

28 June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to confirm the arrangements for schools and settings following the Prime Minister's announcement of the delay to step four of the roadmap for easing restrictions.

Although in other settings some restrictions have been eased, the current protective measures in place at your child's school will remain and are just as important now as they ever have been. These measures are aimed at reducing the potential for any spread of Covid-19 and ensuring schools and settings can remain open for the benefit of all children and young people.

Protective Measures

Schools, colleges and early years settings are still required to follow guidance from the Department of Education, the Local Authority and Public Health England. This advice is not only aimed at minimising the risk of transmission in schools and settings, but also out in the community. This includes the continued need to avoid mixing, regular handwashing, consistent groupings (known as bubbles) and enhanced cleaning routines.

Each school or setting must continue to follow their individual risk assessment. This will be specific to the context of the school or setting and so may differ from others.

Testing

Regular testing remains a vital part of the approach to managing the virus, whether an individual has symptoms or not (asymptomatic). It is important that anyone displaying symptoms of Covid-19 self-isolates immediately, along with other members of their household and organises a PCR test. It is not appropriate to use rapid lateral flow tests when individuals have symptoms of Covid-19. The symptoms of Covid-19 remain the same and can be found here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms-in-children/).

We also continue to strongly encourage staff, students and their households to take part in regular testing if they are not showing symptoms. This will help to reduce the risk of the virus unknowingly entering the school community. School staff and students of secondary age have access to twice-weekly asymptomatic Covid-19 testing through their school or setting. Households of staff, children and young people attending primary schools or settings also have access to twice weekly testing.

You can access a free LFT in a number of ways, including at the local LFT site in your district, by collecting a home LFT kit from a test site, or by ordering a home test kit online. More information about these options can be found here: [Regular Rapid Lateral Flow Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Tests](#).

Schools and settings remain responsible for contact tracing following a positive case. Any individual identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 has a legal obligation to self-isolate if advised to. There is help available, including financial

support, if you are required to self-isolate and are unable to go out to work or work from home - <https://www.essex.gov.uk/support-if-you-are-self-isolating>

Face covering

Face coverings are no longer required for students or staff in classrooms in schools and further education settings. However, they should still be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). This may include parents and carers entering the school grounds to collect or drop-off pupils. Please check with your child's school regarding their specific arrangements.

School trips

Schools and settings are permitted to take domestic residential education visits, however we appreciate some have already taken the difficult decision to cancel or reschedule trips due to the uncertainty over the restrictions, the time needed to organise such trips and measures in place at some types of venues. Where visits do go ahead restrictions around group sizes still apply and a risk assessment will be prepared and shared with you. This risk assessment will outline the protective measures in place for the visit and protocols for responding to a case of Covid-19. At this time, international travel is still not permitted.

Wraparound care, clubs and activities

The limits on the sizes of groups for wraparound care and clubs/ activities have been lifted. However, pupils and students must remain in consistent groups and adhere to the risk assessment for that provision. Your child's nursery, childminder, school or college can give you more information about their risk assessment and protective measures in place.

Sports Days

School sports days can go ahead, in line with the rest of the school or settings system of controls. This means that pupils and students must remain in their bubbles, and early years children remain in their consistent groups. Spectators are allowed to attend but must adhere to the risk assessment and current social distancing requirements. Where events take place outdoors, spectators can gather in separate groups of up to 30 – the legal gathering limit. Multiple groups of 30 are permitted, with sufficient space in between the groups and no mixing, but young children of all ages are included in this number.

Sports days will require careful management of the arrival and leaving and of sibling groups as it's imperative the groups do not mix at all. Your school will have a risk assessment in place to manage their event and this may include holding class events at different times, seating arrangements and/ or staggered start and end times. Please do familiarise yourself with the arrangements and adhere to the risk assessment throughout your visit.

Transition Events

We appreciate that moving between phases and schools is a big change for many children and it is important to manage this change well. Transition events, which usually bring together children and young people from across multiple schools or settings, cannot go

ahead in the way they usually would, whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain in place. This means that these activities are very difficult to organise this year. Whilst a consistency of approach across the county would be ideal, this is very difficult given that schools all have individual risk assessments for their own context and that children will transition from and to multiple different schools.

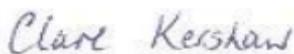
We recognise that for primary schools and their pupils, it is a priority for year 6 to transition well out of primary school and to preserve this experience, as much as possible. For this reason, many schools have decided to move transition activity into the beginning of the Autumn term. The majority of secondary schools are running summer school programmes over the summer holidays and so some support can be arranged here, particularly for vulnerable pupils. As well as remote alternatives and transition activity at the beginning of September. If you have any questions, please speak to your school about their transition plans.

Leaver's Events

We know that for lots of pupils, the latest announcement and impact on planned leaver's events will be disappointing. Some schools have already cancelled or significantly amended events so that they remain in line with current government guidance. The latest advice from Public Health is that this is the most sensible option and they have reinforced the importance of adhering to the safety measures and legal gathering limits in place at any events that are still planned to take place.

We appreciate that the delay to the final step of the roadmap and the cancellation or amendment to many end of year celebrations will have been disappointing for many, however, we'd like to thank you for your continued help and for supporting your child's setting by following the protective measures and restrictions that they have been required to implement. We ask that you please continue to adhere to these and encourage your children to do the same, to help to ensure that schools and settings remain a safe place to learn and work.

With best wishes,



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