



Living with Covid in education settings

Having successfully managed a challenging autumn and winter period, it is now time to look forward to the next twelve months and beyond. Given the success of the Government's strategy, the state of the virus and the protections the country has built, England is now in a position to take the next steps in living with the virus.

Key messages for education settings

- The overarching objective is to maximise the number of children and young people in face-to-face education or childcare and minimise any disruption, in a way that best manages the risk of COVID-19.
- From 21st February, as we learn to 'live with Covid', students in mainstream education and childcare settings **will no longer be asked to test asymptotically on a twice weekly basis**. Students should now test in line with public health advice for wider society.

Self-isolation

- There is no longer a legal requirement for people with COVID-19 to self-isolate from the 24th February, however **if pupils have any of the main symptoms or a positive test result, the public health advice is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people** remains.
- Children and young people are also advised to take an LFD test 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day.
- If both tests are negative they should return to their childcare or educational setting, if they normally attend one, and feel well enough to do so.
- If they have a positive LFD test, they should take another test the following day and should return to their setting after two negative LFD tests on two consecutive days.
- The maximum advised period they are advised to stay at home for is 10 days.
- Anyone with any of the main symptoms should order a PCR test and is advised to stay at home while waiting for the result.
- Contacts or siblings of positive cases should not be asked to isolate.

Contact Tracing

- Daily Testing of Close Contacts and contact tracing by NHS Test and Trace will also end on the 24th February.
- All education and childcare settings should continue to ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep occupied spaces well ventilated, and follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Resilience and planning for COVID-19 remains important, and measures affecting education and childcare may still be necessary in some circumstances.

- Local authorities may recommend additional measures are implemented in individual settings or across an entire area. More severe measures affecting education and childcare may be necessary in extreme circumstances.

Key Q&A

What are you doing to reduce risk in settings? / Does this mean settings will be less safe to attend?

- Given we now know that the risks of severe illness from COVID-19 in most children and most fully vaccinated adults are very low and our successful vaccination programme has achieved a high rate of take-up, we can inject greater normality back into education settings.
- All education and childcare settings should continue to ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep occupied spaces well ventilated, and follow public health advice on managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- As is the case now, anyone with symptoms should undertake a PCR test and self-isolate at home, if positive.
- These measures remain the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus when used in combination.

What discretion do individual settings have around implementing additional measures such as face coverings, if they want?

- Settings should seek additional public health advice if they are considering additional measures, either by phoning the DfE helpline (0800 046 8687, option 1) or in line with other local arrangements.
- Individual settings continue to have responsibility for putting in place proportionate control measures in compliance with health and safety law, to ensure they meet their health and safety duties.
- Settings must regularly review and update their risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents', as the circumstances in their setting and the public health advice changes. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective and working as planned.
- No pupil or student should be denied education on the grounds that they are, or are not, wearing a face covering or taking a COVID test.

What happens if an individual school/setting does still choose to recommend wearing face coverings?

- Face coverings are no longer routinely recommended in either classrooms and teaching spaces, or when moving around the premises outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas.
- These recommendations have been removed to ensure as little disruption to learning as possible and so that all children and young people can enjoy a normal experience in the classroom.
- Settings should ensure their contingency plans cover the possibility that the temporary and exceptional wearing of face coverings may be necessary.

- Settings should consider seeking additional public health advice if they are considering additional measures, either by phoning the DfE helpline (0800 046 8687, option 1) or in line with other local arrangements.
- No pupil or student should be denied education on the grounds that they are, or are not, wearing a face covering.

Contact tracing for children isn't as simple as adults with getting contact details etc. – are schools going to need to get involved again? If not, how will it be safe, especially with no daily testing?

- Contact tracing by NHS Test and Trace will also end on the 24th February. The responsibility moves to the individual. Close contacts of someone with COVID-19 but who did not spend time with them overnight are at a lower risk of becoming infected. They will be advised to follow guidance such as getting vaccinated and knowing the symptoms of COVID-19.

What can a school do if a parent sends a child in to school with Covid? Can they prevent them from coming into school?

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

Under what circumstances should/shouldn't students attend?

- School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. It is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible are regularly attending school.
- If an individual has any of the main symptoms or a positive test result, the public health advice remains unchanged and is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

What if a setting wants to keep testing?

- It is no longer recommended that mainstream settings ask pupils, students and staff to regularly test, and they will not be able to access test kits for this purpose.
- Staff and students should now test in line with public health advice for wider society. In exceptional circumstances, Directors of Public Health may advise additional testing is undertaken, for example due to high staff absences or severe disruption.

What happens to schools' direct supply line for tests? Will schools still be able to offer on-site testing where pupils won't or can't test at home?

- The Education channel remains open for recommended testing in an Outbreak, but settings that are not continuing with regular testing should advise staff and students to get tests from Gov.uk and local pharmacies in the first instance.

What is the guidance for:

- **immuno-suppressed/those currently identified as more vulnerable**
 - **pregnant staff**
 - **those living with 'vulnerable' family members**
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- Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, people previously considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk are not being advised to shield again.
 - Individuals with a weakened immune system should follow [DHSC and UKHSA advice](#) for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk from COVID-19.
 - Children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who live with someone who has COVID-19 should continue to attend the setting as normal.