

Educational Settings COVID 19 Guidance August 2021

Education Setting COVID19 Guidance – Post 16th August 2021

Alongside the 'Guide to completing an 'Educational Settings COVID19 Risk Assessment' document, this document has been designed to provide education settings with updated guidance in line with the Government changes made on the August 16th and the recent lifting of some restrictions. Risk Assessments should be reviewed and updated following the Government recommendations alongside your own local arrangements, where supported by your employer.

It is expected that Educational Settings will continue to:

- Promote full vaccination of all staff, alongside promoting vaccination among appropriate pupils and parents.
- Ensure good hygiene for everyone.
- Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
- Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
- Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Please note that from the 16th August 2021 onwards, close contacts who have had both doses of vaccination (more than 14 clear days prior to date of exposure to case) and those aged under 18 years and 6 months will not be required to self-isolate (unless they are symptomatic or test positive), but will be asked to take a PCR test. They will also continue to be asked to consider continuing with twice weekly LFT testing, limiting their social contact, and wearing face coverings in indoor public spaces.

The Local Authority and local Public Health will continue to support schools that want to keep some mitigations/measures in place to minimise/prevent transmission of infection, such as consistent groupings, staggered start and finish times, minimising bringing parents onto site, use of face coverings. We will continue to keep this position under review based on infection rates in the county and any other relevant considerations.

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Mixing and 'bubbles'

It is no longer recommend that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that bubbles will not need to be used for any summer provision (for example, summer Educational Settings) or in Educational Settings from the autumn term. You should make sure your outbreak management plans cover the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups.

Positive Cases, testing and contact tracing

Following the initial on-site testing, Secondary settings will continue to issue staff and pupils with LFTs for twice weekly testing. Primary settings will also issue LFTs to staff for twice weekly testing, and we will continue to encourage all primary-age pupils to continue to test on a regular basis. As there will no longer be isolation for doubly vaccinated close contacts and those under 18 years and 6 months, this will be a key mitigation to try and avoid bringing the infection into schools, and we will continue to work with schools to reinforce this with parents and the wider school community.

You should ensure that you are aware and log all pupils in the school who have tested positive for COVID-19 including dates for onset of symptoms (if relevant) and test dates, as well as any known links and exposures inside or outside of school. NHS Test and Trace should have been in contact with the positive case to ascertain some of the known close contacts and recommended any contacts to get a PCR test.

We would advise that in these scenarios you also notify parents that there is a positive case, and recommend other pupils get a PCR test. If you have continued with some local measures and mitigations (such as consistent groupings or zoning) you should be able to identify potential contacts easily. If not then we would suggest as a minimum you ask all class contacts that the case may have had in their infectious period (2 clear days prior to day of symptoms onset/test - if no symptoms - through to 10 days afterwards), alongside any other close contacts the child has had (break times, lunch times, before and after school (including transport) to go for a PCR test, and continue with twice weekly LFT testing (this would be recommended in primary settings with cases also). Please note that this will not require the interrogation of seating plans but will require talking to the pupil/staff about non-class contacts. Please let the LA know about potential transport contacts.

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If there is more than one case in the same class/group in a short time period, it may be recommended that parents/staff are notified and an additional PCR test recommended 4-7 days after that notification, alongside continuing with regular LFT tests. Further actions may also be recommended by the LA

This approach is intended to complement the work of NHS Test and Trace who will talk to cases (or their parents) directly about any close contacts they know about in the setting. It will also be important to identify staff close contacts who have not had both vaccinations more than 14 clear days prior to contact with the case, as they will need to isolate for 10 clear days after the day of last contact with the case (alongside taking a PCR test).

Please note that the above local recommendations will be kept under review in the light of changing national/regional guidance and direction. It may be that a change is made from recommending PCR testing to LFT testing, for instance for the broad potential close contact groups identified.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to Educational Setting or college.

Reintroduction of face coverings

If you have an outbreak in your Educational Setting, a director of public health might advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms (by pupils, staff and visitors, unless exempt). You should make sure your outbreak management plans cover this possibility. In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. Transparent face coverings may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, the evidence to support this is currently very limited. Face coverings (whether transparent or cloth) should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

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

The use of face coverings may have a particular impact on those who rely on visual signals for communication.

You have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils to support them to access education successfully. Where appropriate, you should discuss with pupils and parents the types of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support an individual.

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

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Stepping measures up and down

You should have your outbreak management plans that outline how you would operate if there were an outbreak in your Educational Setting or local area. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children and young people, any measures in Educational Settings should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of Educational Settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible. Central government may offer local areas of particular concern an enhanced response package to help limit increases in transmission. If you have several confirmed cases within 14 days, 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, such as implementing elements of your outbreak management plan. 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.

Control measures

You should:

- Ensure good hygiene for everyone, using signage and providing hand sanitiser or hot water and soap for regular use
- Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, ensuring regular touch points are included within your regime
- Keep occupied spaces well ventilated, do not prop open fire doors or use desk, portable or floor standing fans.
- Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Ensure good hygiene for everyone

Hand hygiene

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

Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. The [e-Bug COVID-19 website](#) contains free resources for you, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

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

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Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents

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

Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

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

You should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of your risk assessment and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving particular consideration when holding events where visitors such as parents are on site, for example, Educational Setting plays.

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

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

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

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

You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature. The [Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [CIBSE COVID-19 advice](#) provides more information.

DfE is working with Public Health England, NHS Test and Trace, and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) on a pilot project to measure CO2 levels in classrooms and exploring options to help improve ventilation in settings where needed.

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

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test pupils, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on [when to self-isolate and what to do](#). They should not come into Educational Settings if they have symptoms, have had a positive test result or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine).

If anyone in your Educational Setting develops [COVID-19 symptoms](#), however mild, you should send them home and they should follow public health advice.

If a pupil in a boarding Educational Setting shows symptoms, they should usually self-isolate in their residential setting so that their usual support can continue, others may then benefit from self-isolating in their family home.

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For everyone with symptoms, they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

If a pupil is awaiting collection, they should be left in a room on their own if possible and safe to do so. A window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if possible. Appropriate PPE should also be used if close contact is necessary. Further information on this can be found in the [use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) guidance. Any rooms they use should be cleaned after they have left.

The household (including any siblings) should follow the PHE [stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Asymptomatic testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within Educational Settings. That is why, whilst some measures are relaxed, others will remain, and if necessary, in response to the latest epidemiological data, we all need to be prepared to step measures up or down in future depending on local circumstances.

Over the summer, staff and secondary pupils should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open, such as summer Educational Settings. Educational Settings will only provide tests for twice weekly asymptomatic testing for pupils and staff over the summer period if they are attending an Educational Setting. However, testing will still be widely available over the summer and kits can be collected either from your local pharmacy or ordered online.

As pupils will potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary Educational Setting pupils should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.

Settings may commence testing from 3 working days before the start of term and can stagger return of pupils across the first week to manage this. Pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.

Staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed.

Secondary Educational Settings should also retain a small asymptomatic testing site (ATS) on-site until further notice so they can offer testing to pupils who are unable to test themselves at home.

There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to test over the summer period. They will be offered the 2 tests at an ATS at the beginning of the autumn term when they start at their secondary Educational Setting as a new year 7. Educational Settings may choose, however, to start testing year 6 pupils earlier, including in summer Educational Settings, depending on their local circumstances.

Confirmatory PCR tests

Staff and pupils with a positive LFT test result should self-isolate in line with the [stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). They will also need to [get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19](#). Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the pupil can return to the Educational Setting, as long as the individual doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms.

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Additional information on [PCR test kits for Educational Settings and further education providers](#) is available.

Other considerations

All clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) children and young people should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend. Further information is available in the guidance on [supporting pupils at Educational Setting with medical conditions](#). You should ensure that key contractors are aware of the Educational Setting's control measures and ways of working.

Admitting children into Educational Settings

In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a pupil with symptoms should not attend the Educational Setting, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your Educational Setting, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. Your decision would need to be carefully considered, considering all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Attendance restrictions

The degree of restrictions applicable to Educational Settings should form part of your Outbreak management plan. As a general rule attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory Educational Setting age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend their Educational Settings. Where a child is required to self-isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19 in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC they should be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where they are unable to attend because they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code I (illness). For pupils abroad who are unable to return, code X is unlikely to apply. In some specific cases, code Y (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) will apply. Further guidance about the use of codes is provided in the [Educational Setting attendance guidance](#).

Travel and quarantine

Where pupils travel from abroad to attend a boarding Educational Setting, you will need to explain the rules to pupils and their parents before they travel to the UK. All pupils travelling to England must adhere to [travel legislation](#), details of which are set out in [government travel advice](#). Additional guidance has been issued on the [quarantine arrangements for boarding Educational Setting pupils travelling from red-list countries to attend a boarding Educational Setting in England](#).

Parents travelling abroad should bear in mind the impact on their child's education which may result from any requirement to quarantine or isolate upon return.

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Remote education

Not all people with COVID-19 have symptoms. Where appropriate, you should support those who need to self-isolate because they have tested positive, to work or learn from home if they are well enough to do so. Educational Settings subject to the [remote education temporary continuity direction](#) are required to provide remote education to pupils covered by the direction where their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19.

You should maintain your capacity to deliver high-quality remote education for the next academic year, including for pupils who are abroad, and facing challenges to return due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, for the period they are abroad.

Independent Educational Settings (not including academies) are only covered by the remote education temporary continuity direction in relation to state-funded pupils in their Educational Settings. However, they are still expected to meet the [Independent Educational Setting Standards](#) in full at all times. The remote education provided should be equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in Educational Setting. You should work collaboratively with families and put in place reasonable adjustments so that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can successfully access remote education.

Full expectations for remote education, support and resources can be found on the [get help with remote education service](#).