



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

**Guidance for the full opening  
of schools:  
A rapid overview**

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# The ambition



It is the government's intention for all pupils to be back to school in September.

CST supports this ambition because:

- Prolonged absence from school is concerning academically, socially - and for some children, from a welfare and safety perspective; and
- The long-term impact of a deep recession, particularly on the poorest families, will be very damaging.

This is an exercise in the balance or risk. It is important to balance the public health risks in the short term (related to the transmission of the virus) with longer term public health considerations. If a child loses out on education, this can have an impact on that child across their whole lives - their economic prosperity and long-term health. Children benefit hugely from being at school.

We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead of us. School and trust leaders must be trusted to exercise discretion and good judgement to suit their context and in the best interests of their pupils, parents and communities.

# The rationale



- The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased.
- NHS Test and Trace system is running.
- Public Health England is clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools.
- Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing - we know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.
- The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school.
- Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well-qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households, school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.

# Part one: Public Health Advice to minimise risks

### **Essential measures include:**

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

### **How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:**

- grouping children together
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks so that pupils do not breathe on each other
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

# The system of controls #1

The set of actions schools must take, grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection’

## A. Prevention:

- 1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- 2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach
- 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- 5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

*Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time. Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances. Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.*



## The system of controls #2

### B. Response to any infection

7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community

9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

*Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.*

*Very detailed guidance follows including how to group children, measures within the classroom, measures elsewhere and measures for arriving at and leaving school. Schools must work through the system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school, and allows you to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. If you follow the guidance set out here, the guidance states that you will effectively reduce risks in the school or groups of schools, and create an inherently safer environment.*

# Risk assessments

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that schools and trusts should revisit and update their risk assessments, to consider the additional risks and control measures to enable a return to full capacity in the autumn term.

Schools and trusts should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls in respect of their conventional risk profile considering the implications of COVID-19.

Schools and trusts should ensure that they implement sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of control to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

*More guidance on risk assessments is available in the Annex to the guidance.*

# Part two: School Operations



# Transport

## School transport

Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public and tend to be consistent. This means physical distancing will not apply from the autumn term on dedicated transport. Advice is given on the system of controls to implement for school transport

## Public transport

Use of public transport by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum. Pupils using public transport should refer to the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#).

# Attendance

The usual rules on school attendance will apply from September, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus.

Where this is the case, DfE expects schools to be able to immediately offer these pupils access to remote education.

# Workforce #1

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

Clinically extremely vulnerable list will be paused on 1<sup>st</sup> August. Where schools apply the full measures in the guidance, the risks to all staff will be mitigated significantly, including those who are extremely clinically vulnerable and clinically vulnerable. Pregnant women are in the clinically vulnerable category. DfE expects this will allow most staff to return to the workplace, although they advise those in the most at risk categories to take particular care while community transmission rates continue to fall.

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

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus. Research is ongoing to understand and translate these findings. If people with significant risk factors are concerned, DfE recommends schools and trusts discuss their concerns and explain the measures the school is putting in place to reduce risks. School leaders should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures where appropriate.

## Workforce #2

### Deploying support staff and accommodating visiting specialists

Schools should ensure that appropriate support is made available for pupils with SEND, for example by deploying teaching assistants and enabling specialist staff from both within and outside the school to work with pupils in different classes or year groups.

### Supply / peripatetic teachers

Schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this period. Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between schools, but school leaders will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the school where possible. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the school premises, and secure best value, schools may wish to use longer assignments with supply teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.

## Workforce #3

### **Expectation and deployment of ITT trainees**

DfE strongly encourage schools to consider hosting ITT trainees. There is otherwise a risk that insufficient training places will be available.

### **Staff travelling abroad over the summer**

DfE advises that school leaders discuss leave arrangements with staff before the end of the summer term to inform planning for the autumn term. Where it is not possible to avoid a member of staff having to quarantine during term time, school leaders should consider if it is possible to temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.



## Extra curricular provision

You can consider resuming any breakfast and after-school provision from the start of the autumn term. This is likely to be logistically challenging, particularly for clubs that would normally offer support across year groups, where parents are using multiple providers, or where childminders are picking up/dropping off pupils.

DfE advises that schools should carefully consider how they can make such provision work alongside their wider protective measures, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible. If it is not possible to maintain bubbles being used during the school day then schools should use small, consistent groups.

The [guidance](#) for summer holiday childcare will be useful in planning extra-curricular provision. This includes schools advising parents to limit the number of different wraparound providers they access, as far as possible. Where parents use childcare providers or out of school activities for their children, schools should encourage them to seek assurance that the providers are carefully considering their own protective measures, and only use those providers that can demonstrate this. As with physical activity during the school day, contact sports should not take place.

# Part three: Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support



# Curriculum

Principles:

- Teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term, but make use of existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important missed content – prioritise within subjects of the most important components for progression.
- While substantial modification to the curriculum may be needed at the start of the year, schools should aim to return to the school’s normal curriculum in all subjects by summer term 2021.
- Plan on the basis of the educational needs of pupils.
- Develop remote education so that it is integrated into school curriculum planning.

*The guidance gives specific points for early years foundation stage (EYFS) to key stage 3 and then for key stages 4 and 5. In exceptional circumstances, it may be in the best interests of a year 11 pupil to discontinue an examined subject because the school judges that, for example, they would achieve significantly better in their remaining subjects.*



## Physical activity

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided whilst following the measures in their system of controls. Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups, and contact sports avoided.

Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising distancing between pupils and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sports 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

# Pupil wellbeing and support

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. Some may need support to re-adjust to school; others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return; a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school.

Schools should consider the provision of pastoral and extra-curricular activities to all pupils designed to:

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

# Behaviour expectations

Schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules/policies, and consider how to communicate rules/policies clearly and consistently to staff, pupils and parents, setting clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour.

Schools should set out clearly at the earliest opportunity the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how they will enforce those rules including any sanctions. This is particularly the case when considering restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules.

Schools will need to work with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that behaviour expectations are clearly understood, and consistently supported, taking account of individual needs and should also consider how to build new expectations into their rewards system.

*It is likely that adverse experiences and/or lack of routines of regular attendance and classroom discipline may contribute to disengagement with education upon return to school, resulting in increased incidence of poor behaviour. Schools should work with those pupils to help them reintegrate back into school life.*

# Part four: Assessment and accountability

# Inspection

Routine Ofsted inspections will remain suspended for the autumn term.

However, during the autumn term, inspectors will visit a sample of schools to discuss how they are managing the return to education of all their pupils. These will be collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations set out in this document, and will not result in a judgement. A brief letter will be published following the visit.

The insights that inspectors gather will also be aggregated nationally to share learning with the sector, the government and the wider public. In addition, Ofsted has the power to inspect a school in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding.

It is intended that routine Ofsted inspections will restart *from* January 2021, with the exact timing being kept under review.



# Primary assessment

Statutory primary assessments will take place in summer 2021. The early years foundation stage profile, and all existing statutory key stage 1 and 2 assessments, should return in 2020 to 2021 in accordance with their usual timetables. This includes:

- the phonics screening check
- key stage 1 tests and teacher assessment
- the Year 4 multiplication tables check
- key stage 2 tests and teacher assessment

The statutory rollout of the reception baseline assessment has been postponed until September 2021.

# Public examinations

GCSEs and A levels will take place in summer 2021 but with adaptations, including those which will free up teaching time.

Ofqual has launched a [consultation](#) on proposed adaptations to exams. This consultation includes proposals and questions on the following areas:

- adaptations to exams and assessments that could free up teaching time
- adaptations to exams and assessments to address obstacles that could be created by any public health safeguards
- sampling of subject content
- the use of more optional questions in exams
- changing the length of exams
- changing the exam timetable



# Accountability

Performance tables are suspended for the 2019 to 2020 academic year, and no school or college will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020.

Until the new data release is available, all those working with schools, including Ofsted and DfE regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data. The Department for Education will continue to use 2019 data as a starting point for any conversation about support for schools with Ofsted judgements below good.

*CST have asked for clarification on performance tables for 2020 to 2021.*

# Part five: Contingency planning for outbreaks

## Process in the event of local outbreaks

If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread.

The Department for Education will be involved in decisions at a local and national level affecting a geographical area, and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice.

DfE has published [local lockdown guidance](#).

# Remote education

For individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils, remote education plans should be in place. These should meet the same expectations as those for any pupils who cannot yet attend school at all due to coronavirus. (*extended guidance on remote education support follows*).

In the event of a local outbreak, the PHE health protection team or local authority may advise a school or number of schools to close temporarily to help control transmission. Schools will also need a contingency plan for this eventuality. This may involve a return to remaining open only for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, and providing remote education for all other pupils.



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**Thank you**

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