

DfE - Frequently Asked Questions

Why are certain year groups going back in the first phase?

The rate of infection remains too high to allow the full opening of schools for all pupils. There are three key reasons why nurseries, Reception, Year 1, Year 6, Year 10, and Year 12 are being prioritised.

1. The value that face to face interaction with teachers and education staff provides for young people:
 - Children in Reception and Year 1 are at the beginning of their school career and are mastering the essential basics, including counting and the fundamentals of reading and writing, and learning to socialise with their peers.
 - Year 6 children are finishing Key Stage 2 and are preparing for the transition to secondary school and will benefit immensely from time with their friends and teachers to ensure they are ready.
 - Year 10 and 12 pupils have been prioritised because they are preparing for key examinations next year and are most at risk of falling behind due to time out of school or college.
2. There is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract Coronavirus and there is a moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with the virus.
3. Older children are better able to continue learning at home. We know it's hard for parents and children, but everyone is playing their part in the national effort to combat the virus. There are many innovative ways to learn outside the formal school or college setting, and those who aren't being asked to return to school or college immediately will continue to be educated remotely.

Priority Groups

Vulnerable children (including children in need, those with an Education, Health and Care plan(EHCP) and those assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities and the children of key workers are also encouraged to attend.

Do you expect children to follow social distancing guidelines? If so, how?

We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account.

Class sizes will be smaller, creating more space for children and teachers. Children will only mix with their small group. Schools will implement protective measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission. This includes increasing cleaning and reducing pinch points in the school day such as breaktimes, pick up and drop off time.

We've followed the best scientific advice and looked at what other countries are doing when drawing up guidance.

What protective measures are you asking education settings to take?

Full details of the protective measures schools should implement are available in **DfE guidance**. Examples include:-

- Making sure children and young people are always in the same groups each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day or subsequent days
- Increasing the frequency of cleaning, reducing the use of shared items and utilising outdoor space
- Ensuring all adults and children frequently wash their hands with soap and water, including on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing

Do teachers and education staff require PPE?

Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and/or other measures cannot be maintained e.g. on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings.

Information on the very limited distances in which education staff require PPE is on the www.gov.uk website.

Will teachers, children and young people have access to testing?

Yes. Staff, children, and young people in all settings will be eligible for testing if they begin to display Coronavirus symptoms, as well as symptomatic members of their households. To access testing parents will be able to use the 111 online Coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is under 5.

A negative test will enable children to get back to childcare or education, and their parents to get back to work. Where a setting has a positive case, the rest of the class or group within the childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to isolate for 14 days. As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected Public Health England will work with settings to advise on the appropriate course of action.

This could include a larger number of children and young people who may be asked to isolate at home as a precautionary measure. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce the risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

Will parents be fined if they don't send their children back to school?

No. While the DfE are strongly encouraging children in eligible groups to attend, parents/carers will not be penalised for keeping their children at home