

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reducing the risks in schools

Guidance to help schools ensure a low-risk environment for learning and teaching.

Tuesday 3rd of August

Overview

This guidance takes effect from 9th August. It sets out that: local authorities and schools should continue to apply the mitigations that were in place at the end of last term, with the exception of some modifications as set out in this guidance. This approach to retaining mitigations is expected to remain in place for a period of up to 6 weeks (until the end of September), following which further advice will be provided the modifications that should be made to mitigations relate to:

- o an updated wider policy on self-isolation, contact tracing and testing for U18 close contacts, which results in the ability to remove contact groupings in schools; and
- o further minor adjustments to the previous mitigations to ensure consistency with measures in place in wider society.

These modifications should be made as soon as possible after the return to school, and in any case within 4 weeks of return.

The table below summarises the approach for key mitigations:

Mitigation	Approach (retain/ retain with modifications/ remove/ new)	Timings
Risk assessment	Retain	Ongoing
Encouragement of vaccination	New	Ongoing
Environmental cleaning	Retain	Up to 6 weeks (then contingent on further advice)
Hand and respiratory hygiene	Retain	
PPE in specific circumstances	Retain	

Face coverings in communal areas	Retain	
Face coverings in secondary classrooms	Retain	
Physical distancing for adults	Retain (note change to “at least 1m”, but 2m distancing expected to remain for logistical purposes)	
One way systems	Retain	
Drop-off and pick-up	Retain	
Staggered start and stop times/ break and lunch times	Retain	
Restrictions on assemblies	Retain	
Support for people in the highest risk groups/pregnant staff	Retain (updated guidance)	
2x weekly at-home asymptomatic testing	Retain (updated guidance/materials to support uptake and recording)	
Outbreak management	Retain (updated guidance re: public health approach)	
Self-isolation, contact tracing and testing for adults 18+	Retain with modifications (updated guidance – removal of some restrictions for double-vaccinated adult close contacts)	Align relevant school arrangements with updated approach in wider society ASAP
Self-isolation, contact tracing and testing for U18s	Retain with modifications (updated guidance – removal of some restrictions for U18 close contacts)	
Groupings	Remove	Remove ASAP and in any case within 4 weeks

Ventilation	Retain (strengthened guidance for LAs on CO2 monitoring)	Ongoing
Restrictions on Drama, Music, PE and Dance	Remove (in line with previous guidance)	Up to 6 weeks (then contingent on further advice)
Restrictions on school visitors	Retain with modifications (P1 parents/carers permitted to support transition where strictly necessary)	
School transport	Retain with modifications (alignment with public transport).	
School trips	Retain (updated guidance)	
Readiness and assurance	Retain (updated guidance)	Ongoing

Mitigations will be kept under constant review, and if data and evidence suggest that any specific mitigations can be removed at an earlier stage advice will be provided to that effect.

Annex A sets out detailed guidance on the application of mitigations and other safety measures. It has been updated to take account of evolving knowledge and experience of dealing with the pandemic, and to remove out-of-date material. Otherwise this material remains largely in line with the version of the Reducing Risks guidance in operation last term, and schools and local authorities will be familiar with much of the content.

Purpose of this guidance

The guidance applies to all local authorities and schools (primary/secondary/special/school hostels/residential) under their management. Local authorities and schools should exercise their judgement when implementing this guidance, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their children, young people and staff taking into account local circumstances.

Local authorities should ensure that any external organisations involved in delivering services in schools (e.g. contracted facilities management services) are required to follow this guidance.

Nothing in this guidance affects the legal obligations of local authorities with regard to health and safety, public health and their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Local authorities must continue to adhere to all such duties when implementing this guidance.

This guidance should also be used by grant-aided schools and independent schools to support their recovery efforts.

Recognising its specific context, [separate guidance](#) for the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and childcare sector has been developed.