you become aware of a parent's intention, or decision, to home educate.

Alerting local authorities as soon as possible where needed helps them to check if a child is receiving statutory social care services and notify any relevant social worker

to work with the home education team to carry out any further checks or assessments that may be needed.

Part 1 of [keeping children safe in education](#) is clear that you are expected to support social workers and other agencies following any referrals. You will already be aware which children have a social worker assigned to them or their immediate family.

You should work with local authorities and, where possible, coordinate meetings with parents to seek to ensure EHE is being provided in the best interests of the child.

You may find it helpful to direct parents to [the advice on understanding what EHE is](#). Schools are not required to provide any support to parents that have withdrawn their child for EHE. Support provided by Local Authorities is discretionary, including support for a child's special educational needs.

If a parent wants you to admit their child, you should follow your normal processes for in-year admissions applications. Or, put them in touch with their local authority admissions team to discuss [how to apply for a school place for their child](#).

## Inspection

### State-funded school inspection

Routine, graded Ofsted inspections remain suspended for the spring term. It is intended that these inspections will resume in the summer term. We are continuing to keep the inspection arrangements under review.

In the spring term, Ofsted is conducting non-graded monitoring inspections of:

- inadequate schools
- schools judged as requires improvement at their last 2 (or more) consecutive inspections
- some other schools that require improvement

The monitoring inspections are designed to:

- provide assurance to parents
- provide support to schools
- take into account the school's context, including the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- enable inspectors to reach an assessment of whether leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances



The monitoring inspections focus on:

- action being taken to provide education in the current circumstances
- the curriculum, including any adaptations to meet current challenges
- the provision of remote education
- support for pupils with SEND, whether they are in school or being educated at home
- the contribution of those responsible for governance
- the impact of support and challenge provided to the school, including from any external partners

Ofsted also continues to have the power to inspect a school where it has significant concerns. This could include concerns relating to:

- the quality of education being provided, including remote education
- safeguarding

## **Independent schools (not including academies) inspection**

Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate will continue to undertake emergency, progress monitoring and material change inspections where appropriate in the spring term. The current intention is that standard inspections will not be reintroduced until the summer term.

## **Primary assessment**

We have cancelled the statutory Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests and key teacher assessments planned for summer 2021, including the Key Stage 2 tests in reading and mathematics.

You should continue to use assessment during the summer term, using past test papers if you wish. This will inform teaching, enable you to give information to parents on their child's attainment in their annual report, and support transition to secondary school.

We are planning for a full programme of primary assessments to take place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

## **Exams**

GCSEs, A and AS level exams will not go ahead this summer as planned. Students taking GCSE, AS and A levels, will receive grades based on teacher assessment, with teachers supported to reach their judgements by guidance and training from the

exam boards. Further detail will be published shortly, now that the consultation on this has closed.

## Accountability expectations

Performance tables were not published for the 2019 to 2020 academic year. We will not judge schools on data based on exams and assessments from 2020.

We will not publish data based on exam and assessment results from summer 2021 on school and college performance tables.

Read [coronavirus \(COVID-19\): school and college accountability](#) to see what this means for accountability in 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021.

## Contingency planning

For individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils and pupils who are shielding following government guidance related to coronavirus (COVID-19), remote education plans should be in place.

You should continue to operate as normally as possible. In the event that restrictions in schools are needed to help contain the spread of the virus, you may be asked to revise your delivery models for a short period of time. To help with this, we have published a [contingency framework, which has been updated and](#) outlines how schools should operate in the event of any restrictions.

Any decision that there should be local restrictions in any childcare or education settings will be made by central government on a case-by-case basis.

Find guidance on how schools can order devices and access support to get set up with a digital platform at [get help with technology](#).



Department  
for Education

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