

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020

VERSION CONTROL

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V1.0	30/7/2020	First version of document
V2.0	25/8/2020	Update to guidance on face coverings in Key Public Health Measures section and Dedicated School Transport section. Updates effective from 31 st August 2020.
V3.0	11/9/2020	Various updates for clarification of key issues, including self-isolation, testing procedures, quarantine, outbreak and case management, and links to updated guidelines on Physical Education and Home Economics. The revised and additional text introduced in this version of the guidance is in red.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020

Non-statutory guidance to support implementation of a full-time return to school.

Version 3.0

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OVERVIEW

[Note: This overview section is under review and will be updated in light of the latest evidence and experience in the next version of the guidance.]

1. This guidance has been developed to support a safe return to school for all children, young people and staff taking full account of progress made in suppressing COVID-19 in Scotland, the scientific advice received and the advice of the Education Recovery Group and other key stakeholders.
2. In Scotland, as at 19 July 2020, 152 (0.8%) of a total 18,452 positive cases of COVID-19 were among people aged under 15. This is a rate of less than 20 per 100,000 of the population in that age group. There have been no deaths among people under 20 years of age. [These data](#) are regularly updated.
3. In the light of this greatly improved situation with regard to suppression of the virus, and in the context of the vital importance of school to a child's development, wellbeing and right to education, the balance of risk is now strongly in favour of children and young people returning to school full-time. This is a positive development that will help address the wider impacts of the virus on the health and wellbeing, educational progress and attainment of our children and young people.
4. It is the Scottish Government's intention that all children and young people, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the autumn term in August so as to benefit once again from all that school brings to their lives. There is increasing concern around the negative impact of school closures on children and young people's wellbeing. The wellbeing of all children, young people and staff should be the central focus when preparing for the reopening of schools.
5. This updated planning assumption reflects the latest scientific evidence and advice and the significant progress that Scotland has made in suppressing the virus. It remains contingent, however, on continuing success in this regard and prevailing public health guidance. The Scottish Government has agreed with partners in the Education Recovery Group that schools will reopen on 11 August. The Scottish Government welcomes local authority decisions which enable children and young people to return to school full-time as quickly and safely as possible, and expects all pupils to be in school full-time by 18 August at the very latest. The Scottish Government will bring forward an Educational Continuity Direction to that effect.
6. The [scientific advice](#) that has informed this decision and the development of this guidance was published on 16 July. This updates and builds on an [initial summary of key scientific and public health advice](#) published on 26 May 2020.
7. We do not however expect the return to school in August to be a return to normality. We must remain vigilant and continue to manage the risks of COVID-19. This guidance has been designed to help our local authorities and schools to do so, and ensure the safety of children, young people and staff.

8. The guidance applies to all local authorities and schools (primary/secondary/special/school hostels/residential) under their management. 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. It should also be used by grant-aided schools and independent schools to support their recovery efforts. Please read the [supplementary guidance](#) for residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities, developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. [COVID-19 guidance for colleges](#) may also be relevant to some.
9. Recognising its specific context, separate [guidance for the Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) and childcare sector](#) has been developed. There is also specific [guidance for childminders](#) and for “[Out of school care](#)”. [Guidance for youth work and the Community Learning and Development Sector](#) is also available.
10. 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. Under the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#), they must have regard to the advice relating to coronavirus from the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland.
11. 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. Where this guidance states that local authorities and schools:
 - “should” do something, there is a clear expectation, agreed by all key partners, that it should be done.
 - “may” or “may wish” to do something, the relevant sections have been included as examples of relevant practice that can be considered if appropriate. Local variations are likely.
12. Changes in incidence of COVID-19, and the impact of implementation of this guidance in schools, will be closely monitored at the national and local level. The guidance will be kept under review and updated when necessary. Local authorities and schools will also need to be able to adapt to local issues, e.g. outbreaks or local increases in cases of COVID-19, and follow any locally-determined advice and guidance.

KEY PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

13. This section of the guidance sets out the key public health measures that local authorities and schools should implement to minimise the risks of COVID-19 transmission and infection. These controls, when implemented alongside updated risk assessments, will help substantially reduce the risks to children, young people and staff and ensure a safe, successful return to school.
14. This guidance is designed to promote a consistent and equitable approach against the context of the nationwide health emergency. Every school is different, however, and local authorities and schools will understand best how this guidance can be applied in their settings. They should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff, and ensure that the risk mitigation measures set out in this guidance are implemented effectively.

Risk assessment

15. Employers must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect children, young people, staff and others from COVID-19 within the education setting.
16. It is a legal requirement that local authorities and headteachers ensure that risk assessments are conducted or updated to reflect the revised planning assumption of a full return to school. Implementation of the mitigations set out in this section will help manage risks effectively for children, young people and staff returning to full-time learning.
17. All aspects of the return to school should be considered, including transport to and from school and for learners attending college and work placement activities. Specific risk assessments should be completed regarding school cleaning and the use of school kitchens, including those used for home economics. This does not replace the need for other risk assessments required by law, such as under fire safety legislation. All risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and as circumstances change.
18. Schools should ensure that they implement pragmatic and proportionate control measures which reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practical level. They should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:
 - effective;
 - working as planned; and
 - updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.
19. In accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, all local trade unions should be consulted with and involved in the development of risk assessments. Risk assessments should be shared with staff and trade unions, including catering and facilities management teams and contractors where appropriate.

20. Schools should communicate with all school staff, children, young people and parents/carers regarding health and safety. It is imperative that all members of the school community understand what measures are being put in place and why, and can cooperate to make them work. Schools may wish to consult children, young people and parents/carers on these arrangements to help ensure that they feel safe and comfortable in school.
21. While intended for wider use, the Health and Safety Executive has produced helpful [guidance on COVID-19 risk assessments](#).
22. For more information on what is required of employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments, see Annex B.

Public health measures to prevent and respond to infections

23. In order to address the risks identified in their risk assessments, local authorities and schools should adopt core public health measures in a way that is appropriate to their setting. Ensuring a positive learning environment for all children and young people, should include measures focused on preventing and responding to infections.
24. Essential public health measures include:
 - enhanced hygiene and environmental cleaning arrangements;
 - minimising contact with others (groupings, maintaining distancing for young people in secondary schools and physical distancing for adults);
 - wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary;
 - a requirement that people who are ill stay at home; and
 - active engagement with Test and Protect.

Enhanced hygiene and environmental cleaning

Personal hygiene

25. Schools should **strongly** encourage and support all children, young people, staff and any others for whom it is necessary to enter the school estate to maintain COVID-secure personal hygiene throughout the day.
26. The key COVID-secure personal hygiene measures that all children, young people and staff should follow are:
 - frequent washing/sanitising of hands for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly, and always when entering/leaving the building, before/after eating and after using the toilet;
 - encouraging children, young people and staff to avoid touching their faces including mouth, eyes and nose; and
 - using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze, and use bins that are emptied regularly for tissue waste.
27. It will be the responsibility of every individual in the school to observe good hygiene practice to minimise the risk of infection. Schools should identify opportunities to reinforce for all

children, young people and staff the importance of COVID-secure hygiene measures throughout the school day, as part of their work on responsible citizenship. Involving children and young people in discussions about how to manage mitigations will be critical to their success. Signage should be applied appropriately, including in toilets.

28. Adequate facilities should be available for [hand hygiene](#), including handwashing facilities that are adequately stocked or have alcohol-based hand rub at key areas. Outdoor hand basins or hand sanitisers should be available at entry/exit points, to allow all building users to wash/sanitise their hands as they enter/leave the building at pick up/drop off time and at break/lunch times. Help should be given to those children and young people who struggle to wash their hands independently. Over time it is possible that children and young people will become complacent about hand hygiene. Schools should involve them in making plans to ensure continued rigour.
29. School uniforms/clothing and staff clothing should be washed/cleaned as normal. Any arrangements in place to support washing of school uniform and clothing should be continued.

Enhanced environmental cleaning

30. If the school site or building has been closed for many weeks or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, the local authority/school should undertake a health and safety check of the building concerned, including water quality sampling for legionella and other bacteria.
31. Local authorities and schools should ensure that an enhanced environmental cleaning regime is in place. The regime put in place should be in line with [Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings](#). This specifies in particular:
 - Ensuring regular detergent cleaning schedules and procedures are in place using a product which is active against bacteria and viruses;
 - Ensuring regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (e.g. desks, handles, dining tables, shared technology surfaces etc.);
 - Ensuring that where possible movement of individuals between work stations is minimised and where work spaces are shared there is cleaning between use (e.g. avoid hot desks and instead each individual, children, young people and staff, has a designated desk);
 - Ensuring there are adequate disposal facilities;
 - Wedging doors (other than fire doors) open, where appropriate, to reduce touchpoints;
 - Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and physical distancing is achieved as much as possible; and
 - Cleaning work vehicles, between different passengers or shifts as appropriate.
32. There should also be more frequent cleaning of rooms/areas that must be used by different groups, including staff (e.g. classrooms, toilet blocks, changing rooms and staff areas).
33. Movement of children, young people and staff between classrooms should be minimised wherever possible. Where this cannot be avoided, the provision of appropriate cleaning

supplies to enable them to wipe down their own desk/chair/surfaces before leaving and, especially, on entering the room should be considered as part of overall hygiene strategies for secondary schools.

34. Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment (e.g. in practical subjects or for children with additional support needs), sensory rooms, practical subjects with specialist equipment and dining halls, etc. to ensure safe use. Staff can safely eat in the dining hall if they wish. They should use their own crockery/cutlery in staff areas and ensure these are cleaned with warm general purpose detergent and dried thoroughly before being stored for re-use.
35. It is recommended that younger children access toys and equipment that are easy to clean. Resources such as sand, water and playdough should be used only by consistent groupings of children and should be part of relevant risk assessments. Children and young people should wherever possible be encouraged not to bring toys from home to the setting or to share their personal belongings, although it is appreciated that for younger children **and for some children and young people with additional support needs** this may be difficult to prevent. Consideration should be given to practical alternatives to provide comfort and reassurance, which is particularly important for younger children and children with additional needs. However, if a child brings their own book/bag/personal device that only they use then this should not increase the risk of indirect spread of the virus. Children, young people and staff should be instructed to keep bags on the floor and not on their desks or worktops.
36. Children, young people and staff can take books and other resources home, although unnecessary resource sharing including textbooks should be avoided, especially where this does not contribute to education and development. Cleaning between uses should be in accordance with the [Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings](#). Assist FM have also published complementary [guidance on cleaning for local authorities](#) with helpful practical advice on cleaning schedules.
37. Library books should be quarantined for 72 hours upon return to the library. The amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surface is likely to have decreased significantly after this time. School libraries should develop quarantine procedures for returned books and resources. Book drops and book trolleys can be used as they are easy for staff to wheel into a dedicated quarantine area and can be easily labelled.

Ventilation

38. Schools should ensure adequate levels of ventilation. Wherever it is safe to do so, doors and windows should be kept open to increase natural ventilation (this advice will be reviewed as we head into the winter months). This will also help to reduce contact with door handles. However, internal fire doors should never be held open (unless assessed and provided with appropriate hold open and self-closing mechanisms which respond to the actuation of the fire alarm system). The Fire Safety Risk Assessment should always be reviewed before any internal doors are held open.

39. Where **it is not possible to keep doors and windows open, and** centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, systems should **wherever possible** be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels.

Minimising contact between individuals and groups

40. The COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has published [scientific advice on physical distancing in schools](#). The advice states:

“Subject to continued suppression of the virus, and to surveillance and mitigations being in place, the balance of the evidence suggests that no distancing should be required between children in primary schools. The evidence is less clear for older pupils but at present we support the same approach being taken in secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks, the effectiveness of mitigations and the benefits to young people of being able to attend school.”

41. It goes on to state:

“In both primary and secondary settings, the preference would always be to avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces and, wherever possible, to keep children and young people within the same groups for the duration of the school day. In giving this advice we recognise the practical challenges. Where possible, timetabling should be reviewed to reduce movement of groups of pupils around the school estate as much as possible.”

42. It is important to understand that this advice has been developed by the sub-group in the specific context of schools. There are sound reasons for approaches to physical distancing to vary in different contexts, including the drawing of judgements about cumulative risk across the whole of society and the features of distinct environments.

Physical distancing between children in primary schools

43. On the basis of the scientific advice, and subject to all other risk mitigation measures set out in this advice being appropriately implemented, there is no requirement for physical distancing between children in primary schools.

Maintaining distance between young people – secondary schools

44. The scientific advice is that physical distancing between young people in secondary schools is not required to ensure a safe return to schools.
45. The evidence for this is less clear for older pupils, but at present this approach is being advised for secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks, the effectiveness of mitigations and the benefits to young people of being able to attend school.

46. However, within the context of a full return to school, and to provide additional reassurance to young people, staff and parents/carers, where there are opportunities to further minimise risk these should be encouraged. As a precautionary approach therefore secondary schools should encourage distancing where possible between young people particularly in the senior phase.
47. Distancing should be implemented in a proportionate way. Importantly, schools should ensure that the specific approaches adopted do not introduce capacity constraints and/or prevent a return to full-time learning in school.
48. Mitigations that schools **should** consider could include:
- Encourage young people to maintain distance where possible, particularly indoors – this does not have to be strict distancing of 2m if this is unachievable, but encouraging young people not to crowd together or touch their peers is recommended.
 - Discourage social physical contact (hand to hand greeting/hugs)
 - Use all the available space in classrooms, halls, libraries or social spaces to promote distancing where possible.
 - Adjust class space if required, and where possible, to maintain spacing between desks or between individual young people
 - Seat young people side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face
 - Avoid situations that require young people to sit or stand in direct physical contact with others.
 - Where young people need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (for example to access a shared resource) this should be organised to minimise congregation around the point of access to the shared resource.
 - Where staffing within the school allows it, consider altering class sizes and composition to intensify support for young people and create more space. For example, where there are 3 maths sets in a year group (one set with 30 pupils, another with 20 pupils and another with 10 pupils) class size and composition may be altered to improve the spread of pupils and create 3 sets of 20 pupils.
 - Young people in the senior phase may require to spend time in college environments. **They should ensure that they follow the [guidance on the appropriate approach to these specific circumstances while on campus](#). This has now been included in updated guidance for colleges.**
49. Secondary schools should consider which of these possible mitigations are achievable in their establishment, bearing in mind that this distancing is an additional, precautionary step, which goes beyond what is recommended in the current scientific advice on the re-opening of schools.

Minimising contacts (groupings)

50. In line with the scientific advice, in both primary and secondary settings, wherever possible, efforts should be made to keep children and young people within the same groups for the duration of the school day. Consistent groups reduce the likelihood of direct transmission, allow for quicker identification of those who need to self-isolate and may reduce the overall

number of children, young people and staff who need to isolate in the event of a positive test or COVID-19.

51. Schools should make efforts to keep groups apart from other groups where possible. In open plan settings with large numbers of children or young people (for example multiple classes in one open plan space) consideration should be given to ensuring clear demarcation and separation between the areas in which different groups learn. Schools should consider how to reduce the movement of groups across different parts of the school estate where possible. In particular, schools should avoid assemblies and other types of large group gatherings.
52. Where it is necessary to bring groups together, alternative mitigating actions should be put in place, such as limiting the time spent together. Guidance about the maximum size of gatherings allowed in wider society in Scotland (e.g. [places of worship](#)) may provide a suitable benchmark for the advisable maximum size of a single group activity within a school at the time of reopening. When undertaking fire test drills or procedures where the whole school is evacuated, schools and local authorities should consider muster points and whether these need to be altered to ensure a greater degree of separation.
53. The approach taken to configuring groups should be risk-based and adapted to the specific circumstances of the school. The general approach should be to keep groups consistent where practically possible, taking into account the feasibility of doing this while delivering a broad, meaningful curriculum and promoting children, young people **and staff's** health and wellbeing.
54. Examples that schools may draw on include:
 - in primary schools it may be appropriate to have groups organised according to full-class sizes. Where staffing within the school allows it, schools may consider altering class sizes and composition to intensify support for children and create more space;
 - for young people in secondary schools within the BGE, consideration may be given to keeping pupils in the same groupings across the curriculum. Where possible, consideration may be given to teaching whole/ half year group blocks in as close to tutor group sections as possible while the guidance on “minimising contacts” is in place; and
 - for those young people in the senior phase where consistent groups cannot reasonably be maintained, schools will wish to consider the most appropriate delivery and timetabling models to keep mixing of young people to the minimum necessary while ensuring a full range of subjects can be offered. One option may be working together in a group for extended blocks of time. Another may be for the senior phase to be considered as a group in and of itself, with senior pupils kept away from other age groups where possible. Where staffing within the school allows it, schools may consider altering class sizes and composition to intensify support for young people and create more space. Schools may also wish to consider other ideas such as timetabling in double periods (or more) to minimise contacts if this is practical or achievable in their context.

55. The practical and timetabling challenges of these approaches, particularly in secondary schools, are recognised. The variation in size, context and physical structure across schools is also recognised. If groups cannot reasonably be maintained, or if groups require to be larger in size with some mixing permitted, the application of other risk mitigation measures becomes even more important.
56. These will require coordination of other services such as transport, catering and cleaning. Mitigations should be considered as part of risk assessments and may include:
- ensuring access to hand washing stations or hand sanitiser whenever children and young people move between groups;
 - minimising frequency of change of groups for children and young people in a day;
 - arranging for staff to move to class groups (as opposed to vice versa); and
 - encouraging distancing where possible when in different groups (in secondary schools).
57. Passing briefly in the corridor or playground is considered low risk, but risk assessments should consider the ways in which busy corridors, entrances and exits could be avoided, and could include one way and/or external circulation routes.
58. It is recognised that break times will also require careful consideration. Schools may wish to consider staggered break and lunch times, etc (although these will not be suitable for all schools, and staggering break and lunch times to an extent that they could reduce the overall amount of time children and young people can spend learning in school should be avoided). Localised solutions should be agreed and, as far as possible, children, young people and parents/carers should be involved in these discussions.
59. If children and young people go offsite for lunch, they should follow the rules in place for wider society, for example wearing a face covering when entering a shop. Risk assessments should consider procedures for when children and young people leave and return to school premises, including hand hygiene. Schools may wish to contact local shops in advance to alert them to plans.
60. For children and young people who attend multiple education settings, either in other educational establishments or the wider community, consideration should be given to their groupings and an appropriate risk assessment conducted.

Proportionality

61. It is important to emphasise that both the approaches of maintaining distance between young people (in secondary schools) and the use of groups **are not all-or-nothing approaches**. These will bring public health benefits even if logistics mean they can be implemented only partially (e.g. with groups maintained for the majority of the day but some limited mixing into wider groups permitted for specialist subjects or transport, etc.). Schools should apply proportionate, risk-based approaches to implementation of distancing and the use of groups.

Physical distancing and minimising contact for adults

62. Two metre physical distancing between adults, and between adults and children and young people who are not from the same household should be maintained. This includes non-staff adult visitors to the school e.g. contractors, deliveries etc. Adult visitors to schools should be strictly limited only to those that are necessary to support children and young people or the running of the school and arrangements should be communicated clearly to staff and the wider school community.
63. Maintaining 2m distancing between adults and children whenever possible will help mitigate risk, but it is acknowledged that this is not always possible or desirable, particularly when working with younger primary school children or children with additional support needs who may require personal or intimate care. For the early stage (P1-P2), schools may consider making use of ELC models of managing children's interactions and other mitigations, where appropriate, particularly where adopting a play based approach. Detailed [guidance for ELC settings](#) is available.
64. Where adults cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more) **with other adults and/or children and young people**, face coverings should be worn (or, in certain limited circumstances, PPE - see section on PPE and other protective barrier measures, below).
65. Movement between schools (e.g. of temporary/supply/peripatetic staff etc) should be kept to a minimum, until further notice. This includes attendance at school of those who visit, such as visiting teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers **and those providing therapeutic support**. Recognising the importance of holistic support for children and young people requirement to meet their needs, every effort should be made to secure these wider inputs through lower risk methods such as digital/virtual means or outdoor settings. **This does not mean that none of these services and supports can be provided. The management of visitors to schools requires careful risk assessment in order to prevent transmission of the virus within and between schools.**
66. As cleaning regimes will be enhanced, the extent to which cleaners will be able to move between locations may be constrained depending on local circumstances (see "Enhanced Hygiene and Environmental Cleaning", above).
67. Where movement across locations is necessary to deliver school operations the number of interactions should be minimised, and the 2m distancing between adults should be adhered to wherever possible.
68. All staff can operate across different classes and year groups within a setting where this is necessary in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable. Where staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep 2m distancing from learners and other staff as much as they can.

69. With regard to movement of NCCT teachers between classes and across settings, this is permitted but should be minimised wherever possible. Schools should be encouraged to follow SNCT and LNCT guidance on how flexibility of time over a 2 or 4 week period may help to reduce movement of staff across classes.
70. Schools should plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. The number of people in staff rooms at any one time should be limited to ensure distancing can be maintained.
71. Any facilities management work carried out within the school setting should adhere to the principles of physical distancing and be subject to risk assessment to put in place mitigating actions. Procedures should be put in place for deliveries to minimise person-to-person contact.

Drop off/pick up

72. The arrangements for parents/carers to drop off and collect children and young people require careful consideration, to ensure that large gatherings of people can be avoided and physical distancing between adults and children of different groupings is maintained. Schools should consult parents/carers on their plans and ensure that any arrangements put in place are communicated clearly to parents/carers.
73. Parents should not enter school buildings unless required. Some approaches that local authorities and schools may consider include the following:
 - staggered drop off/pick up times or locations, so that not all children and young people arrive onsite at one time as long as this does not reduce the overall amount of learning time in school for children and young people;
 - if the school has additional access points, consideration may be given to whether it would be beneficial to open these to reduce congestion;
 - consideration may be given to where children and young people go as they arrive at the facility. This could include heading straight to their group's designated learning space/classroom, which could be indoors or outdoors;
 - if parents/carers are dropping off younger children, they should be discouraged from gathering outside the school and should maintain distancing of 2m, as far as practicable, when dropping off their children. Appropriate markings may be introduced at the school gates;
 - for those arriving by car, parents/carers may be encouraged to park further away from the school and then walk with their children to avoid congestion, or alternatively use active travel routes where feasible. Car-sharing with children and young people of other households should be discouraged;
 - where learning spaces can be accessed directly from outside, this may be encouraged to decrease interactions between individuals in circulation spaces;
 - particular consideration should be given to the arrangements for parents/carers of children and young people with additional support needs or disabilities, who may normally drop their children off within the school building, and those who arrive at school using school transport, including taxis.

PPE and other protective barrier measures

PPE

74. For the majority of staff in schools, PPE will not normally be required or necessary. Where it is required or necessary, the following arrangements will apply.
75. Schools and local authorities already have set risk assessment processes for the use of PPE. Following any risk assessment (individual or organisational), where the [need for PPE has been identified](#) appropriate PPE should be readily available and provided and staff should be trained on its use. The use of PPE by staff within schools should be based on a clear assessment of risk and need for an individual child or young person, such as personal care, where staff come into contact with blood and body fluids or lift children and young people.
76. Risk assessments should already exist for children and young people with more complex needs, including those with emotional and behavioural needs. These risk assessments should be updated as a matter of priority in light of changes to provision such as environment and staffing.
77. Local infection control procedures that outline safety and protocols should also be stringently followed. This includes procedures for the disposal of soiled items; laundering of any clothes, towels or linen; and cleaning equipment for children and young people, such as hoists and wheelchairs.
78. Specific guidance has been developed and published for first responders ([COVID-19: guidance for first responders](#)) who, as part of their normal roles, provide immediate assistance requiring close contact until further medical assistance arrives. This guidance sets out clearly what a first responder is required to do if they come into close contact with someone as part of their first responder duties. It covers the use of PPE and CPR.
79. The types of PPE required in specific circumstances are set out below:
 - **Routine activities:** No PPE is required when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom or school settings.
 - **Suspected COVID-19:** A fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn by staff if they are looking after a child or young person who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and 2m distancing cannot be maintained while doing so.
 - If the child or young person who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 needs direct personal care, gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn by staff.
 - Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
 - Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

- **Intimate care:** Gloves and aprons should continue to be used when providing intimate care to a child or young person. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
- Fluid-resistant surgical masks and eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions.

Face coverings [Note: updated effective from 31st August 2020]

80. The Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has provided [updated advice](#) on the issue of face coverings in schools, in light of the latest scientific evidence and the [advice of the World Health Organisation](#), which was published on 22nd August 2020.
81. The advice notes that the volume of evidence supporting the initial scientific position on a key benefit of face coverings (protection of others from infection by the wearer) has grown. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that the wearer of a face covering can be protected.
82. This section of the school reopening guidance has been updated in light of the advisory group's updated advice, and the feedback received from stakeholders on the early experiences of school reopening.
83. A definition of [face coverings](#) (which should not be confused with PPE) can be found [here](#). Use of face coverings in the circumstances set out in this guidance should be seen as just one mitigation within a package of measures. The other mitigation measures in this guidance, including physical distancing for adults, environmental cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene, grouping of young people and maintaining distancing between young people in secondary schools where possible, remain vitally important.
84. Anyone (whether child, young person or adult) wishing to wear a face covering in **any part of the school** should be permitted to do so.
85. Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. Further information on exemptions can be found in wider [Scottish Government guidance](#).
86. Face coverings should not generally be required in classrooms or other learning and teaching environments. However, face coverings should be worn by adults where they cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more) with other adults and/or children and young people.
87. Face coverings should also be worn in the following circumstances (except where an adult or child/young person is exempt from wearing a covering):
 - where adults and young people in secondary schools (including special schools and independent and grant aided schools) are moving about the school in corridors and

confined communal areas (including toilets) where physical distancing is particularly difficult to maintain; and

- in line with the current arrangements for public transport, where adults and children and young people aged 5 and over are travelling on dedicated school transport (see School Transport section).

88. This approach reflects precautionary judgements based on the latest scientific advice and the experience of school reopening to date. It is limited to the specific environments identified above for the following reasons:

- These are areas where mixing between different (age) groups is more likely, increasing the potential for transmission of the virus;
- Experience and feedback has demonstrated that crowding and close contact in these areas is more likely, and that voices may be raised resulting in greater potential for creation of aerosols;
- The scope for effective ventilation is often less;
- There are less compelling counter-balancing arguments regarding the potential impact of face coverings on educational outcomes in these areas of the school estate; and
- For school transport, the adoption of an approach to face coverings applying to children and young people aged 5 and over will be consistent with the current approach on public transport.

89. Face coverings may also play a particularly important role when prevalence rises, and their use may be increased in specific local contexts on the basis of risk assessments and local factors, including as follows:

- Local Incident Management Teams may recommend a further strengthening of the use of face coverings in other areas of the school (e.g. classrooms) when dealing with local outbreaks (see Outbreak Management).
- Individual local authorities and secondary schools (including special schools and independent and grant aided schools) may wish, following the relevant local authority processes and appropriate risk assessment and consultation with school communities, to consider strengthening the use of face coverings in other areas of the school (e.g. classrooms) to address specific local circumstances (e.g. particular concerns or anxieties around distancing or confidence building in the context of local or wider outbreaks).

90. An example of this local “stepping up” of measures may be the use of face coverings in secondary school classrooms where any form of distancing is impossible, in circumstances where increased community transmission is being seen.

91. In making any such local decisions on the stepping up of use of face coverings, it will remain vitally important to consider the potential impact on children and young people, including via

the appropriate use of Equality Impact Assessments. The impact of wearing a face covering for learners with additional support needs, including any level of hearing loss, should be carefully considered, as communication for many of these learners (including hearing impaired young people) relies in part on being able to see someone's face clearly. This is also important for children and young people who are acquiring English and who rely on visual cues to enable them to be included in learning. Individuals who may not be able to handle and wear face coverings as directed (e.g. young learners, or those with additional support needs or disabilities) should not wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

92. In classes where any such impacts are anticipated and no alternative mitigations are reasonable, schools may wish to consider the use of see-through face coverings which are increasingly available. Some children and young people may need additional support/reassurance about the reasons for adults wearing face coverings.
93. It is vital that clear instructions are provided to staff and children and young people on how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings in all of the circumstances above, to avoid inadvertently increasing the risks of transmission. The key points are as follows:
 - Face coverings should not be shared with others.
 - Before putting on or removing the face covering, hands should be cleaned by washing with soap and water or hand sanitiser.
 - Make sure the face covering is the right size to cover the nose, mouth and chin. Children should be taught how to wear the face covering properly, including not touching the front and not pulling it under the chin or into their mouth.
 - When temporarily storing a face covering (e.g. during classes), it should be placed in a washable, sealed bag or container. Avoid placing it on surfaces, due to the possibility of contamination.
 - Re-usable face coverings should be washed after each day of use in school at 60 degrees centigrade or in boiling water.
 - Disposable face coverings must be disposed of safely and hygienically. Children and young people should be encouraged not to litter and to place their face coverings in the general waste bin. They are not considered to be clinical waste in the same way that used PPE may be.

Further general advice on face coverings is available [here](#).

94. There should be regular messaging from schools to adults and children and young people about these instructions. These risks must be considered when deciding locally whether to step up measures.
95. Local authorities and schools should consider carefully how to address any equity concerns arising from the use of face coverings, including in respect of the impacts on certain groups of pupils and the costs of providing face coverings for staff and children and young people. It is reasonable to assume that most staff and young people will now have access to re-usable face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and the Scottish Government has made available a [video](#) on how to make a simple face covering. However, where anybody is

struggling to access a face covering, or where they are unable to use their face covering due to having forgotten it or it having become soiled/unsafe, schools should take steps to have a contingency supply available to meet such needs.

96. No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. **As is usual, if there are any concerns about a child or young person behaving or acting in a way which doesn't align with school policy or procedure, their behaviour or actions should be discussed with them to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible.** See the section on Supporting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People for further guidance addressing concerns regarding adherence to school policy or procedure.
97. **It is not recommended that face coverings are used in secure schools.**
98. Any additional costs of implementing this updated guidance (for example in respect of contingent provision of face coverings, or additional cleaning costs) will be considered via the arrangements for funding of Education Recovery that have been agreed between the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Staying vigilant and responding to COVID-19 symptoms

99. The whole school community should be vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19, and to understand what actions they should take if someone develops them, either onsite or offsite. The most common symptoms are:
 - new continuous cough
 - fever/high temperature
 - loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia).
100. All staff working in and with schools, along with the children and young people in their care, should be supported to follow up to date health protection advice on household or self-isolation **and [Test and Protect procedures](#)** if they or someone in their household exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, or if they have been identified by NHS contact tracers as a close contact of someone with the virus. Guidance on this is available from [NHS Inform](#), [Parent Club](#) and [gov.scot](#). **The National Clinical Director has also written an [open letter](#) to parents and carers providing guidance on how COVID-19 symptoms differ from those of other infections circulating at this time of year. Some of the key points to ensure that children, young people and staff are aware of are as follows:**
 - It is essential that people do not attend school if symptomatic. **Everyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 – a new, continuous cough; fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste - should self-isolate straight away, stay at home and arrange a test via the appropriate method (see below).**
 - People who live in the same household as a person with symptoms should also self-isolate straight away and stay at home. Only those developing symptoms should be tested. There is no need for other members of the household to have a test, unless they are also symptomatic. If the test result for the symptomatic person is negative, and they are not already isolating as a 'close contact' of a confirmed case, they can end isolation

and return to work or school when they are well enough and have not had a fever for 48 hours assuming also that they are not quarantining for foreign travel reasons. The rest of their household can end isolation straight away.

- School staff who opt to undertake asymptomatic testing do not need to self-isolate while awaiting results.
 - If the test is positive, the symptomatic person must remain in isolation until 10 days from symptom onset, or longer if symptoms persist. They must otherwise be well and remain fever-free for 48 hours without medication. The rest of the household should remain in isolation for 14 days from symptom onset in the symptomatic person, even if they don't have symptoms themselves.
 - Everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be put in touch with the local contact tracing team so that other close contacts can be identified. All close contacts who are in the same household as confirmed cases will be asked by Test and Protect to self-isolate for 14 days from symptom onset in the symptomatic person. Contacts from outside the household of the confirmed case will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days from the date of last exposure to the case.
 - Everyone who has been asked to self-isolate by Test and Protect as close contacts of confirmed cases must continue to self-isolate for 14 days, even if they have a negative test result.
 - Unless otherwise advised by Test and Protect or local Incident Management Teams, where children, young people or staff do not have symptoms but are self-isolating as a close contact of person who is a confirmed case, other people in their household will not be asked to self-isolate along with them.
101. Children, young people and staff can book a test through www.nhsinform.scot, the employer referral portal (for staff only – see below) or, if they cannot get online, by calling 0800 028 2816.
102. Schools, other than in those authorities detailed in the following paragraph, will also be able to register their symptomatic staff as category 3 key workers under the employer referral portal, to ensure priority access to testing. The nature of this portal is to prioritise tests and appointments over the general public. This route directs individuals through to a Regional Test Centre or Mobile Testing Unit (whichever is nearer). For those who cannot access an RTC/MTU (if they do not have access to a car or live too far away), they can order a home test kit.
103. For schools in Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, there are different routes to accessing a test in your local areas. Education departments in these areas should liaise with their local Health Boards to ensure priority access to symptomatic testing for school staff.
104. Unless staff are symptomatic or are advised to get a test by a healthcare professional, then testing is not a requirement. However, if members of school staff are concerned that they have been at risk from infection, then they may request a test whether or not they have symptoms. Staff should make such requests via their local authority employer, who can book a test for them using the employer portal, or for staff in Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, can advise school staff on the testing arrangements with their local Health Board.

105. All children, young people and staff must know that they must inform a member of staff or responsible person if they feel unwell with symptoms of COVID-19. Schools may need to ensure a responsible adult is there to support an affected individual where required. If the affected person has mild symptoms, and is over the age of 16 **and is able to do so**, they should go home as soon as they notice symptoms and follow the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection including testing and self-isolation. If the individual affected is a child or young person below the age of 16 (**or otherwise unable to travel by themselves**), parents/carers should be contacted and asked to make arrangements to pick up the child or young person from school (preferably this should be another adult member of their household and not a grandparent) and follow the national guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection including testing and self-isolation.
106. If a child or young person is awaiting collection try to find somewhere safe for them to sit which is at least 2 metres away from other people. If possible, and it is safe to do so, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door with appropriate adult supervision if required, depending on the age and needs of the child or young person. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. **Ensure that guidance on the use of PPE is followed.** The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze, and then put the tissue in the bin. **The symptomatic individual may also be asked to wear a face mask or face covering to reduce environmental contamination where this can be tolerated.** If no bin is available, put the tissue in a bag or pocket for disposing in a bin later. If you don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. Where possible, a separate bathroom should be designated for the individual to use.
107. Those with minor symptoms (staff and young people over the age of 16 and children under the age of 16 accompanied by a parent/carer), should, after leaving the school, minimise contact with others where possible, e.g. use a private vehicle to go home. If it is not possible to use private transport, then they should be advised to return home quickly and directly, and if possible, wear a face covering in line with Scottish Government guidance. If using public transport, they should try to keep away from other people and catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of the elbow. See the [Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings](#) for further advice on travel.
108. If an individual is so unwell that they require an ambulance, phone 999 and let the call handler know you are concerned about COVID-19. If it is safe and appropriate to do so, whilst you wait for advice or an ambulance to arrive, try to find somewhere safe for the unwell person to sit which is at least 2 metres away from other people.
109. Advice on cleaning of premises after a person who potentially has COVID-19 has left the school premises can be found in the [Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings](#). Assist FM have also produced [complementary guidance](#) on cleaning in schools.
110. Individuals should wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell (see personal hygiene section). Also see section on PPE.

111. Schools should manage outbreaks (i.e. 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days) in line with the guidance on outbreak response (below).
112. Schools should also maintain an accurate register of absences of children, young people and staff and whether these are due to possible or confirmed COVID-19. Codes for this have been developed in SEEMIS.

International travel - self-isolation arrangements

113. The Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and National Clinical Director wrote to all Directors of Education on 17 August to clarify the arrangements for children and young people returning to Scotland who are not exempt from self-isolation (“quarantine”) rules.
114. The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 require all those returning to Scotland from non-exempt countries to self-isolate at home or another appropriate location for 14 days. Those self-isolating should not go out to work or school or visit public areas. This point is covered prominently in the [sector advice card](#) which should be displayed in all schools. The list of exempt countries is kept under constant review, and schools and local authorities should ensure they are familiar with the most up to date list.
115. Headteachers and heads of early learning and childcare settings should ensure that arrangements are in place to identify and support children and young people who need to self-isolate including appropriate safeguarding measures. This includes engaging with children, young people and their families to ensure adherence to the legal requirements. Directors of Public Health and local health protection teams are available to offer further support where there are concerns.
116. Detailed [guidance](#) is available, as is the list of [exempt countries](#).

Enhanced surveillance, testing and outbreak management

117. The public health measures set out above will go a long way to ensuring a safe return to school for everyone.
118. There will also be, in parallel, a number of measures, involving testing and other steps, designed to monitor developments and allow for rapid response to any cases of COVID-19. This will include the following key elements.

(i) Enhanced surveillance programme

119. Scotland has an excellent programme of community surveillance. This allows us to monitor actively trends in the pandemic, both nationally and more locally.
120. There will also be specific surveillance in respect of schools and children/young people. This will draw on COVID-19 related information from a range of sources and will cover all school ages and the ELC phase.

121. We are also developing an additional surveillance programme within a sample of schools. This would involve working over a period of time with substantial numbers of children and workers at a representative sample of schools throughout Scotland, using repeated PCR/serology testing and survey data to establish symptoms and infections in the school population to inform the ongoing development of guidance. The principal focus of this at least initially would be children, young people and staff in S4, S5 and S6. Participation would be voluntary and careful consideration is being given to ensuring acceptability in school populations.
122. An additional surveillance study will look at risk in different occupational groups which will improve our understanding of the likelihood of COVID-19 infection and illness within the education workforce, and the effectiveness of measures to reduce transmission.
123. Taken together, these sources will allow regular reporting on indicators such as: overall incidence and swab positivity for Scotland; incidence and swab positivity for school-age children; number and proportion of all cases that are among school workers; hot spots by local authority area; number of clusters or outbreaks that are under investigation within educational settings; and, if feasible, antibody prevalence among children and school workers.
124. These data will inform decision-makers at different levels as they consider any adjustments to make to arrangements – including this guidance – or any investigations to be conducted at certain localities to explore what local responses are required.

(ii) Test and Protect

125. The effective application of Test and Protect in the school environment will be an important means of preventing any spread of the virus. Schools should ensure that they understand the Test and Protect process and how to contact their local Health Protection Team (HPT). Further information on [Test and Protect](#) is available. All educational establishments are considered complex settings and cases will be prioritised and escalated to specialist HPTs.
126. The key initial step is the self-isolation and rapid testing of all symptomatic children, young people and staff (see above). Other children, young people and staff members will not be required to self-isolate unless contacted by the contact tracing service. If a child, young person or staff member tests positive, the HPT will assess what action is needed, taking into account the close contacts the person has had within the school and other factors such as the implementation of mitigating measures, eg cleaning, ventilation and PPE.
127. If a child, young person (or their parent/carer if under 16 years) or staff member is contacted by a contact tracer and told to self-isolate for fourteen days, the person should leave school to self-isolate at home straight away and, if possible, wear a face covering en route and avoid public transport. The Scottish Government has published [advice for employers](#) on how to support people who are asked to self-isolate.

(iii) *Outbreak and case management*

128. The management of outbreaks (if schools have two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 within 14 days) and cases of infectious disease in schools is led by local health protection teams (HPTs) alongside local partners, such as schools and local authorities. Schools should ensure before the return that they know how to contact their local HPT and who will usually be responsible for doing so.
129. The [procedures for outbreak management](#) are well established. Public Health Scotland now ask that if there is either a single confirmed (test positive) case of COVID-19 or any suspicion that there may be an outbreak of cases in a setting (e.g. an increase in background rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19), schools should make prompt contact with their local HPT and local authority so they can assess the situation and offer advice. Note that settings with increased rates of respiratory illness should also be alert to the possibility that this could be due to COVID-19 and contact their local HPT for further advice.
130. Schools and local authorities will be expected to work closely with their local HPT to resolve the situation. COSLA and Public Health Scotland are currently developing a national protocol for managing cases and outbreaks in schools, but actions that they may need to be involved in include (but are not restricted to):
- attendance at multi-agency incident management team meetings;
 - communications with children, parents/carers and staff;
 - providing records of school layout / attendance / groups; and
 - implementing enhanced infection, prevention and control measures.
131. The HPT will make recommendations to the incident management team on self-isolation and on testing of children and staff and the arrangements for doing this. The IMT will discuss and agree additional measures to deal with the specific situation faced in a school. These may include reviewing risk assessments and compliance with existing guidance, the greater use of face coverings, reviewing and reducing higher risk activities, and/or a move to blended learning. Any discussion of possible school closures should take place between schools, local authorities and local HPTs. Schools should maintain appropriate records to support outbreak control measures, e.g. children, young people and staff attendance, details of pupil groups, visitors to schools, and clinically vulnerable/extremely vulnerable children and young people who are attending school.

Special considerations for certain groups

Children, young people and staff who are clinically vulnerable

132. Clinically vulnerable staff can return to work, following a dynamic risk assessment, and arrangements should be made to enable appropriate physical distancing staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible, in line with current advice on the return to school. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, settings must carefully assess and agree with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

Children, young people and staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)

133. The trajectory of the virus has been such that shielding will be paused from 1 August. We expect that children, young people and staff who are shielding will be able to return to school in August, unless given advice from a GP or healthcare provider not to, and can follow the same guidance as the rest of Scotland.
134. Where any concerns do exist, [guidance for people with underlying health conditions](#) has been prepared and will continue to be updated. School staff who have underlying health conditions will wish to be aware of this advice in order to inform discussions with their employer, **trade union** and/or healthcare team. Similarly, parents/carers may wish to have a discussion with their child's healthcare team if they are unsure or have queries about returning to school because of their health condition.
135. In addition, local monitoring arrangements will be in place to give early warning of any local increase in infections in the future which could lead to people in the higher risk categories being advised to stay away from schools again for their safety. Schools will therefore wish to maintain plans for providing education remotely to some children and young people in such circumstances, in line with duties to provide education elsewhere than a school when a child is [unable to attend school due to ill health](#).

Support for children and young people with Additional Support Needs

136. Every child and young person will have different levels of required support. It will be important as part of the risk assessments carried out to consider the individual needs of a child or young person. Where there is a need to work in close proximity with adults and children and young people the safety measures to protect adults and children and young people alike should be followed. Staff should wear a face covering or PPE as appropriate, and regularly wash their hands before and after contact.

Support for anxious children, young people, families and staff

137. The past few months have been a time of considerable change and there will undoubtedly be moments of anxiety. It will be important to take gradual steps in terms of reintroduction to safe practices and intervention with others. It will be important to phase some of this in through family interaction prior to the return to school, particularly for children and young people with additional support needs. It will also be vital for relevant services to consider mental health awareness.

Support for Minority Ethnic children, young people and staff

138. There is some wider evidence that children, young people and adults from a Minority Ethnic background who are infected with COVID-19 seem to be at higher risk of severe disease. The recent report by the National Records of Scotland on the breakdown of COVID-19 deaths in Scotland by ethnic group, concluded that over the course of the pandemic to date, COVID-19 was a relatively more common cause of death for people in the South Asian ethnic group compared to people in the white ethnic group. Work is ongoing to

build upon these data and to improve understanding. The Scottish Government continues to work with experts from a range of fields, including our new Ethnicity Expert Reference Group, to develop actions to help mitigate any disproportionate effects.

139. Consequently, the concerns within Minority Ethnic communities must be recognised and individual requests for additional protections should be supported wherever possible. Responding to requests for additional protections may include offering access to support from occupational health services (OHS) and the provision of individual risk assessments. Care should be taken to ensure that Minority Ethnic children, young people, families and staff are involved in decisions about additional protections - automatic referrals to OHS should not be made. Local authorities should ensure that managers in school have sensitive, supportive conversations with all Minority Ethnic staff, which also consider their health, safety and psychological wellbeing and personal views and concerns about risk. Wellbeing support services should be promoted to all Minority Ethnic staff.
140. Employers should be mindful of their duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#) at all times. All Minority Ethnic staff from South Asian backgrounds with underlying health conditions and disabilities, who are over 55, or who are pregnant, should be individually risk assessed, and appropriate reasonable adjustments should be made following risk assessment.

Young people in the senior phase who attend colleges

141. **Young people in the senior phase may require to spend time in college environments. They should ensure that they follow the [guidance on the appropriate approach to these specific circumstances while on campus](#). This has now been included in updated guidance for colleges.**

Individual risk assessments

142. Local authorities will already have individual risk assessment processes in place to support individuals in the groups above. They may also wish to have reference to [Scottish Government guidance on individual risk assessment for staff in the workplace](#).

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Promoting attendance and reducing absence

143. It is recognised that some parents and carers may be concerned about their child returning to school, and consider withholding their child until reassurance is provided. In these circumstances schools and local authorities should engage with those parents and carers to provide reassurance on any concerns, overcome any barriers to learning, and support attendance. [National guidance on promoting attendance and managing absence](#) makes clear the importance of relationships with families in promoting good attendance. The National Parent Forum has produced [guidance for parents on the return to school](#).
144. Parents are required under the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) to provide education for their child. It is important that children and young people are able to benefit from their right to education; are able to see their friends and have social contact and benefit from the learning, care and support that schools provide. The need to reconnect to normal patterns and routines in children's lives will be important and reassuring to them.
145. National guidance is clear that measures of compulsion for attendance should only be used as a last resort once all other approaches to support attendance have been undertaken. Additional codes will be developed within SEEMiS to support the recording and monitoring of attendance and absence, including specific codes relating to COVID-19.

Curricular and assessment matters

Outdoor learning

146. Schools may wish to consider the increased use of outdoor spaces when they reopen. The outdoors can provide extra space for distancing between consistent groups of learners, help to decrease the risk of transmission and improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of young people.
147. Suitable facilities may include school playgrounds, local greenspaces and/or community areas. When enhancing existing outdoor space, schools may find it necessary to consider temporary shelters or the periodic use of established buildings for activities such as handwashing, regrouping or the relaying of instructions. An appropriate cleaning regime should be introduced along with appropriate bins for disposal of any rubbish and hand washing stations/sanitiser to ensure hygiene.
148. Schools should ensure that children and young people with additional support needs are not disadvantaged. In addition, if outdoor equipment is being used, schools should ensure that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously, as well as considering appropriate cleaning between groups of children using it. Appropriate clothing should be worn for the particular outdoor activity.
149. The [Outdoor Learning Directory](#) provides links to a variety of resources that can be filtered by subject area and curriculum level. Support and guidance on risk assessment can be found on the [Going Out There framework](#).

Practical activities, experiments and investigations

150. Practical, “hands-on” learning and activities, experiments and investigations are an important part of the curriculum across all subject areas. We recognise that practitioners may need to adapt their approaches to enable learners to carry out these activities in a safe way. SSERC has produced [guidance on carrying out practical work in Sciences and Technologies](#) for early, primary and secondary levels, including links to helpful resources.

Physical activity and sport

151. Opportunities to participate in physical activity and sport have the potential to enhance children and young people’s mental and physical wellbeing and will support children and young people to lead healthy, active lifestyles now and in the future. [Guidance has been prepared by Education Scotland and physical education practitioners to assist with decision-making and the safe implementation of timetabled physical education. The COVID-19 Advisory Sub Group on Education and Children’s issues has published advice on PE, music and drama in schools. Guidance on organised outdoor sport for children and young people](#) should also be considered when planning and preparing for physical activity and sport.

Home economics

152. [Guidelines on safe practice in home economics have been prepared by Education Scotland and practitioners and are expected to be published in w/c 14 September 2020 on the Education Scotland website.](#)

Music/singing

153. Scientific and medical advice around how activities such as singing, talking at volume e.g. in theatre performance, or playing wind/brass musical instruments can be managed safely is still being developed. These activities should be avoided during the initial return to schools.

Senior phase/SQA National Qualification Courses

154. Further details will be provided separately before schools return on 11 August, regarding the approach for the assessment of national qualifications for the 2020/21 session.

The provision of activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable

155. These are important for wider health and development of children and can be conducted subject to following the guidance set out in this note, and guidance for the general public where applicable. Schools should consider the need for out of hours cleaning when scheduling activities.
156. [Guidance on school trips and visits](#) was published on 14 August. The COVID-19 Advisory Sub Group on Education and Children’s issues has also published [advice](#) on school trips which include an overnight stay.

Improvement Planning and Reporting

157. The Director of Learning at the Scottish Government wrote to all Directors of Education on 2 June to set out the latest guidance on recovery and improvement planning. This made it clear that planning for 2020-21 should focus on recovery, and then continuity of provision under these changed circumstances. There will be a continued emphasis on issues such as: supporting student and staff health and wellbeing; transitions at all levels; the impact of tragedy in communities; identifying gaps in learning; and a renewed focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap. In particular, there should be a focus on what can be done to remedy any impact that there has been around the widening of inequalities of outcome experienced by children and young people.
158. Schools and local authorities should also complete annual reporting, as a record of progress towards meeting improvement priorities up until the period when schools closed on 20th March 2020. It is important to capture the impact of work which has been undertaken during this academic session.
159. Effective school and local improvement plans are also essential to ensure that the improvement activity which will be set out in the 2021 National Improvement Framework will be informed by local and school-level priorities, and that it will reflect the school and local authority response to supporting children, families and school communities throughout the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

School transport

160. This guidance is intended to inform local authority planning of school transport services. Local authorities are responsible for implementation of this section of the guidance, working with the operators with whom they contract to ensure necessary measures are put in place in line with risk assessments (which should involve appropriate consultation with trade unions and staff). Parents and school staff should all play a role in educating children and young people on acceptable behaviour on school and public transport.
161. This guidance has been informed by the [scientific advice](#) of the COVID-19 Advisory Sub Group on Education and Children's issues, published on 16 July, and [updated advice on face coverings](#) received from the Sub Group in w/c 24 August 2020. The key messages from the scientific advice include:
 - Dedicated school transport should be regarded as an extension of the school estate and it is not necessary to maintain distance between children and young people of all ages (subject to continued low levels of infection within Scotland).
 - Important mitigations include: hygiene, ventilation, improved cleaning regimes including regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces, and regular handwashing. Hand sanitising should be required for everyone prior to boarding dedicated school transport and schools should also consider a process for children and young people which enables them to wash their hands immediately on arrival (as is the case for all children and young people), dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands

again. Effective from 31st August, face coverings should be worn on dedicated school transport (subject to exemptions), to align with the position on public transport.

- Children, young people and adults must not board dedicated school or public transport if they, or a member of their household, have symptoms of COVID-19. If a child or young person develops symptoms while at school they will be sent home. They must not travel on regular home-to-school transport. The school should contact the parent/carer who should make appropriate and safe arrangements to collect the child or young person. In this situation, the wearing of a face covering by the child or young person on the journey home is strongly advised.
- Where public transport (including buses, taxi, trams, subway, trains, ferries and air) is required for school-aged children to attend school, the general [advice and guidance from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland](#) should be followed. This currently includes the mandatory use of face coverings unless exemptions apply and physical distancing where possible.
- Drivers and staff on public transport, and to a lesser extent on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission.

National Transport Guidance and local authority arrangements

162. Schools should be aware of the latest [guidance](#) on how to remain safe when walking, cycling and travelling in vehicles or on public transport as we transition through and out of the COVID-19 outbreak.
163. Local authorities should ensure that local arrangements and advice to staff, parents/carers and children and young people for travelling to and from their school are consistent with the latest national guidance. Schools should work with their local authority public transport teams to inform their local planning, particularly in respect of options to minimise and, where possible, stagger the use of public transport if necessary to address capacity constraints. As part of risk assessments, local authorities should work with schools, transport operators and trade unions as necessary to identify the risks arising from COVID-19 and work through the measures in this section of the guidance to minimise any risks to children, young people and staff travelling on transport to school.
164. Some general points for consideration are:
 - schools should undertake a survey of families as early as possible to understand how children and young people will be travelling to school when they return, to aid in quantifying the potential public transport issues in local authority areas.
 - ensure understanding is shown to children, young people, staff and parents/carers who may be delayed in getting to school due to transport issues.
 - additional support should be available for vulnerable families for planning their journey to school.
 - include colleges and other relevant partners in planning for school transport, as young people in the senior phase may also be doing some of their learning in colleges, on work placements, or through consortium arrangements.
 - ensure that all children and young people travelling on dedicated or public transport have access to hand sanitiser. The precise arrangements for doing so are for local authorities

to decide in consultation with operators and school communities. Options may include provision of personalised supplies to those travelling on school transport.

165. A strategy for communicating and disseminating clear information about school transport provision to parents/carers and children and young people, drivers and other staff should be developed.

Encouraging active travel

166. As far as it is safe to do so, the use of active travel routes by parents/carers, staff and children and young people should be encouraged. Walking and cycling, scooting, wheeling etc should be strongly encouraged. In view of the potential for capacity constraints on public transport to impact on children and young people's ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered. If bikes are stored in bike sheds/racks consideration should be given to the cleaning of these areas and to reducing time spent at the bikes stores/shed.

Dedicated school transport [note: updated effective from 31st August]

167. This section of the guidance applies to dedicated school transport – broadly, transport services which carry children and young people to and/or from their homes and any educational establishment where they receive school education. It is important to note that dedicated school bus vehicles may be used for other purposes before and after transporting children to school – effective implementation of the preventative measures set out below is particularly important in these circumstances.
168. This guidance also reflects the [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children regarding the requirements for the safe travel of children and young people](#) to/from school published on 16 July, and [updated advice on face coverings received from the Advisory Sub Group in w/c 24 August](#).
- **Enhanced cleaning:** Local authorities should work with transport operators to agree what supplementary arrangements are needed alongside operators' existing programmes for cleaning vehicles. It is recommended that frequently touched surfaces are cleaned appropriately after each journey wherever possible – especially important where vehicles are used for other purposes before and after transporting children to and from school – and that enhanced cleaning takes place at the end of each day. Ensuring an effective enhanced cleaning regime is in place will play an important role in suppressing transmission and building confidence among parents, children and young people in school transport services.
 - **Children and young people:** the updated scientific advice is that face coverings should be worn by children aged 5 years and over on dedicated school transport (unless exemptions apply). This means that the position on face coverings on dedicated school transport is consistent with the position on public transport. See the section on Face Coverings under Key Public Health Measures for further information.

- The scientific advice makes clear that maintaining distance between young people on dedicated school transport is not necessary. However, where feasible and provided they do not introduce capacity constraints, the following precautionary approaches may help further minimise risk:
 - Where possible, arrangements should be put in place to allow family groups and children and young people from the same class groupings to travel together. This will reduce unnecessary mixing and is one way to further lower risk.
 - While logistics may prevent this in many cases, where possible, school-aged children and young people should be assigned seats which they use consistently, although this is not essential. This could be allocating specific seats or having rules such as sitting in ascending year groups: front to back, youngest to oldest. Queuing arrangements for picking up children and young people may be important considerations in this regard.
 - Wherever vehicle capacity allows, distancing between individual passengers, or groups of passengers, is helpful. In particular, local authorities should consider whether distancing is possible for secondary pupils or those in the senior phase, in circumstances where children attending different schools travel on the same vehicle, and for certain children and young people with complex needs e.g. those that spit uncontrollably.
 - Where possible, avoid the use of face-to-face seating on dedicated school transport.
- The consumption and sharing of food and drink should not be allowed.
- Any such arrangements will rely on **clear communication between schools and families/children**, including as part of their education to develop as responsible citizens. Drivers are unable to monitor and enforce seating arrangements.
- Transport operators should be asked to keep windows on dedicated school transport open, where possible, and to ensure that mechanical ventilation uses fresh rather than recirculated air; or use air conditioning with attention paid to the appropriate frequency for changes of filters.
- **Drivers, staff and other adults:** particular attention should be paid to ensuring drivers, staff and other adults are protected from the risks of COVID-19 in vehicles. Risk assessments should consider whether changes within a vehicle are required, with changes made on that basis. This may include leaving seats behind/beside the driver empty or fitting a physical barrier or screen. Any adults travelling by dedicated school transport should conform with the requirements for public transport (1 metre distancing with appropriate mitigation measures in place and the wearing of face coverings, at the time of writing). Drivers and passenger assistants may wish to use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser at intervals throughout the journey, and should always do so after performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or handling a child's belongings. Drivers of school transport services may also have other driving tasks as part of their job role, for example delivering meals to care homes, day centres and sometimes transporting others who may be vulnerable. Local authorities should pay particular attention to effective implementation of the preventative measures set out in this guidance in these circumstances to prevent the spread of infection.

- **Adults travelling with children and young people with Additional Support Needs:** Adults travelling with children and young people with Additional Support Needs should be very alert to them displaying symptoms. As a general rule, these adults should wear face coverings. However, this requires to be balanced with the wellbeing and needs of the child: face coverings may limit communication and could cause distress to some children and young people. Advice should be provided to parents/carers to support the effective cleaning of specialist equipment for children and young people with additional support needs who are using school transport. Local authorities should consider the support available for children and young people with complex Additional Support Needs using school transport, and take appropriate actions to reduce risk if adherence to hygiene rules and physical distancing for adults are not possible.
- **All (children, young people, drivers, other adults) travelling on dedicated school transport:** All passengers and staff should sanitise their hands prior to boarding dedicated school transport. Schools should regularly reinforce the importance of this key message with all children and young people. Hand washing/hand sanitising should be done regularly throughout the day including on each and every entry to the school building and prior to boarding the school bus. Good respiratory hygiene should be encouraged (“Catch it, kill it, bin it”) and children and young people should be encouraged to carry tissues on home to school transport. It is crucial that someone with symptoms does not enter a bus and travel. Drivers and adult passengers must self-isolate and book a test if they display coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. Families must get a test for children and young people displaying symptoms.

Public transport

169. Children and young people travelling to and from school normally form a significant proportion of the journeys on public transport during peak times, particularly in city schools and by secondary school children and young people. While physical distancing remains in place on public transport, it will not be practicable for those to resume in the same numbers or mode as previously. Journeys by public transport may take longer and timetables may change. Children, young people and staff who have no alternative to public transport should therefore be advised to plan their journey in advance and leave additional time where possible. Information on public transport services can be found at www.travelinescotland.com. Local authorities may wish to engage with bus operators to identify routes where capacity constraints may be particularly severe and to work with them to agree measures to improve capacity for school pupils.
170. To help address capacity constraints on public transport, local authorities may wish to work with operators and schools to consider the following approaches:
- consider making additional dedicated school transport available in such circumstances. Transport Scotland intelligence suggests there is significant spare capacity in the coach sector currently, due to reduced demand from the tourism sector.
 - where consistent with a full time return to school, consider options which could reduce or spread the number of staff and children and young people travelling at peak times, for example by adjusting traditional start and finish times to avoid the morning and evening rush hours. This would, however, have knock-on impacts for staff and parents/carers.

Feedback from some operators is that, in view of the shift in travel to work patterns occasioned by COVID-19, usual school timings may be achievable.

- consider introducing dedicated zones (e.g. seating or carriages) for school-aged children and young people on public transport at peak school journey times. The scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues includes this recommendation. Discussions with local authorities and operators indicate this approach is likely to be suitable only for services that primarily carry children and young people to school, with limited numbers of adult passengers (i.e. a similar composition as for dedicated school transport). The following considerations apply:
 - In dedicated zones, on both local authority-contracted school bus services and all other public transport services, the same arrangements regarding physical distancing, hygiene, face coverings and cleaning, etc. should apply as for dedicated school transport (see above).
 - Ensure sufficient separation and clear demarcation between zones for the general public and zones for school-aged children and young people. For example, use the top deck of a double decker bus for school children where this is available, or a separate train carriage.
 - Where this is not possible, and zones are on the same level, ensure there is at least 1m distancing, where operators have deemed that acceptable through the introduction of appropriate mitigation measures, and clear demarcation between the zone for the general public and the zone for school-aged children and young people. There should be clear signage and communication to inform the general public of any such arrangements prior to boarding.

171. Where dedicated zones are not in use, the latest [guidance](#) on how to travel safely on public transport will apply.

172. Where children and young people have more complex public transport arrangements to and from their school, for example involving air, ferry or multiple transfers which may be operating on a reduced or different timetable, authorities should explore options with local operators, to inform what pattern and location for in-school learning may be practicable in the immediate term.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

173. Some children and young people, including those with additional support needs, rely on taxi transfers to get to school. Where taxis are used solely for the purpose of transporting children and young people to school, as with dedicated school bus and coach services, physical distancing requirements are not necessary. It is recommended that in private hire vehicles (which are typically saloon cars) children and young people travel on the back seat only and, where appropriate, wear face coverings.

174. There should be careful consideration of how children and young people with additional needs **and adults supporting them** can be provided with safe, bespoke transport arrangements. This could include the use of Perspex shields in taxis (taking into account relevant safety concerns) or finding larger vehicles for transportation. Local authorities and schools should liaise with their local private hire providers on the measures they are putting

in place to protect passengers, including for the arrangements for carrying multiple passengers.

175. When travel by taxi or private hire vehicle is necessary, passengers should follow the advice of the driver, including sitting in the back-left hand seat of the car when travelling alone. Appropriate cleaning and sanitising measures will also be necessary.

Private cars

176. Routes to and from some schools may also be different as areas have made changes to enable physical distancing on pavements and on existing or pop-up cycle routes. While continuing to encourage walking or cycling where they can, parents or carers taking their children to school by car should be encouraged to plan their journey in advance and ensure that their chosen route is accessible. Local authorities may consider introducing park and stride for those children and young people who have to travel by car. [Sustrans guidance on school streets](#) provides advice. Where it is possible to do so, family groups should travel together.

Remote learning and special considerations for people who are unable to attend school

177. While the presumption is of full-time learning in school, there will be some children and young people whose health prevents them from learning in schools for some or all of the time. In these circumstances, appropriate provision should be made for remote learning pursuant to local circumstances. Where children and young people are [unable to attend school due to ill health](#), provision should be made elsewhere than a school, in line with statutory responsibilities. There should be a particular focus on addressing digital exclusion as part of these arrangements.

Free school meals

178. Local authorities' duty to provide free school meals to children and young people who are eligible for them remains. The universal provision of free school meals to all children in P1-P3 who are attending school should continue and all food provided should comply with the [School Food and Drink Nutritional Standards](#).

Access to drinking water

179. **Local authorities remain under a duty to ensure that free drinking water is available to children and young people throughout the day and schools are expected to continue to meet this duty whilst taking account of the latest health protection advice.**

Catering

180. [Guidance from Food Standards Scotland \(FSS\), which includes a risk assessment tool and checklist](#) should be followed. **Any school or local authority wishing to provide a breakfast service should follow this risk assessment tool and checklist.** Further advice around mitigating any issues identified by the risk assessment can be requested from the local

environmental health team. Additionally, this [Q&A from FSS](#) may be useful. Assist FM have also produced updated [catering advice](#).

181. In the circumstances where a school has a breakfast club which is organised by the third sector, parents and carers or volunteers, rather than by the school itself, the [guidance on unregulated children's services](#) will apply. That guidance does not apply to breakfast clubs which are provided by a school or authority themselves (these are considered regulated services), and the arrangements set out in this guidance will apply.

Workforce planning and support

182. Additional workforce capacity will be needed to provide a range of additional support to help with recovery work. The Scottish Government is making additional funding available to local authorities for the recruitment of additional teachers and other staff to support COVID-19 recovery.
183. Local authorities and headteachers, working in close partnership with unions and staff, are best placed to make judgements about how to make best use of available workforce capacity safely and effectively. Many of these decisions will be based on agreements reached within Local Negotiation Committees for Teachers (LNCTs) or local Scottish Joint Council arrangements. This section sets out some high level expectations to ensure consistency, and some information on national initiatives to support local authorities in these efforts.
184. In preparing for a full-time return to school in August, schools may require additional staffing and the flexibility to deploy staff appropriately over the next year to best support children and young people whose progress with learning has been impeded during lockdown, as well as to bring much needed resilience to the education system at this time (e.g. to cover for staff absence). Additionally, we cannot be sure what the future path of the virus will be. If circumstances were to deteriorate again, resulting in further lockdowns (whether nationally or regionally), additional capacity in the teaching workforce should be considered if there is a requirement to switch to a blended model of learning at any stage.

Workforce capacity

185. Local authorities should consider carefully their requirements for additional wider workforce staff, such as cleaners and other facilities management staff to implement enhanced environmental cleaning regimes, in order to support a successful reopening of schools.
186. Local authorities should work through the following actions as part of any teaching/auxiliary education workforce planning activities for the opening of school premises:
- ensure that teachers who have not yet secured permanent employment are considered as an integral part of their planning;
 - consider the potential for teachers with strong digital teaching skill sets to support remote learning. This may be an important aspect of maintaining educational continuity;

- ensure that supply lists are as up to date as possible and include the full pool of available staff. Supply staff are an important aspect of maintaining educational continuity and should be fully utilised in local planning around workforce capacity where needed;
- consider at a local level how all staff who are having to stay at home due to self-isolation can support educational continuity, for example by supporting remote learning;
- consider the availability of health and social care and other multi-agency partners as part of planning for support for children and young people;
- consider any other opportunities to ensure existing qualified teaching staff and wider workforce capacity, such as classroom assistants, cleaners etc, can be deployed to support school reopening.

187. Throughout this process potential workload issues should be carefully considered, and local authorities should be conscious of the wellbeing of all and the need to implement flexible working practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance for all staff.

Identifying additional workforce capacity

188. If the existing capacity in the teaching workforce is insufficient to meet the challenges of a full-time return to school, partners have agreed that the following actions will be expedited to quickly mobilise additional teachers, for what may be a temporary period:

- if required, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) will contact teachers who are on the register of teachers where the information held suggests that they are not currently teaching. This can facilitate their contact with employers to establish their willingness and availability to return to teaching should this be required based on local need. GTC Scotland will guide registrant contact with individual HR departments in local authorities.
- if required, GTC Scotland will contact individuals whose teacher registration has lapsed within the last 3 years, including recently retired teachers, to facilitate their contact with employers to establish their willingness and availability to return to teaching, should this be required based on local need.
- any such approaches to individuals would be accompanied by an offer of appropriate professional learning if necessary (for example, extension of existing return to teaching courses) and a focus on ensuring that the quality of teaching would not be compromised. It may be that a focus on deploying this group of additional teachers to support remote learning would be appropriate if required.

189. The Scottish Catholic Education Service has highlighted existing flexibilities for school session 2020/21 to ensure that sufficient probationers can be allocated to denominational schools for their Teacher Induction year if this is necessary to support local challenges.

190. Guidance has been developed on the management of student teacher professional placements in recognition of the fact that schools are likely to face challenges in effectively supporting students on initial teacher education (ITE) programmes from the beginning of the new school year. It confirms that no students will be placed in schools prior to the October 2020 school break and that GTC Scotland will work with universities to ensure any adjustments to individual programmes align with their accreditation standards. To ensure

that maximum flexibility is maintained, the guidance also confirms that ITE providers will develop contingency plans to allow student teachers to undertake some of their teaching practice through the use of remote learning, should opportunities for direct classroom experience not be available from mid-October 2020.

191. Local authorities should ensure that capacity in the wider workforce in the school environment is sufficient to meet the challenges of a phased return to school and keep this under constant review. For example, depending on local circumstances, there may be a particular need to recruit additional **classroom assistants to support learning** or cleaning staff for enhanced hygiene arrangements.

Workforce support

192. The health and wellbeing of staff is a key principle of education recovery and support should be developed collegiately with staff. Local authorities and settings should ensure that appropriate support for professional learning and wellbeing is provided to all staff, some of whom will be working in unusual circumstances. Local authorities, employers and a range of national organisations already provide a wide range of support to the workforce. This includes a range of employee assistance programmes and online professional learning and support that covers the health and wellbeing of the workforce, colleagues/staff and of children and young people.
193. Local authorities and settings may wish to access the Joint Communication document providing a [summary of available resources](#), produced by partners working under the Education Recovery Group (Workstream 6 – Workforce Support). The COVID-19 Education Recovery Group is continuing to discuss the provision of additional professional learning designed to support staff on return to school in August.

SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

194. The wellbeing of all children, young people and staff should be the central focus when preparing for the reopening of schools at a local level. The Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach is key to that, ensuring that local services are co-ordinated, joined up and multi-disciplinary in order to respond to children and young people who require support, and everyone who works in those services has a role to play.
195. [Guidance on support for continuity of learning](#) and [Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase](#) both reinforce the importance of wellbeing as a critical focus in recovery. Balancing efforts to address lost learning with children and young people's social and emotional needs should be a priority. The guidance on support for continuity in learning also highlights the expected impacts on children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse, and those who are in need of care and protection as a result of lockdown, and an increased need for support for mental health and wellbeing.
196. Local authority and health board partners must be engaged in local planning for the return to school to ensure that the health and wellbeing needs of children can be met. This will be particularly important in planning for transition into P1, GIRFEC planning, prevention activity including surveillance (vision screening) and immunisations, and health developmental interventions.
197. The psychological impact of the outbreak and the necessary public health control measures are likely to have had significant social, emotional and developmental effects on many children and young people and, consequently, achievement. Many children and young people may experience anxiety about the transition from home to returning to school but also many of them will have enjoyed the experience of spending more time at home. Children and young people may need additional time and support to re-adjust to the school environment. Similarly, school staff have been facing significant pressure, support for their mental health and wellbeing is essential both for them and for the social and emotional wellbeing of their children and young people.
198. It will be important for schools to be able to recognise that children, young people and staff may be affected by trauma and adversity, and to be capable of responding in ways that prevent further harm and which support recovery. The [National Trauma Training framework and plan](#) are designed to support the development of a trauma-informed workforce and may have relevance to school plans. Schools should ensure that all staff, including catering and cleaning staff, are aware of safeguarding procedures.
199. Formal and informal education settings, for example, youth work and CLD professionals should be prepared to prioritise support for the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff, alongside infection control measures. Approaches that advocate positive, nurturing relationships are a key foundation of Scottish education and efforts to address trauma and adversity and will support children and young people who may be experiencing significant symptoms of anxiety, depression or significant behavioural changes. They may require additional support from their class teacher, pastoral care staff, school counselling or Educational Psychology Services, or specialist family and health services. Continuity in learning guidance supports these considerations.

200. For children and young people with additional support needs, schools and local authorities should consider the individual needs of children and young people in planning for their return to school, recognising that for some children and young people, access to their usual learning support will not have been possible during lockdown.
201. Local authorities and schools will wish to note that screening and prevention programmes such as the universal P1 vision screening, immunisation programmes and Childsmile programme may not have taken place as usual. Local authorities working with local health colleagues, should consider the appropriate time for these to be re-introduced and resumed, recognising their benefit to children and young people's short and longer term health outcomes. This should be undertaken in line with the guidance on paragraph 62 on the management of visiting staff to schools.
202. As would be usual, if there are any concerns about a child or young person behaving or acting in a way which doesn't align with school policy or procedure, their behaviour or actions should be discussed with them to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible. If that does not resolve the concerns, then the usual school and authority policy and procedures for dealing with concerns should be implemented, within the context of positive relationships and behavioural approaches, including discussing the matter with the child or young person, parents and carers as appropriate.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

203. The best and safest way to re-open schools is in the context of low community transmission and with a clear strategy towards driving case numbers continually towards zero. Given Scotland's current low prevalence, schools should reopen for full-time learning in August, but with a view to being able to change those arrangements at short notice if required.
204. If the further unlocking of restrictions results in an increase in cases, there will need to be flexibility in the use of this advice and variation among areas depending on transmission in their local community. This could mean, for example, that distancing may be required or the introduction of face coverings on school transport if prevalence increases. However, the overall objective is to continue to push incidence and prevalence down across Scotland and to re-establish school provision as fully as possible.
205. In the event of a local outbreak of the virus, a school or a number of schools may be closed temporarily to help control transmission. Schools and local authorities will need contingency plans for this eventuality and should include the possibility of using online national resources such as digital classrooms. This may involve a return to being open for vulnerable children and children of key workers only and providing remote learning and support for all other children and young people. Local authorities and schools should ensure that parents/carers are fully informed of the contingency plans in place.
206. If the scientific advice is that physical distancing should be introduced for children and young people in schools, then schools and local authorities must be prepared to enact contingency measures as outlined in their Local Phasing Delivery Plans. Local authorities should continue work to strengthen these and to plan for different future scenarios. e.g. a range of distancing requirements.
207. Local authorities and schools should continue the work they have been undertaking in relation to tackling digital exclusion. This includes the provision of devices and connectivity solutions to support educational continuity when children and young people are learning outside of the school environment. This local activity will be supplemented by the Scottish Government's £30m investment in digital devices and connectivity solutions designed to combat digital exclusion.
208. Evidence from the Child Poverty Action Group showed that families entitled to free school meals valued having that support continue during lockdown. Should a school or schools be closed during term time local authorities should continue the provision of a free school meal or an alternative to all children who are eligible, this could include a direct cash payment, voucher, home delivery or collection from a specified hub.
209. Schools should maintain frequent and regular contact with children and young people while learning at home.
210. Local authorities and schools should consider the use of resources through national initiatives and partnerships including the enhanced e-Sgoil and SCHOLAR offerings. As announced on 25 June 2020, local authorities, Education Scotland, and other key partners are working with e-Sgoil to deliver a range of live lessons which will be delivered by qualified

teachers to support learning across Scotland. Partners are working to ensure a wide-range of certified courses in both English and Gaelic medium education are available for learners in the senior phase from 11 August 2020, with lessons in the broad general education available thereafter.

211. The appropriate digital resource in terms of cameras, etc. would need to be implemented in learning spaces if this approach were adopted. There are other examples across Scotland, whereby a lesson is taught across dual locations, with those not in the same location as the teacher still being able to participate in class discussions and interact with the teacher. The digital infrastructure in all environments (home and school) should be considered, including cameras, microphones and appropriate IT, as well as wider considerations around safeguarding and online safety.

Special considerations for certain groups

Children, young people and staff who are clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)

212. Local authorities and schools should consider the arrangements for children, young people and staff who are clinically vulnerable, in the event of a localised outbreak of COVID-19. This should include consideration of the plans for communicating with families, the actions to be taken immediately on the emergence of a local outbreak, the arrangements for returning clinically vulnerable children, young people and staff to their homes, the arrangements to support children and young people's learning and care, and staff wellbeing. This may include seeking advice from the health protection team who are managing the response to the potential localised outbreak.

Support for children with Additional Support Needs

213. Local authorities and schools should consider the arrangements required to support children with additional support needs learning during any localised outbreaks of COVID-19 as part of contingency planning. For some children and young people with additional support needs the return to home learning may have a significant impact on them, due to further changes in their learning approach. Wherever possible, consistency in learning approaches and support should be maintained. It is recognised that this will be balanced against the need to ensure that any outbreak of COVID-19 is contained and managed.

Support for vulnerable children and young people

214. Local authorities and schools should consider the arrangements needed to support vulnerable children and young people. This may include ensuring continued support for children and young people at risk of harm through children's services, and to support for their continued learning.

COMMUNICATIONS

215. Communication and dialogue with trade unions, staff, parents/carers and children and young people on the reopening of schools should be carefully considered when implementing this guidance, to ensure confidence in the revised arrangements across all school users. Clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice and what is expected of all parties will be key to ensuring a smooth return to school. This will be particularly relevant for new starters to the school, children, young people and staff.
216. The channels of communication through which trade unions, children, young people, staff and parents/carers can raise concerns about the implementation of safety measures in individual settings should be made clear.

Parents and carers

217. The main concerns for parents and carers are likely to be the safety and wellbeing of their children in schools. In line with requirements under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 local authorities and settings should make arrangements to involve and communicate with all parents and carers, including the Parent Council. Advice and support is available from those in the local authority who are responsible for parental involvement. Two-way communication is vital. The gathering of questions, issues or concerns from parents and carers will be just as important as clear communication to parents and carers about how things will work.
218. Schools and local authorities should also consider how they continue to engage parents and families as part of the school community and in school decision making. As part of this, it will be important to consider the impact of parents not being able to go into the school buildings, and to ensure that this does not pose a barrier to open ongoing communication. Schools and local authorities should consider the steps that can be taken to continue and support activities such as Parent Council meetings, parent's evenings and subject choice discussions.
219. National information, Q&As and other material on education recovery, parental communication and home learning can be used to complement any communications locally and at school level. This includes [Parent Club's](#) dedicated COVID-19 web pages, the [National Parent Forum](#) (website and weekly newsletter), information from GTC Scotland's "Teaching Scotland" magazine, [Education Scotland's "Scotland Learns"](#) and [Parentzone Scotland](#) websites and other sources.

Children and young people

220. Schools and settings will wish to develop arrangements for good quality dialogue with and communication with children and young people about the return to school. A variety of methods can help to gather children and young people's views, questions and issues, and can help to clarify and address difficulties prior to return. Pupil Councils, pupil panels and pupil participation remain very important at this time. [General advice on good principles and methods for learner participation](#) is available from Education Scotland as well as a range of third sector organisations.

221. Schools and local authorities may wish to consider the information and evidence available from available national level survey work with young people on COVID-19. This includes the work conducted jointly by [Young Scot](#), [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) and [YouthLink Scotland](#) as well as guidance and information from [Children's Parliament](#) and [Children in Scotland](#). Local community learning and development services, Parent Councils and local parent umbrella groups should also spread this information. In addition, there is practical support on poverty-sensitive approaches in [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland's survey report](#) on the cost of learning in lockdown.

Related guidance/links

- [Coronavirus Act 2020](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [COVID-19 workforce education information and resources](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [information and guidance for social or community care and residential facilities](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [non-healthcare settings guidance](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [procedures for outbreak management](#)
- Scottish Government [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance for residential children's houses, residential schools and secure care facilities on staffing, social distancing and self-isolation](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance for the Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) sector](#)
- Scottish Government [COVID-19 guidance for colleges](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance for childminders](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance on "Out of school care"](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance for youth work and the Community Learning and Development Sector](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance on organised outdoor sport for children and young people](#)
- [Scottish Government guidance on individual risk assessment for staff in the workplace.](#)
- Scottish Government [initial summary of key scientific and public health advice](#)
- Scottish Government [Test and Protect advice for employers](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance on promoting attendance and managing absence](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance on support for continuity of learning](#)
- Scottish Government [Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase](#)
- Scottish Government [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues regarding the requirements for the safe travel of children and young people](#)
- Scottish Government [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues regarding physical distancing in schools](#)
- Scottish Government [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - advisory note on face coverings in schools](#)
- Scottish Government [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - advisory note on school trips which include an overnight stay](#)
- Scottish Government [scientific advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - advisory note on physical education, music and drama in schools](#)
- Scottish Government guidance for the safe use of [places of worship](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance for people with underlying health conditions](#)
- Scottish Government guidance for children [unable to attend school due to ill health](#)
- Scottish Government [guidance on unregulated children's services](#)
- [National Transport Guidance portal](#)
- [www.travelinescotland.com](#)
- [Outdoor Learning Directory](#)
- [Going Out There framework](#)
- [Scottish Advisory Panel on Outdoor Education](#)
- [Assist FM Catering guidance](#)

- [Assist FM Cleaning guidance](#)
- Health and Safety Executive [guidance on COVID-19 risk assessments](#)
- Health and Safety Executive [PPE at work](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive coronavirus information](#)
- [Sustrans guidance on school streets](#)
- [School Food and Drink Nutritional Standards](#)
- [Guidance from Food Standards Scotland \(FSS\)](#)
- National Parent Forum Scotland [guidance for parents on the return to school](#)
- SSERC [guidance on carrying out practical work in Sciences and Technologies](#)
- [National Trauma Training framework and plan](#)
- [Parent Club's Coronavirus pages](#)
- [National Parent Forum](#)
- [National Improvement Hub](#)
- National Improvement Hub - [Physical Education guidelines](#)
- [Education Scotland's "Scotland Learns"](#)
- [Parentzone Scotland](#)
- [General advice on good principles and methods for learner participation](#)
- [Young Scot](#)
- [Scottish Youth Parliament](#)
- [YouthLink Scotland](#)
- [Children's Parliament](#)
- [Children in Scotland](#)
- [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland's survey report](#)
- [Care Inspectorate coronavirus information](#)
- [UK Boarding Schools Association COVID-19 guidance](#)
- [Scottish Council of Independent Schools](#)
- [Independent Schools Council](#)
- [NHS Inform](#)
- [guidance about the latest self-isolation and quarantine requirements](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for first responders](#)

Health and safety risk assessment

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means employers and school leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff and children and young people face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). Employers must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable and make the school COVID-secure. General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the [HSE guidance on working safely](#).

Schools should undertake a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment by considering the measures in this guidance to inform their decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace, and the role of others in supporting that. The risk assessment will help school leaders and employers decide whether they have done everything they need to. Employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time. It also makes good sense to involve children and young people (where applicable) and parents in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place. Employers can do this by listening and talking to them about how the school will manage risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) and make the school COVID-secure. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that the school takes their health and safety seriously.

Sharing your risk assessment

Schools should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce. If possible, they should consider publishing it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and children and young people (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

Monitoring and review of risk controls

It is important that employers know how effective their risk controls are. They should monitor and review the preventive and protective measures regularly, to ensure the measures are working, and taking action to address any shortfalls.

Roles and responsibilities

All employers are required by law to protect their employees, and others, from harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum employers must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in the organisation (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

Given the employer landscape in schools is varied, we have set out here what the existing DfE [Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools](#) guidance states about the roles and responsibilities for health and safety in schools: the employer is accountable for the health and safety of school staff and children and young people. The day-to-day running of the school is usually delegated to the headteacher and the school management team. In most cases, they are responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This includes health and safety matters. Schools must appoint a competent person to ensure they meet their health and safety duties. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides more information on the role of headteachers and employers in the guidance.

[The role of school leaders - who does what](#) and a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of school setting in its [FAQs section](#), under 'Who is accountable for health and safety within a school?'. References to actions by employers in this guidance may in practice be carried out by headteachers in schools, but the employer will need to assure themselves that they have been carried out, as they retain the accountability for health and safety. If not already done, employers should ensure that a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment for their school is undertaken as soon as possible. As part of planning for the return to school, the employer is likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that those employers use this document to identify any further improvements they should make.

Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

Health and safety risk assessments identify measures to control risks during education and childcare setting activities. Health and safety law requires the employer to assess risks and put in place measures to reduce the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law also requires employers to record details of risk assessments, the measures taken to reduce these risks and expected outcomes. Schools need to record significant findings of the assessment by identifying:

- the hazards
- how people might be harmed by them
- what they have in place to control risk

Records of the assessment should be simple and focused on controls. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring.

Risk assessments consider what measures you need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff
- children and young people
- visitors
- contractors

Schools will need to think about the risks that may arise in the course of the day. This could include anything related to the premises or delivery of its curriculum or activities, whether on-site or in relation to activities offsite.

Consulting employees (general)

It is a legal requirement that employers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of staff creates a culture where relationships between employers and staff are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, staff should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer. Consultation does not remove the employer's right to manage. They will still make the final decision but talking to employees is an important part of successfully managing health and safety.

Resolving issues and raising concerns

Employers and staff should always come together to resolve issues. As providers widen their opening, any concerns in respect of the controls should be raised initially with line management and trade union representatives, and employers should recognise those concerns and give them proper consideration. If that does not resolve the issues, the concern can be raised with [HSE](#). Where the HSE identify employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Supplementary guidance for residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities

This guidance was developed in consultation with regulatory bodies, members of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, local authority school residence providers and other key partners.

Establishments may also find the existing Scottish Government [guidance for residential children's houses, residential schools and secure care facilities on staffing, social distancing and self-isolation](#) useful.

1. Application

All schools, including residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities, should have regard to the measures set out in the main school reopening guide and apply them as appropriate in their specific settings.

This supplementary guidance is intended for school care accommodation services, provided for the purpose of pupils in attendance at a public, independent or grant-aided school, and consisting of the provision of residential accommodation. For clarity, this includes residential, special and secure accommodation.

These include independent boarding school facilities and residence halls provided by local authority secondary schools.

2. Preparing for reopening of facilities

Every setting should undertake its own specific risk assessment, considering local circumstances, the domestic arrangements of pupils and staff, travel requirements and public health and hygiene requirements.

The assessment should consider the overall number of pupils, staffing levels, the capacity of each residential hall or house including arrangements for the provision of meals, the mix of shared dormitories and bathrooms/toilets, individual bedroom facilities, and shared communal facilities including cleaning schedules, particularly for kitchens and bathrooms. These preparations will assist in determining whether boarding houses/residence halls can be considered discrete family units.

Risk assessments should also include contingency provision for symptomatic pupils or staff, those with underlying health conditions, and consideration of issues such as catering, external pastoral support, and the use of school and public transport.

Schools should inform the Care Inspectorate of their intention to re-open and proposed re-opening dates.

3. Incoming pupils

Dependent on public health and travel advice, schools may wish to ask international boarders, or those from outside the remit of Scottish public health guidance, to return early for the Autumn term in order to carry out any required quarantine period. This may include those service children in boarding schools whose parents are serving overseas. This will require specific confirmation from residential care and health protection authorities. Schools should consider whether a variation to registration conditions may be required.

Schools that can provide assurance that a suitably equipped boarding house can count as “accommodation” for the purposes of public health guidance, may be in the position that pupils can re-enter the country knowing that they will be safely looked after at school or, where appropriate, by guardians.

Likewise, schools with responsibility for guardians will also be required to assess specific guidance for those guardians/carers they work with.

Schools may wish to draw on the [guidance about the latest self-isolation and quarantine requirements](#) for parents accompanying international boarders.

4. Hand hygiene

Boarding facilities should provide appropriate hand hygiene facilities (eg. hand sanitiser) in common spaces. Bathrooms should be fully supplied for handwashing and drying.

5. Minimising contact between individuals and groups

Schools should apply the guidance on minimising contact between individuals and groups as set out in the main school reopening guide. The following special considerations may apply:

- appropriate risk assessments should be undertaken for any new groupings or households formed within the facility (see Groupings/Households) above.
- groups may include relevant members of residential staff.
- it may be necessary to keep boarding pupils in one group residentially and another during the school day.
- each group should observe appropriate physical distancing between adults and children/young people. For secondary-age young people, distancing should be maintained where possible, in a practical way, provided this does not introduce capacity constraints. These approaches should also be adopted with any pupil or member of staff outside their household.
- where possible, individual rooms with en suite washing and toilet facilities may be provided to reduce interactions.
- where pupils are permitted to leave the school premises (e.g. during free time or at lunch time, flexi-boarders, school residence pupils returning home at weekends, etc.) they should follow the rules in place for wider society, for example wearing a face covering when entering a shop. Risk assessments should consider procedures for when children and young people leave and return to school premises, including hand hygiene.

6. Staying vigilant and responding to COVID-19 symptoms

Residential pupils showing symptoms will require to be isolated and tested. If a child in a boarding school/residence hall shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their residential setting household. Most children will benefit from self-isolating in their boarding house so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their family home.

Students should not travel to the school if showing symptoms.

7. Surveillance, testing and outbreak management

Schools should follow the procedures for Test and Protect and outbreak management as set out in the main school reopening guide.

On surveillance, the overall reporting on incidence amongst school age children and staff will include data from these settings.

It is recommended that the relationship between the residential house/school and the local Health Protection Team is proactive and established as early as possible. This will enable working relationships to be continuous and possible future scenarios to be rehearsed.



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