

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

AUTUMN TERM PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

On 2 July, the Department for Education (DfE) published [guidance to support schools in England](#) with full reopening from the beginning of the autumn term 2020.

This planning checklist is intended to supplement the above government documents, by providing suggested actions and checks which organisations can consider in their own context. We recognise that a flexible and tailored approach will be needed.

This guidance is for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal or professional advice. It represents ASCL's interpretation, but you rely on it at your own risk. For specific advice relevant to your particular circumstances, please contact your employer's HR service or legal advisers.

Note the guidance includes a section headed System of Controls, which is the set of actions schools **must** take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection'.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is the government's expectation that all pupils in all year groups, will return to full-time school from the beginning of the autumn term (appreciating that the date schools return varies). The guidance (which is endorsed by Public Health England (PHE)) sets out a set of actions school and college leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission.

STEPS TO TAKE

- Complete a **health and safety risk assessment**, and revise where necessary individual and specific risk assessments.
- Consider the impact on staff and pupils who have **protected characteristics**, including race and disability, in developing your approach to reopening.
- Carry out risk assessments particularly for **vulnerable groups** (children and adults), to understand the specific risks faced from exposure to Covid-19, and actions which employers can take to keep all school users safe.

This includes staff returning to work in school/college, and existing staff who are potentially more at risk due to their race, age, disability or pregnancy. Networks such as those for black, Asian and minority ethnic (**BAME**) or **disabled staff** will be an important source of support to schools and colleges:

- [BAMED Schools and COVID-19: guidance for Black, Asian and minority ethnic \(BAME\) staff and their employers in school settings](#)
- [Royal College of Psychiatrists Report: Impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic \(BAME\) staff in mental healthcare settings | assessment and management of risk](#)

Guidance produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will help schools and colleges identify **who is at risk of harm** and how this guidance should be closely followed. It includes templates and examples that organisations can adopt, along with specific guidance on some vulnerable groups.

- [HSE managing risk and risk assessment at work guidance](#)
- [COVID-19 guidance for NHS workforce leaders - risk assessments for staff](#)

HSE's guidance on **vulnerable workers** should also be used where appropriate:

- [HSE vulnerable workers guidance](#)

Review emergency plans and revise where necessary to reflect changes made to other policies and protocols.

ASCL: [Reopening of schools and colleges - questions from members](#)

Schools continue to be responsible for a range of **health and safety measures** and statutory compliance. See the [health and safety](#) section of good estate management for schools. If required, refer to the DfE [Managing school premises guidance, where sites are partially open](#), during the coronavirus outbreak. This guidance advises to review arrangements for your hot and cold water systems, gas safety, fire safety, kitchen equipment, security including access control and intruder alarm systems and ventilation. It also includes guidance on **re-opening after a lengthy closure**. We recognise that schools would usually undertake these checks where sites have been shut down for the summer but checks and maintenance services may be in demand and take longer due to Covid-19.

Other points to consider:

- Site inspections and property management checks
- Movement and storage of furniture and equipment
- Arrangements for deliveries, contractor and necessary visitors

IMPLEMENT SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HYGIENE GUIDANCE

STEPS TO TAKE

Develop **seating plans for classrooms**, increasing distance between pupils and ensuring all desks are forward-facing.

Plan ways to promote **handwashing with soap and water** for at least 20 seconds across the school day, particularly:

- after coming into school
- after sneezing or coughing
- before and after handling or eating food
- after going to the toilet

Ensure there are enough **hand washing or hand sanitiser stations** available.

Promote the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach, e.g. by **providing tissues, bins, posters**.

Ensure sufficient stock of frequently used items (e.g. stationery) to **minimise sharing amongst pupils**.

Identify any specific PPE needs and ensure sufficient supply using local supply chains.

Contact suppliers and service providers to inform them of social distancing and hygiene measures.

Advise staff to **utilise natural ventilation** via external doors and windows where possible and safe to so.

PLAN ARRANGEMENTS TO REDUCE MIXING BETWEEN GROUPS

The government guidance advises that the approaches suggested of **separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options** and will bring benefits even if partially used. Schools may decide to allocate children to class groups for the majority of the time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport.

STEPS TO TAKE

Plan group sizes.

Revise timetables to accommodate groups and minimise movement between classrooms.

Where possible **stagger start, break, lunch and finish times.**

When using staggered timings i.e. start to the day, break and lunchtimes, end of the day – consider implications for staffing, space capacity and contract provision; along with families with more than one child or dropping off at more than one school.

Review the format of large gatherings, many schools are using online platforms to do staff meetings and celebration assemblies.

Revise extra-curricular offers to minimise mixing between groups. If necessary, cancel activities.

Note the guidance advises that schools should consider resuming **breakfast and after school provisions**, where possible, from the start of the autumn term, and under the section sub-heading “Extra-curricula provision” that “If it is not possible to maintain bubbles being used during the school day then schools should use small, consistent groups”.

Plan ways to **minimise contact around school estate between groups**, for example, separate entrance/exit gates, one-way systems, clear signage, staff on duty to direct those on site, visible ground/floor markings such as arrows, safety cones/tape/signs.

Divide playground(s) and outdoor spaces to minimise mixing between groups, also consider the use of playing fields during good weather, temporary structures, such as well-ventilated marques/canopies could extend the area available, particularly during lunchtimes which could be a particular pinch point for some schools

Plan arrangements for drop off/collection and communicate these to parents.

Some primary schools have introduced marked areas on the playground for parents/carers to wait (similar to measures used by supermarkets) and the teacher brings the children outside, rather than having people crowded around classroom/external doors.

Likewise, schools have asked parents/carers to minimise waiting times and not to stop and chat, communicating that it is important to keep routes to and from school as clear as possible

Plan measures for lunchtimes, including:

- Managing lunch queues
- Reconfiguring dining spaces
- Communicating new arrangements to catering suppliers and lunchtime supervisors
- Options for using outside space

CLEANING

STEPS TO TAKE

Read [PHE's COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#).

Define a new **cleaning schedule**.

Implement a **cleaning log** to track cleaning frequency for bathrooms, classrooms and communal areas.

Plan for the **daily removal and safe disposal of rubbish**.

Recruit additional cleaning staff if needed.

Schedule **frequent cleaning of resources** (e.g. books, toys) shared within groups.

Schedule the **isolation or cleaning of resources** (e.g. books, toys) shared between groups.

Purchase additional standard cleaning equipment if needed.

WORKFORCE

The guidance states that with the relaxation of shielding measures from 1 August, they expect that most still will attend school. The wider government advice advises that those who can work from home to do so. They state that this will not be applicable to most school staff, but where a role may be conducive to working from home, giving the examples of admin roles, school leaders should “consider what is feasible and appropriate”.

STEPS TO TAKE

Make a staffing plan, redeploying staff to reflect changes to the school's operation or to support catch-up provision.

Note that the guidance advises that staff can operate across different classes and year groups.

ASCL: [Secondary Schools – example emergency deployment ideas](#)

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| Recruit new short-term or permanent staff as required (including NQTs). |
| Consider hosting an ITT trainee . |
| Engage supply staff as required. |
| Speak to your local authority or trust if you need further advice on workforce planning and deployment . |
| Provide communications and mandatory training on cleaning protocols, hygiene practices and social distancing for all staff . Communicate other requirements, such as, monitoring of symptoms, what to do if a colleague or pupils is unwell, dedicated first aiders and safeguarding leads, revisions to emergency plans, plans to supervise arrivals and departures, break and lunchtimes (including late arrivals), and plan a system for providing feedback and relief for staff to facilitate breaks and absence. |
| Consider wellbeing and welfare of all staff , putting in place measures to check on staff wellbeing. Consider plans for new staff joining, supporting new supply staff, impact on mental health, options available to provide support and reporting systems. Include appropriate ongoing adjustments to application of sickness absence policies to reflect Covid-19 related absences and issues. |
| Consider your approach to handling cases of staff subject to any ongoing/pre-existing processes under sickness absence, capability and disciplinary policies . Further sources of guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACAS Guidance • HSE Guidance: Statutory requirements on an employer around home workers |
| Track your staff groups differentiating between absence related to Covid-19 and other absences i.e. those who are unwell, shielding and in self-isolation. Continue with regular reporting of staff absence figures. Consider the support required by staff who are returning to work from maternity, paternity, adoption leave or long-term sickness absence . Ensure you have in place a robust and comprehensive audit trail of all support provided in cases of staff absence. Review revisions to work plans and risk assessments. |

CURRICULUM

The government guidance sets out a number of key expectations for schools and other settings to consider if revising their school curriculum for the 2020/21 academic year:

- 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.
- 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.

STEPS TO TAKE

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| Identify the most important missed content and make use of existing flexibilities to plan how this will be covered, within a broad curriculum in all subjects. |
| Plan formative assessment of pupils to inform modifications to the school's curriculum. |
| Identify students most at risk of disengagement/most in need of additional tutoring . |
| Start recruitment of additional catch-up tutors and apply for funding from National Tutoring Programme if needed. |
| Engage with LAs, agencies and the families of pupils with SEND to devise a plan to provide specific support as needed. |

Ensure individual education plans (**IEPs**) and **EHCPs** are in place and reviewed for each child who may be at increased risk or has additional needs. Work with your local authority or trust; and where applicable NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, and families to identify what provision can be reasonably provided for in line with EHCPs.

BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE

STEPS TO TAKE

Write to parents, explaining:

- what precautions and processes will be in place
- mandatory attendance expectations
- the reasons why returning to school is important

Revise **behaviour and attendance policies** if necessary to create the right conditions to re-engage pupils in their learning and reintegrate them back into school life. Further information will be made available on this page.

Review **uniform** expectations.

Begin joint work with LAs to develop plans for **re-engaging pupils at risk of disengagement**, including vulnerable children, those previously persistently absent and those who have not engaged with school during lockdown.

Provide additional **pastoral and support services**, exploring how services might be delivered remotely prior to reopening. Refresh 'where to get help' posters all around school for when children and young people return and place them in prominent places.

Be aware that the **KCSIE guidance** has been updated.

Your Designated Safeguarding Leaders (DSLs) may need some extra time, particularly at the start of the Autumn Term.

REMOTE EDUCATION

The government guidance advises that for individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils remote education plans should be in place. Schools are also advised to have a contingency plan in place in the event of a local outbreak.

STEPS TO TAKE

Develop a **contingency plan** for remote education provision by the end of September which meets the expectations set out in the guidance.

Have systems in place to move to **providing remote education where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate**, or where there is a local lockdown, as soon as you are reasonably able to.

Apply for **government-funded** support through The Key for School Leaders and access one of two free-to-use digital education platforms: G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education.

Use the EdTech Demonstrator Programme to contact a network of schools and colleges who are already using **remote education technology resources** for help and support.

ASCL guidance:

- [Approaches to check-in meetings for children and young people](#)
- [Possible approaches to teaching Year 10 and Year 12 from 15 June](#)
- [Leading learning during school and college closures](#)

TRANSPORT

Note that the guidance makes **a distinction between dedicated school transport (including statutory provision) and public transport services** which are also used by the general public, providing guidance for each scenario. It also recognises that social distancing will significantly reduce available transport in the autumn term.

STEPS TO TAKE

Encourage parents and pupils to **walk, cycle or drive to school** rather than take public transport.

Remind parents and pupils still using public transport that **face coverings** are mandatory for children 11 years+.

Consider organising **walking buses** for primary pupil groups.

Work with the local authority, other local schools and transport providers to consider adjusting **start and finish times and/or staggered starts**. As mentioned previously, consider the needs of parents and carers dropping off and picking up from more than one education setting. Please also note this is caveated within the guidance that “staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time”.

Work with home-to-school transport providers to determine appropriate **protective measures** to take on transport to align with your school's policies.

Communicate with parents, carers and pupils the importance of **travelling safely** and being aware of dangers, such as, stranger danger and travelling to school alone; and the measures they could use to reduce risks to their personal safety.

Read the [Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020](#) guidance

Check your local authority has sufficient information from parents, carers, and students about their home to school travel plans. This could include data on how students intend to travel to school or college from the start of term.

Where dedicated home to school transport is used, the face covering law does not apply, but the guidance advises people aged 11 and over to wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college from the start of the autumn term (this does not apply to those who are exempt).

Plan a process for children and young people to remove face coverings when they arrive at school. Enable them to wash their hands immediately on arrival and then wash their hands again after removing their face covering.

PLAN PROCEDURES TO MANAGE SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19

STEPS TO TAKE

Read process for dealing with [symptomatic pupils](#).

Read procedure for dealing with a [suspected outbreak](#).

Identify **a room that symptomatic pupils will wait in** until parents collect them, ideally with:

- a door you can close
- a window for ventilation
- a separate bathroom (either attached to the room or nearby)
- use signage to designate the room and process for identifying if it is in use

Prior to children and young people returning to school, plan and deliver **staff training on the process for dealing with symptomatic pupils** and ensure they are aware of the steps the school will take in the event of an outbreak.

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August 2020

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