

Summary of updates to the schools coronavirus (Covid-19) operational guidance

Originally written 26 March 2021; *section in red changed 29 March 2021*

The DfE has updated its [operational guidance for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#). This includes a number of important changes, including on face coverings, Year 11 and 13 attendance after May half-term, and CEV pupils and staff.

The key changes are as follows:

Face coverings

When this updated guidance was published on the morning of 26 March it said, on the use of face coverings in lessons in secondary schools and colleges, that the government is “taking this additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be continue to be in place **after** Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point” (our bold).

The guidance was changed later that day to read “These measures will be continue to be in place **until** Easter” (our bold again).

Transport

The guidance now includes the suggestion that, when someone who tests positive has travelled in the same vehicle as other people, assessing who counts as a close contact of a should take into account factors such as:

- vehicle size
- degree of face-to-face contact
- length of time in close proximity
- whether a Perspex screen is in place

Test and Trace support payments

The guidance now references the fact that some parents of children asked to self-isolate are now eligible for financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, and includes detailed guidance on the role of schools and colleges in supporting this.

Asymptomatic testing

This section has been updated to recognise that most pupils and staff are now testing from home, rather than on site.

Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils

Shielding advice is being paused nationally from 31 March. From 1 April, therefore, all CEV pupils are expected to attend their school unless they are one of the very small number of pupils under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend. Schools are asked to discuss any concerns parents may have about this, and a new requirement has been included that schools should “discuss with individual parents other specific accommodations that can be put in place to ensure that the pupil can regularly attend”.

Clinically extremely vulnerable staff

From 1 April (when shielding advice is paused), CEV staff will be advised to continue to work from home where possible, but if they cannot work from home should attend their workplace.

Educational visits

The guidance continues to advise against any educational visits at the moment. However, it sets out how visits might resume, in line with the government's broader roadmap, stressing that any dates for moving to the next step on the roadmap remain indicative. This means that, if Step 2 of the roadmap commences on 12 April as planned, schools will be able to resume educational day visits from 12 April, as long as they are conducted in line with relevant Covid guidelines and regulations.

Domestic residential visits will not be able to resume until 17 May at the earliest. More guidance on international travel will be provided later.

Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity

Detailed guidance is now included on how wraparound provision and extra-curricular activities can be resumed in line with the government roadmap.

Physical activity in schools

Detailed guidance is now included on how currently prohibited sporting activities can be resumed in line with the government roadmap. This includes the resumption of outdoor competitive sport between schools from 29 March,

Inspections

The guidance says that the DfE is "engaging with Ofsted and the sector on the inspection arrangements for the summer term, and will provide information about this soon".

Year 11 to 13 exam cohort attendance and provision for the 2021 summer term

Annex B of the guidance contains detailed information on expectations on Year 11 and 13 students, and their schools and colleges, in the summer term. The key points are:

- The government recognises that, for many pupils, work done after the May half term will not contribute towards their grades.
- The government is not changing the legislation that governs compulsory school age. As usual, pupils cease to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the year in which they turn 16.
- However, schools should make appropriate judgements on activities for their pupils after May half-term. This might not mean full-time provision and could include visits to education providers, independent study or remote provision combined with attendance in person.
- Schools are strongly encouraged to maximise opportunities that meet the progression needs of their students during this period. These could include:
 - designing and planning content to support pupils to embed curriculum content in which they are less secure (which may include remote or independent work)
 - liaising with local 16 to 19 providers to support pupils' transition to A level study or vocational and technical qualifications
 - providing support to students around their training and pastoral needs, as well as study skills post-16

ASCL made detailed suggestions to the DfE about an appropriate approach to attendance and provision for Year 11 and 13 students in the second half of the summer term, and we are very pleased to see the flexible approach we advocated reflected here.