



Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for school and college leaders

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Introduction

The situation with regard to Coronavirus (Covid-19) is fast-moving and hard to predict. The most up-to-date guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England for educational settings can be accessed [here](#), and further information about the government response [here](#).

This document is intended to supplement that official guidance. It is designed to help school and college leaders to prepare for a widespread outbreak of the virus, and the major implications for their pupils and staff.

Leaders with specific questions are advised to contact the DfE's Coronavirus helpline on coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk or 0800 046 8687. ASCL's member support hotline is available on 0116 2991122. Please be advised that both helplines will be extremely busy at the moment, and it may take a while to get through. See Section 2 of this document for further sources of information and support.

Section 1: Ten steps to plan and prepare

These ten steps aim to assist school and college to plan and prepare for a widespread outbreak of the virus. Most will already have done or considered everything here, but they provide a useful checklist to refer back to as the situation evolves.

1. Check emergency plan details, reminding families and staff to update their details, in case a closure is required during school opening hours. **Consider asking families if they have members working in vital services, such as emergency services and food distribution.**
2. Revise or draft a risk assessment (see Section 3), ensuring clear delegation of responsibilities and decision making. It should take into consideration how vulnerable pupils' needs will be met (including alternative ways to raise safeguarding concerns in the event of a partial or full closure) and identify staff or pupils who are at higher risk, i.e. those who have underlying health conditions.
3. Communication is key to dispelling rumours and myths. Consider designating a liaison and communications role for keeping up to date with information and fielding inquiries within the school.
4. For school trips, obtain a clear understanding of the cancellation policy put in place by the travel company, venue and transport provider. Check to see if any changes have been made in the light of the current situation. Pursue a full refund as a priority. **We recommend keeping a record and evidence of all additional costs and losses incurred due to coronavirus.**
5. Ensure regular health and safety processes and procedures are being followed robustly, check medical equipment and plans such as inhalers, asthma plans and medication. Consider ways to reduce the risk of spread in and around school, i.e. additional handwashing on entering school and/or classes, waste handling and disposal.
6. Consider ways to reduce person-to-person close contact and potential pinch points, such as assemblies, sporting activities, and group cookery/tasting activities. There are various measures schools could consider, but they need to decide what is workable in their specific circumstances. These could include individual snack plates for nursery children; children keeping water bottles with them rather than in communal trays; additional cleaning between dinner sittings; reducing self-service options from food service; and providing protective equipment for those preparing and serving food.

7. Check consumable stocks and supplies are in place, i.e. food, hand wash, tissues, hand sanitisers, cleaning materials and equipment. Consider alternatives if some supplies are unavailable, such as changing school meal menus or a reciprocal arrangement with other local schools to support each other.
8. Check that cleaning and site maintenance staff and contractors have appropriate and necessary supplies to undertake cleaning.
9. If a site is multi-use, consider measures that could collectively be taken with the other organisations, such as asking all visitors to clean their hands before entering any of the buildings on site.
10. In the event of a partial or full closure, provide clear expectations to families and staff of what work will be carried out. For staff, consider any additional infrastructure, equipment and advice needed for those adjusting to homeworking, i.e. appropriate working hours and use of equipment, login details and remote access. For pupils, check what equipment they have access to at home and consider how to support those who are unable to access digital resources.

Section 2: Sources of information and support

[Downloadable posters](#)

[COVID-19 guidance for educational settings](#)

[COVID-19 travel guidance for the education sector](#)

[NGA information for governing boards](#)

DfE helpline: coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk or call 0800 046 8687

ASCL member support hotline: 0116 299 1122

For NHS advice call 111

Section 3: Risk assessment template

The following is an exemplar risk assessment template to help schools, trusts and colleges to consider risks, trigger points and measures to implement. Inevitably, this can't anticipate specific risks in every institution, but it could form a starting point, or serve as a checklist against organisations' existing risk assessments.

School/trust/college name Risk assessment template

Government Response Stage	Trigger Points	Measures to consider	Responsibility
<p><i>Phase 1 – 'containment'</i> This involves trying to catch cases early and capture contacts to avoid the spread of disease</p>	<p>None; follow generally accepted guidance and practice.</p>	<p>Whole school/trust/college reminders for hygiene measures via posters, assemblies and classes. Handwashing facilities and soap available. Follow school policy for sickness. Check code for recording absences.</p>	
<p><i>Phase 2 - 'delay'</i> If phase 1 does not work, the government will increase their response to delay the spread of illness</p>	<p>Increased absence rates of pupils or staff. Local increases in sickness. Public Health England alerts. Specific guidance from the Department for Education. Government COBRA committee announcements. Suspected cases of specific illness in school or within the community.</p>	<p>Increase hygiene procedures and reminders. Communicate vital information to all users and visitors to the school. Hygiene lessons for all pupils in a way they can understand, e.g. visual prompts. Increased enforced use of handwashing before eating of food and snacks. Robustly enforce the 48-hour exclusion from school after all symptoms have stopped. Consider the viability of trips and events. Review the situation daily. Check code for recording absences.</p>	

<p><i>Phase 3 - 'research'</i></p> <p>If delaying the spread fails, the government will focus on finding out how the virus spreads and how people can be effectively treated</p>	<p>Direct case or increased likelihood of cases.</p> <p>Public Health England alerts on restrictions.</p> <p>Specific guidance from the Department for Education.</p> <p>Government COBRA committee announcements.</p>	<p>Reduction of person-to-person close contact (where possible), for example, whole school assemblies and school events.</p> <p>Screening options, i.e. taking temperature where there is concern.</p> <p>Increasing the period of exclusion (above 48 hours) from school where specific symptoms are present.</p> <p>Sending pupils home showing any of the symptoms in school.</p> <p>Additional cleaning measures.</p> <p>Restrictions or exclusions placed on visitors to school site.</p> <p>Check code for recording absences.</p>	
<p><i>Phase 4 - 'mitigate'</i></p> <p>If infections are considered widespread, expect NHS services to focused on the most severe cases and restrictions to be put in place</p>	<p>High levels of sickness.</p> <p>High rates of absence.</p> <p>Significance of danger of disease or illness.</p> <p>Specific guidance from the Department for Education.</p> <p>Government COBRA committee announcements.</p>	<p>Partial or full closure of classes/school/site.</p> <p>Additional cleaning measures.</p> <p>Reduction or exclusion of visitors.</p> <p>Check code for recording absences.</p>	

Section 4: Suggested actions in response to specific issues

Specific issue	Actions	Responsibility
Pupil or staff member displaying or reporting possible symptoms	<p>Individual plus all other members of their household to self-isolate for 14 days and follow guidance from the NHS and Public Health England (if required call 111 for advice).</p> <p>Inform headteacher/line manager as soon as possible.</p> <p>Consider distancing measures for those they have come into recent close contact with.</p> <p>Cleaning measures, waste disposal and checks on hot water.</p> <p>Inform staff.</p> <p>Reminder staff, parents and pupils of the school/trust/college's hygiene and sickness procedures.</p> <p>Contact relevant stakeholders and agencies, where advice is required, for example, the local authority, trust CEO/COO, Public Health England.</p>	
Teacher shortage	<p>Consider options to cover classes or groups, for example, supply cover, splitting classes, senior leaders, partial closure for certain classes or year groups, part-time timetables.</p>	
Support staff shortage	<p>Consider options to cover key roles, for examples, supply covers, prioritising highest need children and/or classes with capacity available.</p>	
Protection for most vulnerable children	<p>Identify the most vulnerable children, particularly those with underlying health conditions.</p> <p>Discuss with parents/carers the initial steps and agree key actions and measures, e.g. isolation.</p>	
Staff with known underlying health issues, including pregnant staff	<p>Ask them to contact their medical advisor/consultant to seek advice on their condition.</p> <p>Consider options for flexible working, e.g. working from home.</p>	
Kitchen and catering (including potential partial closure or shut down)	<p>Consider if parents/carers are able to provide packed lunches, whether other schools or catering providers could provide alternatives, provision of food vouchers, reduced menus.</p> <p>Check cleaning and hygiene measures.</p> <p>Consider reducing self-service options and providing protective equipment for those preparing and serving food, for example, face masks and disposable gloves.</p>	
Site team shortage	<p>Discuss with cleaning team and/or contractor potential cover arrangements.</p> <p>Consider coverage of key tasks, for example, site unlocking and locking, checking water temps</p>	
Leadership team shortage	<p>Consider options for covering, e.g. utilising middle leaders.</p> <p>Consider options for ensuring that staff and suppliers continue to be paid.</p> <p>Consider options to fulfil completion of statutory duties (where they are still expected), e.g. financial returns.</p>	

Admin shortage	<p>Consider options for covering essential tasks, e.g. other members of support staff and/or senior leaders.</p> <p>Inform parents of alternative arrangements, e.g. not to phone unless it is an emergency, leave answer phone messages, email a generic email address.</p> <p>Consider coverage of key tasks and potential revisions to processes and procedures, e.g. first aid provision.</p>	
Other school users	<p>Inform visitors and other users of the school site of control measures, including the possibility of additional hand washing and suspension of access or usage.</p>	
Long period shut down	<p>Consider options for continuation of learning and communication with pupils and families, e.g. possible use of technology to deliver assemblies, project work, tasks, reading, software/apps.</p>	
Safeguarding	<p>Continue to proactively check on any unexplained absences as you ordinarily would, for example, if a pupil is off but parents/carers don't call in.</p> <p>Consider alternative arrangements for raising safeguarding concerns, e.g. hotline number.</p> <p>Should all designated safeguarding leads be absent, consider alternative arrangements.</p> <p>Schools may have limited communication methods with pupils but remind staff not to share their personal phone numbers or contact details.</p> <p>With online learning, remind staff and pupils/students of vital principles such as avoiding one-to-one tutoring or messaging unless this is pre-approved and auditable. (There are useful safeguarding considerations here about online learning and what is and isn't appropriate: https://www.lgfl.net/about/coronavirus.)</p> <p>Reduce worry and talk to young people about what is happening. (This Coronavirus video series from CBBC Newsround is reassuring, and explains what is happening in a child-friendly way. You may also find these Top Ten Tips for 'Talking to Your Children About Scary World News' from the Mental Health Foundation helpful.)</p> <p>Check that other emergency plans can still run effectively and safely, e.g. should the fire alarm sound, are key roles covered?</p>	
Pupils with SEND	<p>Where medical needs are acute, school visitors and multi-agency visits between classes should be kept to a minimum.</p> <p>Home visits, therapy visits should be conducted virtually wherever possible.</p> <p>Supporting SEND pupils in the case of closure:</p> <p>Pupils with SEND will be better served with home learning that consolidates knowledge rather than introducing new learning.</p>	

	<p>When making decisions about how and if schools will be able to deliver education to students during the period of closure, schools must take into consideration any reasonable adjustments it could make to enable students with disabilities to access those arrangements.</p> <p>Special settings may want to consider the loan of equipment that can support physical health, for example, postural management should continue during school closures and parents may not have access to equipment such as standing frames.</p>	
<p>Vulnerable pupils, staff and families</p>	<p>Maintain regular contact with alternative provision providers to check absences of pupils and any potential safeguarding issues arising. In the event of school closures, check if/what work the AP has set too.</p> <p>Some special schools and those with vulnerable youngsters have taken the decision to stay open at the moment but are excluding visitors, unless urgent, to the school. This means for the school, no visitors or visits except urgent ones.</p> <p>There may be vulnerable family members connected to pupils or staff who require consideration, for example, where a lone parent is immunodeficient or immunocompromised.</p> <p>Supporting vulnerable pupils in the case of closure:</p> <p>Consider how families experiencing extreme financial hardship will access the hardship fund at your school or local authority.</p> <p>Some schools are considering a central base for food distribution for those who won't have access to food bank vouchers.</p> <p>Work packs for pupils who don't have access to technology.</p> <p>Hotline numbers shared with most vulnerable families where they can get support.</p> <p>A phonenumber for school support.</p>	
<p>Financial risks</p>	<p>Consider additional costs and losses that maybe incurred, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff sickness absence insurance may not cover illness related to a pandemic. ○ Contracted services may continue to incur costs, e.g. fixed catering contract charges. ○ Cancellation of trips, events and lettings. ○ Additional supply cover and cleaning costs. ○ Rising prices of essential supplies. <p>We recommend keeping a record and evidence of all additional costs and losses incurred due to coronavirus.</p>	

Communication	<p>Communicate necessary information and guidance to pupils, staff, parents and governors. Share where and how official notices will appear (and will not), for example, school/trust website, telephone answer phone message, social media.</p> <p>Update emergency key contacts list i.e. site staff, senior leadership team, transport providers, catering, cleaning, IT, local authority/trust.</p> <p>Consider asking families if they have members working in vital services, such as emergency services and food distribution.</p>	
Governors and trustees	<p>Refer to guidance from the National Governors Association (NGA) here and the information sheet they have produced here.</p> <p>We recommend that schools and colleges review their governance documents, e.g. instrument, articles and standing orders, to check what flexibilities exist around the convening of meetings to transact business. Some schools and trusts have taken the decision to hold governance meetings via teleconference as an interim measure, to reduce the number of visitors into school. Restricting meetings may also be necessary to protect governors themselves, who may be in high risk groups or self-isolating.</p>	
School travel and transport	<p>Consider advice and additional precautions required for children travelling with escorts, via taxi, rail and private/public bus routes.</p>	
Examinations and statutory assessments	<p>Refer to announcements from the Department for Education and the regulator Ofqual.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/updated-statement-on-coronavirus</p>	

Flexible/home working	<p>Communicate expectations for staff and pupils around, for example, working hours (including that staff will not be expected to be available 24 hours a day or to respond immediately). Consider if additional safeguarding advice or reminders are required.</p> <p>Develop guidelines for teachers to support continued learning in the event of a lengthy school closure, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff to communicate to pupils via XXXX ○ Children to have XXXX activity per day based on current topics (where possible) ○ Online access is available to XXXX via XXXX (provide separate instructions and access information where required) ○ IT support is available by contacting XXXX ○ Consider whether is appropriate to introduce new topics ○ Set project work and longer tasks where appropriate ○ Other activities could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online learning ○ Outstanding homework activities ○ Daily reading ○ Daily challenges ○ Creative/mindfulness/wellbeing activities ○ Children to submit work via XXXX ○ School-based message to parents explaining the expectations from parents to support their child/children <p>Make staff aware that there are ongoing cyber security phishing scams around the Coronavirus. Scammers are starting to distribute fake emails pretending to be an employer, with an option to sign up to get the latest updates on coronavirus, whereas it is really a scam to harvest personal details. https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/cyber-experts-step-criminals-exploit-coronavirus</p>	
Ofsted	<p>An announcement was made on 16 March 2020 that all routine inspections of schools, social care, early years and further education providers will be put on hold, though Ofsted may still inspect settings where there are safeguarding concerns. It is not clear at the time of writing (17 March 2020) what the longer-term view will be and when inspections will re-start.</p>	

Section 4: Control measures

Control Measure	Control Stage	Actions	Person responsible
Tissues	1	Provide adequate stock levels of tissues and replenish stocks where possible.	
Handwashing and gel cleansing dispensers	1	Ensure hand wash/gel dispensers are full and regularly re-filled. All children to use available hand washing/cleansing facilities before eating. Replenish stocks where possible. Consider options for external hand washing, e.g. outside taps. Supervise young children to ensure they wash their hands for 20 seconds.	
Other users of the building	2/3	Contact users and visitors to inform them of usage expectations. Use clear signage.	
Monitoring absences	2	Daily report to the senior leadership teams of pupil and staff absences. Regular analysis of individual classes and year groups.	
Communicating travel arrangements	3	Ask parents/carers to inform school of any close family member who has returned from abroad within the last month. Staff to inform headteacher of any travel arrangements to high-risk areas including those of any close friends or family they have been in contact with.	

Control Measure	Control Stage	Actions	Person responsible
Reducing close person-to-person contact activities	2	<p>Ensure extremely high hygiene for any food consumption and making activities.</p> <p>Avoid activities passing items around a class, for example, circle time objects, artefact sharing, and touching activities, e.g. contact games in PE, gymnastics.</p> <p>Cease handshaking and hugging of children and visitors.</p> <p>Use disposable cups for drinks.</p> <p>Ask parents to ensure children have a water bottle in school and to keep these in their own bag/drawer/locker.</p>	
Personal hygiene	2	<p>Provide regular communication to parents/carers of hygiene expectations and ask them to discuss them with their children, e.g. washing hands immediately after arriving home.</p> <p>Supervise all children washing their hands if necessary.</p> <p>Classes to teach and regularly remind children about hand washing techniques.</p> <p>Hand washing before snacks and before eating dinner.</p> <p>Distribute information posters.</p>	
Review cleaning	2/3	<p>Meet with cleaning supervisor/contractors to review cleaning arrangements and make any necessary amendments.</p> <p>Increase focus cleaning on touch points, e.g. handles, rails and tables, redirecting from other tasks or increase hours where possible to accommodate measures.</p> <p>Daily cleaning routines.</p> <p>Deep clean if required.</p>	
School visitors and site users	2/3	<p>Consider and communicate additional safety measures before entering school.</p> <p>Request that they inform school of any suspected or confirmed cases connected to them.</p>	
Absence policy	2/3	<p>Review the time period of exclusion for children or staff who are ill with other conditions and increase if necessary, at least to the minimum 48 hours clear of symptoms.</p>	

Control Measure	Control Stage	Actions	Person responsible
Support for families affected (wellbeing checks)	2/3	Communicate to parents/carers and staff ways to contact school and who to contact if they need advice and support. Keep regular contact with affected families and staff.	
Taking temperature of anyone in school who may begin to feel unwell	2/3	Consider purchasing a non-contact thermometer.	

ASCL Policy Team

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www.ascl.org.uk