

Questions from ASCL members ahead of announcement on wider opening – with links to answers in new government guidance where provided

14 May 2020

Key

Addressed in new government guidance? **green** = yes; **yellow** = partially; **red** = no

Links to new government guidance

1. [Actions for education and childcare settings](#)
2. [Guidance for parents and carers](#)
3. [Implementing protective measures](#)
4. [Initial planning framework](#)

Question	Addressed in new guidance?	Where?	Answer
Rationale and scientific advice			
What is the main reason for opening schools further at this time? Is it concerns around children and young people's education, concerns around their safety and wellbeing, or concerns around the economy?		1	The guidance says the following: "We want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers, carers and teachers. Children returning to educational and childcare settings in greater numbers will also allow more families to return to work."
Does the proposed process and prioritisation for opening schools further align with this rationale? For example, a policy driven by economic concerns might prioritise younger children; one driven by children's safety might prioritise vulnerable children; one driven by education might prioritise those partway through exam courses.		1	This question is partially addressed. Opening to children in nursery, Reception and Y1 could "allow more families to return to work" – but only if they don't have siblings in other years. The focus on younger children could be seen to meet the desire to improve their learning (because remote learning is harder for younger children) and their wellbeing (because remote social interaction is harder for younger children). And the desire for students in Y10 and Y12 to have some face-to-face contact with their teachers recognises the educational importance of those years.

<p>Will any proposed dates for opening further be revised if the government has not met its five tests by that date?</p>		1	<p>Yes. The guidance states that “we will only do this provided that the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing and the enabling programmes set out in the Roadmap are operating effectively.”</p>
<p>On what scientific evidence and sociological modelling has the decision about when and how to open schools further been based? In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assumptions have been made about the transmission of the virus between children, and between children and adults? • What assumptions have been made about the capacity for schools and colleges to implement social distancing? 		1, 2, 3	<p>The guidance states that these decisions are “based on the latest scientific advice” (1), but doesn’t provide any detail on, or links to, this advice. It states (1) that the government has factored in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severity of disease in children – there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) • the age of children – there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) • numbers of children going back – which needs to be limited initially then increased gradually as the science permits • systems to reduce the size of the groups coming into contact with each other – such as smaller class sizes spread out across settings <p>The guidance advises on a range of social distancing measures which could be implemented, but recognise that “early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff” (3).</p>
<p>How much capacity will there be for individual schools and colleges to adapt the government’s direction to work in their own contexts?</p>		1, 2, 3	<p>The guidance is clear that only pupils in the targeted year groups (along with vulnerable children and children of key workers) should be invited into school in the first instance. There is, though, some flexibility for schools to prioritise further if they don’t have the capacity to safely open to all children in these year groups (and a priority order for this), and considerable flexibility on the practicalities of making this work in different settings. The priority order is as follows (3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years settings - 3 and 4 year olds followed by younger age groups

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infant schools - nursery (where applicable) and reception • primary schools - nursery (where applicable), reception and year 1
Might plans to open schools and colleges further vary in different geographical regions, to recognise the different rates of infection across the country?			No. There is no indication in any of the guidance that different approaches may be taken in different regions.
Has consideration been given to how a phased re-opening based on year groups might work in post-16 settings, where 50% of students are likely to be in Year 12?			No. There is no mention of this in any of the guidance (though this is less of an immediate issue as Year 12 students are not being invited back full time at this stage).
Has consideration been given to how a phased re-opening based on year groups might work in three-tier systems (i.e. areas with first, middle and high schools)? If children in transition years were to be prioritised, this would mean Year 4 and Year 8 in these areas, rather than Year 6.		1	The guidance includes this fleeting reference to middle schools: "We encourage middle schools to do the same and welcome back children in year 6, to ensure national parity for children in this year group". There is no suggestion that schools in three-tier systems should invite children in Y4 or Y8 to attend.
If we move to phased approach based on year groups or rotas, presumably the expectation will still be that children of key workers and vulnerable children can attend school or college at all times?		1, 2, 3	Yes, it's clear that this is the case.
Does the government's modelling of potential phased approaches recognise the impact of many more teachers' own children needing school places?			There is no mention of whether or not this has been considered in the modelling.
Might there still be a role for hubs or clusters of schools for the foreseeable future?			<p>There is no mention of hubs or clusters in any of the guidance. The assumption appears, therefore, to be that all schools and colleges will be open.</p> <p>There is, however, a suggestion (3) that, if particular settings are not able to keep pupils in groups of 15 or fewer, because of either insufficient space or insufficient numbers of teachers, they should "discuss options with their local authority or trust", and that "solutions might involve children attending a nearby school".</p>
Has the government taken into account that any three week lead-in time starting imminently will			There appears to have been no recognition of this (despite ASCL and other organisations pointing it out on several occasions).

include the half-term holiday, when many school and college-based staff will be trying to take some much needed time off?			
What mechanisms will there be for schools and colleges, or parents, to feed back to government on how well the approach is working, and any concerns they may have?			There is no indication of a mechanism for feedback, though the guidance (1) indicates that there will be a review process before any more pupils are invited back: “Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, for a month if feasible, though this will be kept under review. We will only welcome back additional year groups if the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus indicates it is appropriate to have larger numbers of children within schools. The safety of children and staff is our utmost priority.”
<i>Safety of staff, pupils and families</i>			
Which staff and pupils will be expected to come into school or college, and which will continue to need to stay at home?		1, 3	<p>The guidance is clear about which year groups (and other priority pupils) will be invited into school or college.</p> <p>It is also relatively clear about how different degrees of medical vulnerability will impact on expectations on staff and pupil attendance (1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children, young people and staff who have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. We do not expect people in this category to be attending school or college, and they should continue to be supported to learn or work at home as much as possible. Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. Few if any children will fall into this category, but parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category. Staff in this category should work from home where possible, and refer to the detail in our protective measures guidance • a child/young person or a member of staff who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if a child/young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the guidance on shielding, it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, if they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home • staff and children or young people should not attend if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household
What about staff and pupils who may themselves be considered fit to come into school or college, but live with one or more vulnerable people?		1, 3	<p>The guidance states the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child/young person or a member of staff who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting • if a child/young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the guidance on shielding, it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, if they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home (1)
What about staff and pupils who are deemed able to attend school or college, but are too scared or anxious to do so?			There is no guidance in any of the documents on how to handle this situation.
What about staff who struggle to find childcare for their own children at the moment, including those			There is no guidance in any of the documents on how to handle this situation.

with children in year groups other than those targeted?			
What will schools and colleges be expected to do if they don't have sufficient staff able to work on site?		3	Schools and colleges in this situation are advised to "discuss options with their local authority or trust", and that "solutions might involve children attending a nearby school".
What social distancing measures will schools and colleges be expected to implement?		1, 2, 3	There is extensive advice on this in the guidance. This is presented as a "hierarchy of controls" that, when implemented, "create an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced". This hierarchy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend childcare settings, schools or colleges • cleaning hands more often than usual • ensuring good respiratory • cleaning frequently touched surfaces often • minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times) (3)
What PPE will be provided to pupils and staff in different settings, how will this be procured, and how will it be expected to be used?		3	The guidance is relatively clear on this. It states that "the majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others". Exceptions to this include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way • if a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the

			<p>eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn</p> <p>There appears, however, to be a contradiction here with the advice in the government's Covid-19 recovery strategy that "people should aim to wear a face-covering in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible and they come into contact with others that they do not normally meet, for example on public transport or in some shops".</p> <p>In terms of procurement, the documents suggest that "education, childcare and children's social care settings and providers should use their local supply chains to obtain PPE. Where this is not possible, and there is unmet urgent need for PPE in order to operate safely, they may approach their nearest local resilience forum."</p>
Will schools and colleges be expected to take pupils' temperatures on a regular basis?		3	The guidance states that "parents, carers and settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning", because "routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus".
What additional hygiene measures will schools and colleges be expected to implement? And will appropriate cleaning products be supplied?		3	<p>The guidance lists extensive cleaning procedures, and other hygiene measures, that schools and colleges should implement, and suggestions of where to procure cleaning products.</p> <p>There is, however, no indication of who is expected to carry out the frequent cleaning of surfaces and objects required, particularly in small primary schools which are unlikely to have a cleaner on site during the school day.</p>
What additional health and safety processes will schools and colleges be expected to implement?		3	The guidance lists extensive health and safety processes that schools and colleges should implement, though settings will inevitably need to consider other aspects relevant to their own context and site.
Will regular testing of non-symptomatic pupils and staff be implemented?		3	There is no indication that non-symptomatic pupils and staff will be able to access tests, but there is clarity that "when settings open to the wider cohort of children and young people, all those children and young people eligible to attend, and members of

			<p>their households, will have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus”. Education staff displaying symptoms, and members of their households, will continue to be able to access tests, as is already the case.</p>
<p>What role might contact tracing play in education settings?</p>		3	<p>The guidance states the following: “The government is developing a new national test and trace programme. This will bring together an app, expanded web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential coronavirus symptoms. This programme will play an important role in helping to minimise the spread of coronavirus in the future. It will also include more traditional methods of contact tracing if a child, young person or parent tests positive. This could include, for example, direct discussion with parents and schools or colleges on recent contacts. The government is recruiting 18,000 contact tracers to support contact tracing and will recruit more if needed. They will play an important part in tracing the contacts of those with coronavirus, including children.”</p>
<p>If someone in a school or college community were to test positive, would the institution be expected to close for a period?</p>		3	<p>No, in most cases. The guidance states the following: “When a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.</p> <p>Where the child, young person or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.</p> <p>Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff</p>

			<p>member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.”</p> <p>As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England’s local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.”</p>
Legal and financial issues			
Will pupils in targeted groups be required to attend, or will this be optional?		1	The guidance states that “eligible children – including priority groups – are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable (in which case they should follow medical advice). If someone in their household is extremely clinically vulnerable, they should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to, and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions. Families should notify their nursery/school/college as normal if their child is unable to attend so that staff can explore the reason with them and address barriers together. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels. Schools and colleges should continue to inform social workers where children with a social worker do not attend.”
What will be the implications for schools and colleges if targeted pupils don’t attend?		1	The guidance is clear that “schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels”.
What will be the implications for parents and pupils if targeted pupils don’t attend?		1	The guidance is clear that “parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time”.

Who will have the final say if there are disagreements over whether or not pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, should attend?		1	<p>It is clear that, for most children, it will be up to their parents to decide whether or not they attend school or college during this period.</p> <p>For vulnerable pupils, as has been the case for the last few weeks, the expectation is that schools and colleges, LAs, parents or carers, and (where relevant), social workers should come to a joint decision on whether that pupil should be at school or college.</p>
What legal protections will there be for schools and colleges if staff or pupils become ill, or even die, as a result of attending their setting?			There is nothing in the guidance on this issue.
Are schools and colleges legally accountable if pupils or staff don't follow social distancing rules? And what disciplinary powers will they have if these rules aren't adhered to?		4	<p>There is nothing in the guidance on legal accountability.</p> <p>On discipline, the initial planning framework suggests that schools and colleges should "update behaviour policies to reflect the new rules and routines necessary to reduce risk in your setting and agree how to communicate this to school staff, students and parents and review uniform expectations".</p>
Which current statutory requirements will be disapplied during a phased re-opening?		1	<p>There is nothing explicit in the guidance on this issue. We assume that the statement that parents will not be fined if their children don't attend during this period means that the current disapplication of offences for non-attendance, which is due to expire on 31 May, will need to be extended.</p> <p>The guidance states that "no school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils during this period".</p> <p>The current modification of the duty on LAs and health commissioning bodies in relation to EHCPs is already secured until 25 September.</p>
What risk assessments will schools and colleges be expected to do prior to opening further – and will government provide a template for these?		1, 2, 3, 4	A risk assessment template is not provided, although the initial planning framework could be used as the starting point for one.

What new or updated policies would schools and colleges need to have in place before opening further?		4	A comprehensive list of policies to be produced or updated is not provided, but the initial planning framework includes a suggestion of some policies which may need to be reviewed.
Is there any expectation that schools and colleges will be open over the summer holiday period, for some or all pupils? If so, who would be expected to staff this provision?			There is no mention of this in the guidance.
Will the government continue to reimburse any additional costs incurred by schools or colleges as a result of opening further?		1	<p>The guidance states that the fund for schools to cover specific additional costs as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak “remains open and should be used by schools as appropriate. Access to the wider business support schemes, including Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), can continue to be used for staff typically paid for through private income, on condition that the principles in Department of Education’s sector specific guidance continue to be met.</p> <p>For early years settings, the dedicated schools grant (DSG) should continue to be paid by local authorities for provision of free entitlements. Where parents are accessing hours beyond the free entitlements they are eligible for, early year providers should continue to charge parents in the normal way. The wider business support packages can continue to be used as appropriate, including the loan schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), on condition that the principles in Department for Education’s sector specific guidance continue to be met.”</p>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>			
Will the National Curriculum be suspended during this period, to enable schools and colleges to focus on providing the education, care and support they believe their pupils most need?		1	<p>The guidance states that “no school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils during this period”.</p> <p>However, “the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years</p>

			old. Early years settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as set out here .”
Will schools and colleges be expected to provide the same curriculum to pupils in school and those at home?		1	The guidance includes little on this, beyond the following statement: “Schools should use best endeavours to support pupils attending school as well as those remaining at home, making use of the available remote education support ”.
If a school or college believes it can more effectively educate all pupils remotely during this period, would they be permitted to continue to do so?		1, 2, 3	At primary, it is clear that the expectation is that pupils in nursery, Reception, Y1 and Y6 should be invited into school if the school’s risk assessment indicates that it is safe to do so, even if leaders and teachers believe they could more effectively educate these children remotely. At secondary, the current ambiguity around expectations for Y10 and Y12 give schools and colleges significant leeway in the extent to which they educate pupils in these year groups on site or remotely.
When will decisions be made about potential changes to exams in 2021? This will affect curriculum planning for students in these years, and what schools and colleges prioritise in the coming months.			There is nothing in the guidance on this issue.
Will PE and games lessons be permitted? With what restrictions? What about sports fixtures with other schools?		3	There is little in the guidance on this, beyond the instruction that pupils in different groups should not play sports or games together.
How can we make sure any further re-opening helps to reduce rather than widen the disadvantage gap?			There is nothing explicit in the guidance on this.
<i>Other practicalities</i>			
Will school buses, taxis, and public buses and trains used by pupils be up-and-running from the date that schools and colleges open further – and able to cope with potential staggered start and finish times or half-day opening?		1, 3	Transport is mentioned in the guidance, but schools, colleges, trusts and LAs are simply told that they will need to “work together and with relevant transport providers to put in place arrangements which fit the local circumstances, including the measures being put in place to reduce contact”. Document 3

			<p>includes a number of suggestions of how transport could be made safer during this period.</p> <p>The guidance encourages parents, children and young people to “to walk or cycle where possible, and avoid public transport at peak times”.</p>
What and how might social distancing be implemented on school buses, taxis, or public buses and trains used by pupils – or indeed among pupils walking to or from school?			<p>This issue is not addressed in this guidance.</p> <p>Recent guidance from the Department for Transport on travelling safely during the coronavirus outbreak includes some advice on walking, cycling, using private vehicles, travelling in taxis and on public transport – for both adults and children.</p>
What will be the expectations on schools and colleges in terms of providing food?		1	<p>The guidance says the following: “Schools should provide meals for all children in school, and meals should be available free of charge where pupils meet the free school meal (FSM) eligibility criteria. To ensure food is available for pupils who attend, educational settings are expected to reopen their kitchens and ensure that meals are able to be prepared and served safely.</p> <p>We are also continuing to ask schools to work with their food providers to offer meals or food parcels for benefits-related free school meal pupils not in school. Now that schools are opening more widely, school catering teams will be better placed to do this. The provision of food vouchers for those eligible under the benefits criteria will also continue to be available where needed. Information on supporting those in FE with free meals is in the FE operational guidance.”</p>
Will the free school meals voucher scheme continue during a period of phased opening?		1	<p>Yes. The guidance says that “the provision of food vouchers for those eligible under the benefits criteria will also continue to be available where needed”.</p>
What will be the expectations on schools in terms of wraparound care?		4	<p>The initial planning document implies that it will be up to individual schools to decide what wraparound care, if any, they can provide during this period: “Agree whether breakfast clubs, lunch clubs and after-school clubs can operate (in line with the</p>

			implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings guidance), and under what terms.”
Will contractors and visitors be allowed on site?		3	It is clear that essential contractors, such as caterers and cleaners, will be expected to be on site. Beyond that, guidance appears simply to be that schools and colleges should “tell children, young people, parents, carers or any visitors, such as suppliers, not to enter the education or childcare setting if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus”.
What will be the expectations on social distancing in boarding schools? Will they be treated as large ‘households’, hence negating the need for internal social distancing?			There is nothing in the guidance on this issue.
For boarding schools with international pupils, when might those pupils return, and what would the quarantine arrangements be?			There is nothing in the guidance on this issue.