

Up-to-speed on: the full reopening of schools following the national lockdown

On 22 February, Prime Minister Boris Johnson set out the roadmap for how coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions will be eased in the coming months. This article breaks down what schools need to know.

Key points

The key points are as follows:

1. [All pupils will return to face-to-face education from 8 March](#)
2. [Secondary school pupils will be offered testing from 8 March](#)
3. [Schools need to review and update their coronavirus risk assessments](#)
4. [Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals should continue to shield](#)
5. [Face coverings should be worn in classrooms in secondary schools unless social distancing can be maintained](#)
6. [Schools must provide remote education for pupils who need to stay at home](#)
7. [Schools must have contingency plans in place](#)

Read on to learn more about each key point.

All pupils will return to face-to-face education from 8 March

From 8 March schools should fully open to all pupils. Early years settings have remained open to all children throughout the national lockdown – this position has not changed.

All primary school pupils should return on 8 March. Secondary schools can operate a phased return of pupils in the week commencing 8 March to allow for testing that week. Pupils that remain at home during this week should be provided with remote education.

From this date, all schools should also work to resume all before- and after-school educational activities and wraparound childcare, where this provision is necessary to support parents to work, attend education and access medical care, and to support pupils' wider education and training.

Schools should encourage parents to send their children to school, particularly those who are vulnerable. Elective Home Education (EHE) does not automatically put children at greater risk of harm. Schools should consider whether a parent's decision to educate their child at home gives greater cause for concern compared to remaining in school. If there is cause for concern, schools should follow their own safeguarding procedures.

Secondary school pupils will be offered testing from 8 March

To support the return to school, from 8 March, secondary schools should offer pupils testing at an on-site asymptomatic testing site (ATS) – this testing is voluntary. Testing and the return of all pupils can be phased during this week.

Secondary schools should offer three lateral flow device (LFD) tests to pupils, three to five days apart. Schools have the flexibility to decide how best to deliver testing on a phased basis from 8 March, but vulnerable children, the children of critical workers and pupils in Years 10 to 13 should be prioritised.

Pupils should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers should continue to attend throughout this week, unless they receive a positive test or need to self-isolate. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with the school's phased return arrangements.

After this initial testing, pupils and staff in secondary schools will be supplied with LFD test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home. This will be a change to current procedures where secondary staff are being tested on site twice weekly.

Primary school staff should continue to self-test with LFDs twice a week at home. Primary-age pupils will not be tested with LFDs. This approach will be reviewed in the light of emerging evidence.



Schools need to review and update their coronavirus risk assessments

To prepare for full opening, schools need to review and, where necessary, update their coronavirus risk assessments and any other affected health and safety risk assessments. These risk assessments need to be treated as 'living documents', meaning they should be regularly reviewed and updated as guidance changes.

Schools must notify staff and their health and safety representatives of the outcomes of risk assessment reviews. Schools must also communicate any changes to their procedures to parents.



Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals should continue to shield

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) pupils and staff should continue to shield until further notice. Pupils who need to remain at home should be provided with remote education and CEV staff should be supported to work from home. Those living with someone who is CEV can still attend work where home-working is not possible.

The Department of Health and Social Care has added a third category to the [definition of CEV](#). The definition has been expanded to include a new group of adults who have been identified through the [COVID-19 Population Risk Assessment](#) as potentially being at high risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus. Individuals identified as CEV through this risk assessment are advised to shield. Anyone newly identified as part of this group will be notified.



Face coverings should be worn in classrooms in secondary schools unless social distancing can be maintained

It's already recommended that in schools educating pupils in Year 7 and above, pupils and adults should wear face coverings when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms where social distancing cannot be easily maintained. From 8 March, the DfE also recommends that face coverings are worn in classrooms or during activities, unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, e.g. in PE lessons. These measures will be in place until Easter, when they will be reviewed.

In primary schools, face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible.



Schools must provide remote education for pupils who need to stay at home

Schools will still be required to provide remote education as soon as reasonably practicable to pupils covered by [the Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction](#) where their attendance at school would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around coronavirus, e.g. where they are self-isolating or shielding.



Schools must have contingency plans in place

In the event that restrictions in schools are needed to help contain the spread of coronavirus, schools may be asked to revise their delivery models for a short period of time. Schools need to have contingency plans in place for outbreaks in school or changes in restrictions.



What's next?

- Read the DfE's guidance for schools in full [here](#). Specific guidance for early years settings can be found [here](#).
- We'll be updating a number of our resources in line with the government's announcement. We would recommend adding the following articles to your 'Watch list' to be notified when they are updated:
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Risk Assessment for Schools](#)
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Contingency Plan](#)
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Staff Handbook](#)

Bibliography

DfE (2021) 'Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance'