

Up-to-speed on: what the national lockdown means for schools

The DfE has released guidance on how schools should operate during the period of national lockdown, announced on 4 January 2021. This article summarises what you need to know to get you up-to-speed quickly.

Key points

The key points are as follows:

1. [Schools partially closed from 5 January until February half-term](#)
2. [Early years settings remain open to all](#)
3. [Schools need to revisit and update their risk assessments](#)
4. [Shielding reintroduced for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals](#)
5. [Face coverings must be worn in secondary schools](#)
6. [2021 SATs, GCSEs, AS and A-levels cancelled](#)
7. [Teacher judgment to be used for exam grading](#)
8. [Assessments in some vocational and technical qualifications can still go ahead](#)
9. [Pupils eligible for FSM to be provided with food parcels or vouchers](#)
10. [Pupils not eligible for on-site provision must be provided with remote education](#)
11. [Ofsted to enforce remote education](#)
12. [Government laptop scheme to continue](#)
13. [Rapid testing programme to continue for those on-site](#)

Read on to learn more information about each key point.

Schools partially closed from 5 January until February half-term

During the national lockdown from 5 January, schools are expected to remain open only to the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils. On-site attendance of eligible groups should not be limited.

Children with at least one parent who is a critical worker can go to school if necessary, including parents who may be working from home. Parents who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can. Schools should speak to parents to identify which pupils need to attend on-site provision. If necessary, schools may ask for simple evidence that the parent is a critical worker, e.g. a pay slip or an ID badge.

Schools should not implement a rota system or allow pupils outside of eligible groups to attend on-site provision, even if they think they can accommodate more pupils.

When providing on-site provision for eligible pupils, schools should ensure that group sizes are small. Pupils who are old enough should be supported to maintain distance from staff and

peers. Any additional space where lower numbers of pupils are attending should be used to maximise the distance between pupils and staff.

Schools should continue to provide wraparound care, such as breakfast and after-school clubs, for pupils eligible to attend on-site provision.

Early years settings remain open to all

Early years settings – including registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in schools and other pre-Reception provision on school sites – remain open across the country to provide early education and childcare.

Only vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers should attend on-site Reception classes.

Schools need to revisit and update their risk assessments

Schools should already have risk assessments in place to mitigate the risk of transmission of coronavirus on site; however, schools must revisit and update their risk assessments, building on the learning to date and the practices that have already been developed.

It is good practice for schools to treat the risk assessments as live documents, which are kept under constant review in order to respond to changing circumstances.

Schools should also review their safeguarding policy to reflect the higher number of pupils who will be learning remotely.

Shielding reintroduced for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals

Under the national lockdown, the government expects everybody to work from home where possible. Schools can determine the workforce that is required in school, taking into account the updated guidance for staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). The expectation is that staff not attending school will work from home where possible.

The government has reintroduced shielding for CEV individuals; therefore, staff and pupils in this category should not attend school. CEV individuals are those identified through a letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor.

Schools should speak with CEV staff about how they will be supported to work from home, and they should continue to be paid on their usual terms.

Staff who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, and individuals who are themselves clinically vulnerable, can continue to attend school if they are not able to work from home.

Pregnant women should work from home where possible, and schools should follow the advice in the government's [‘Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for pregnant employees’](#).

Face coverings must be worn in secondary schools

During the national lockdown, face coverings must be worn in educational settings with pupils in Year 7 and above. Adults and pupils must wear a face covering when moving

around the school site, i.e. in corridors, and communal areas where social distancing cannot be easily maintained. Schools need to communicate this to all relevant stakeholders.

2021 SATs, GCSEs, AS- and A-levels cancelled

Pupils due to take GCSEs, AS and A-levels in Summer 2021 will no longer be expected to sit exams. The DfE and Ofqual have worked up a range of contingency options for providing exam results this year.

Statutory KS1 and KS2 tests will also not take place this academic year.

Teacher judgment to be used for exam grading

The Education Secretary stated that he expects Ofqual to consider a teacher-assessed system as a substitute for formal exam results.

Ofqual will launch a consultation next week to give schools the opportunity to have their say on the system that will be used for results. The consultation is expected to be concluded within two weeks in order to give certainty to schools.

Training and support on the system for awarding grades will be provided to ensure grades are given fairly and consistently.

Assessments in some vocational and technical qualifications can still go ahead

The DfE has said that schools and colleges are allowed to go ahead with assessments in some vocational and technical qualifications, if they feel it is right to do so.

Ofqual and the DfE are formulating arrangements for pupils who do not take their January assessments, as well as arrangements for vocational and technical assessments scheduled for February onwards.

Pupils eligible for FSM to be provided with food parcels or vouchers

Schools are being advised to work with their catering advisers so that meals can continue to be available to any pupils eligible for FSM who are still attending school.

Extra funding is to be introduced to support schools in providing food parcels or meals for eligible pupils during the period of national lockdown.

Where schools are unable to provide food parcels, they will be able to order vouchers through the national voucher scheme.

Further details about the national voucher scheme will be provided shortly by the DfE.

Pupils not eligible for on-site provision must be provided with remote education

The government has strengthened the minimum standards of remote learning during the national lockdown. Schools are now expected to offer pupils video lessons and a set number

of hours of remote education for pupils which has increased from the government's previous minimum expectations. Schools should be providing, as a minimum:

- KS1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger pupils
- KS2: 4 hours a day
- KS3 and KS4: 5 hours a day

Younger children in KS1 are not expected to be provided with solely online teaching.

Schools should also appoint a senior leader to take on overarching responsibility for remote education. Information on remote learning arrangements must also be published on the school website for parents and pupils by 25 January 2021.

Schools are expected to have a digital platform to provide at least some of their remote provision via video lessons, for example G-Suite or Microsoft Education. This is to allow interaction, assessment and feedback across the school. Schools can offer their own videos, or use other providers such as the [Oak National Academy](#).

All pupils who are being provided with remote learning should be recorded as code 'X' on the school register.

The DfE has outlined that some pupils who have difficulty engaging in remote education may be considered to be vulnerable and are, therefore, eligible to attend on-site provision. This is a decision based on local discretion and the needs of the pupil and their family.



Ofsted to enforce remote education

Unlike during the first national lockdown in March 2020, Ofsted will now hold schools to account for the quality of remote education.

Ofsted will carry out monitoring inspections during the national lockdown of schools who require support. The inspections will focus heavily on remote education.

The regulator will also be able to inspect schools of any grade where it has significant concerns about safeguarding or the quality of remote learning. Parents are being encouraged to raise any concerns about remote education with the school initially, and if they feel the issue is not resolved, they can raise their concern with Ofsted.

Routine full inspections remain suspended during this term.



Government laptop scheme to continue

The scale of deliveries of laptops from the government's laptop scheme has been increased. Secondary schools can place their order for devices, which will be systematically delivered to schools over the next two weeks. The most disadvantaged areas will be prioritised by the government.

The DfE is also working with UK mobile network operators to provide access to the internet. Schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts for disadvantaged families via the [DfE's website](#).

The level of additional data for families will vary by provider. Three UK customers, for example, will receive unlimited data, and EE customers will receive an extra 20 gigabytes per month.

Rapid testing programme to continue for those on-site

Secondary schools, colleges, special schools and alternative provision providers should continue to offer rapid-result tests for individuals who are on-site during partial school closures. Daily testing of close contacts should be available to pupils and staff, and weekly testing should be available for staff. Primary school staff will be provided with rapid-result testing later in January.

Find out more about the rapid-result testing programme in our [resource pack](#).

What's next?

- You can access and read the DfE's full guidance [here](#).
- Ofqual's consultation on how exam year pupils will be provided with results will be published in the coming weeks.
- As always, we're here to help. Add this article to your 'Watch list' to be notified via email as soon as we publish any updates to this page.
- Check out our [Remote Education Resource Pack](#) for additional support in providing remote education during this time.

Bibliography

DfE (2021) 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools'

DfE and The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP (2021) 'Education Secretary statement to Parliament on national lockdown' <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-statement-to-parliament-on-national-lockdown>> [Accessed: 7 January 2021]

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The Guardian (2021) 'Boris Johnson 'extremely cautious' on when England's schools will reopen' <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/06/boris-johnson-extremely-cautious-on-when-englands-schools-will-reopen>> [Accessed: 7 January 2021]