

# **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools**

Non-statutory guidance to ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning and teaching.

Version 4.3

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## VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Summary of changes
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 <sup>st</sup> 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 highlighted in yellow.
V4.3	30/10/2020	Shifting the emphasis of the guidance from “reopening schools” to “protective measures in schools”.  Further changes resulting from feedback on the experience of implementing the guidance at local level. Key changes include updated guidance on: ventilation as we head into autumn/winter; shielding and individual risk assessments and Additional Support Needs.  Updates to versions 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, to take account of comments from CERG members where possible, the latest advice from the sub-group, and to align with the levels approach within the Strategic Framework.  A summary of the key changes in this guidance is available on the <a href="#">Education Scotland Education Recovery page</a>

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## Overview

1. This guidance was developed to support a safe return to school for all children, young people and staff in August 2020. It has since been updated on a regular basis to support the continuing safe implementation of a full-time return to school, and most recently to reflect the levels approach within '[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Scotland's Strategic Framework](#)' (herein the 'Strategic Framework'). It takes full account of the evolving COVID-19 situation in Scotland, the experience of reopening schools to date, the advice received from scientific and public health experts and the advice of the Education Recovery Group and other key stakeholders including children and young people.
2. The Education Recovery Group continues to monitor carefully the incidence and prevalence of COVID-19 in Scotland and in school communities, to inform guidance around safety and wellbeing in schools. [Infographics](#) providing a weekly snapshot of current COVID-related data in relation to children and young people, and their associated workforce, such as the number of tests and positive cases reported, and the attendance and absence of both children and staff in childcare and school settings.
3. The [scientific advice](#) that informed the Scottish Government's decision to reopen schools and the initial 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. This guidance has been informed by [further scientific advice on specific aspects of school reopening](#) which was published on 30 October.
4. 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 children's house, residential schools, secure care facilities and residential respite/short break services for children and young people](#), developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. COVID-19 [guidance for universities, colleges and student accommodation providers](#) may also be relevant to some.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. As set out in the Strategic Framework, to best tackle the virus and protect people, we are moving to an approach based on five levels of protection. This allows for rapid and proportionate responses to be taken – locally or nationally – using a transparent range of measures and options. It also allows us to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach, where a part of the country with lower rates of infection lives with restrictions designed to suppress the virus in higher rate areas.
  9. The Strategic Framework also reiterates that the unique impacts of the pandemic on children and young people, coupled with the necessity to ensure it does not prevent them receiving the best start in life, mean we must prioritise keeping schools and regulated childcare safe, open and welcoming. It is recognised that, to enable this to happen, enhanced mitigations may need to be put in place in other parts of society.
  10. The protective measures set out in this guidance represent the ‘core’ or standard protective measures that should be in place in all schools across all five protection levels. These measures have been augmented in line with scientific and public health advice in the current context of rising prevalence levels. Implementation and adherence to these measures is essential to ensuring the ongoing safety of children and young people, as well as the staff who have worked hard to keep settings open.
  11. These standard protective measures represent the full suite of measures required at levels 0-2 of the Strategic Framework. At levels 3 and 4 of the Strategic Framework, some enhanced protective measures have been identified which aim to tackle specific areas of higher potential risk as prevalence increases, including for those people most clinically at risk. These enhanced protective measures are set out in Annex A. Local authorities and schools who are in an area subject to Level 3 or 4 restrictions should, in addition to the standard protective measures in this guidance, implement these enhanced measures with a view to ensuring that schools can remain open safely.
  12. In addition to the implementation of these mitigations, local authorities and schools will also need to be able to adapt to local issues, and specifically to local outbreaks. This will closely involve local authorities and local Public Health Teams.
  13. Neither the Strategic Framework nor this guidance require any automatic move to school closures or remote or blended learning as a result of specific levels being attained. The measures put in place across wider society at different levels of the Strategic Framework have been designed precisely to avoid this eventuality, and to reduce community transmission sufficiently to allow schools to remain open safely. However, the use of

targeted remote learning remains an important contingency for schools at all levels of the Strategic Framework. There may be circumstances in which, based on clear evidence and public health considerations, or other relevant factors (e.g. minimum staffing requirements) specific schools require either to close, or to implement remote learning for some children and young people, for a defined period of time. All such decisions will continue to be made by local incident management teams working in partnership, and on the independent advice of local Directors of Public Health, who will take full account of school safety and wider public health considerations in line with their statutory duties. Similar decisions may require to be taken by local authorities in conjunction with schools where staffing constraints (e.g. due to self-isolation or shielding) or other matters make such a move unavoidable.

14. 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.

## **Key public health measures**

15. 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 mitigate the risks to children, young people and staff.
16. This guidance is designed to promote a consistent and equitable approach against the context of the nationwide health emergency and is aligned with the Covid 19 Strategic Framework. Every school and setting 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**

17. 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.
18. It is a legal requirement that local authorities and headteachers ensure that risk assessments are conducted and regularly reviewed and updated. Implementation of the mitigations set out in this section will also help manage risks effectively for children, young people and staff in school.
19. All aspects of school life 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 proportionate to the relevant protection level of the local area, and reviewed and updated as appropriate as circumstances change.
20. 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;
  - aligned with the appropriate mitigations for their protection level; and
  - updated appropriately as per the above, including considering any issues identified or changes in public health advice.
21. In accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, all local trade unions should be consulted with and involved in the development and updating of risk assessments. School risk assessments should be shared with staff and trade unions, including catering and facilities management teams and contractors where appropriate.



22. 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.
23. While intended for wider use, the Health and Safety Executive has produced helpful [guidance on COVID-19 risk assessments](#).
24. For more information on what is required of employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments, see Annex C.

### **Public health measures to prevent and respond to infections**

25. 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.
26. 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 face coverings or 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**

27. 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.
28. 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.

29. 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.
30. NHS Inform [Covid-19 General Advice](#) states that 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.
31. 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**

32. The local authority/school should undertake regular health and safety checks of the school estate, including water quality sampling for legionella and other bacteria.
33. 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; ensure adequate contact time for cleaning products is adhered to.
  - 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.
34. 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).

35. 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.
36. 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.
37. 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.
38. 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.

**Fomites (objects or materials which may carry infection – including text books and jotters, etc.)**

39. The updated advice of the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues notes that [recent studies](#) suggest that environmental contamination leading to transmission of COVID-19 is unlikely to occur in real life conditions, provided that standard cleaning procedures and precautions are enforced. In schools, the sub-group noted that this means following the general guidance on hand washing and respiratory hygiene, including cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces, and careful hand-washing with soap and warm water and / or use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after handling jotters, text books (or other pieces of equipment). This section of the guidance has been updated in light of this more recent evidence.
40. There are two potential approaches to mitigating risks from surface contamination of jotters, textbooks and library books. Schools should consider which of these approaches is most appropriate for their circumstances as part of appropriately updated risk assessments.

(i) quarantining books for 72 hours remains an effective measure to mitigate the risks of handling them. The amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surface is likely to have decreased significantly after this time. School libraries adopting this approach may wish to 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. This approach may be best suited to reducing transmission during outbreak situations. In other circumstances it may be disproportionate to the risks involved, particularly if it has a significant impact on learning and teaching.

(ii) Careful hand washing with soap and warm water/use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after handling text books, jotters (or other pieces of equipment) mitigates the need for quarantine for 72 hours before, and 72 hours after. As far as possible and in line with effective practice, staff should avoid touching their mouth, nose and eye area. Good hand hygiene should be sufficient to prevent transmission of infection from these items, even if they are contaminated, as long as the person handling the item does not touch their face between handling the item and decontaminating their hands. Good respiratory hygiene (“Catch it, kill it, bin it”) is also required at all times.

## Ventilation and heating

41. This section of the guidance was updated on 12th October to take account of colder weather during autumn and winter. It has been informed by the latest scientific and public health advice and research from the advisory sub-group on education and children’s issues, Health Facilities Scotland, ARHAI Scotland and the SAGE Environmental and Modelling Group (EMG) which published [updated guidance](#) on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020. Cognisance has also been taken of UK and European building services industry guidance ([CIBSE](#) and [REHVA](#)). This guidance has been developed in consultation with HSE.
42. This section of the guidance is intended primarily for relevant local authority teams – it is not expected that headteachers or teachers should have the expertise to apply it independently.
43. The key requirement for local authorities is to work with schools to identify and implement local approaches that balance the need for fresh air in key parts of the school estate with the maintenance of adequate temperatures. The latest scientific advice identifies that ventilation is an important factor in mitigating against the risk of far-field (>2m) aerosol transmission. The importance of far-field aerosol transmission is not yet known, but evidence suggests it is a risk in poorly ventilated spaces.
44. There is therefore a need for an appropriate supply of fresh air to assist with minimising the risk of virus infection. There is also a need to maintain indoor temperatures for reasons including user comfort, health and wellbeing, and learning and teaching.

45. This guidance seeks to identify practical measures which may be incorporated to balance these issues. The precise balance to be struck, and the most effective ways of doing so, will depend heavily on local factors including building design, location and prevailing weather conditions. It is expected that average external temperatures will drop over the winter months, and also that average wind speeds will rise (c30-40%) compared to summer. The rise in wind speed will increase the need to reduce draughts by closing (or partially closing) windows. The increased speed may however provide some compensation in terms of maintaining overall ventilation rates.
46. Measures to improve ventilation should be viewed as just one part of the overall package of control measures in schools. Schools should continue to ensure a focus on implementation and maintenance of wider controls including personal hygiene, symptom vigilance, enhanced cleaning and distancing.
47. Relevant local authority teams may already be in a position to provide the necessary expert advice to schools on appropriate local approaches to the assessment of current ventilation and the development of strategies to improve ventilation. Where any necessary expertise is not available within a local authority, they may wish to draw on expert external advice to inform their strategies - some local authorities have already done so, and are sharing this expertise through their national networks. In providing advice, local authorities may wish to consider grouping school buildings by common criteria (e.g. type of construction, primary/secondary/ASN, window type, heating system, etc.) and developing a package of viable options in consultation with trade unions and staff in those schools.
48. Schools should ensure that risk assessments are updated appropriately for the autumn/winter period, in consultation with local authorities, staff, trade unions and (where applicable) PFI/NPD providers, to consider issues around ventilation and heating/warmth that are relevant to their specific environments. Drawing on local authority advice, they should consider areas of the school where air flow (including pockets of stagnant air in occupied spaces) and/or temperature may be problematic, and the strategies that may be used to address these issues and mitigate risks appropriately. Some examples of potential approaches are provided below.
49. Schools should as a minimum ensure that adequate levels of ventilation and appropriate temperatures are maintained, with reference to the [School Premises Regulations](#). While minimum requirements vary depending on the specific part of the school estate, for classrooms the regulations stipulate 2 air changes per hour and a temperature of 17°C. Reference should also be made to the [Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#) minimum temperatures.

### **Natural ventilation and temperature**

50. The primary effective method of increasing natural ventilation remains the opening of external doors, vents and windows. Wherever it is practical, safe and secure to do so, and appropriate internal temperatures can be maintained in line with statutory obligations, this approach should be adopted. Keeping doors open (again, with appropriate regard to safety and security) may also help to reduce contact with door handles.

51. 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.
52. As noted above, schools are also required to maintain internal temperatures and conditions in line with statutory obligations (see the School Premises Regulations and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992). It is recognised that in the autumn and winter, schools are therefore unlikely to be able to keep external doors and windows open as often, or for as long, as in warmer weather periods.
53. Scientific and public health advice is that measures to introduce fresh air can have a beneficial impact on virus suppression. Schools should therefore be supported to adopt strategies that help balance requirements for ventilation with internal temperatures and conditions. Expert advice identifies that using pragmatic approaches which recognise the importance of user comfort may help overall behavioural adherence to guidance in relation to ventilation.
54. Potential approaches, the suitability of which will depend on a range of local factors including weather conditions, may include:

#### Ventilation

- partially opening doors and windows to provide ventilation while reducing draughts
- opening high level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- purging spaces by opening windows, vents and external doors (e.g. between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused, or at other suitable intervals if a space is occupied for long periods at a time)

#### Temperature

- providing flexibility in permissible clothing while indoors. Support for parents in relation to additional clothing may be available in some circumstances. Local authorities should ensure that, where individual children and young people cannot access warm clothing necessary for the local strategies adopted, appropriate support is provided on a case-by-case basis. Local authorities should also be aware of the needs of staff who may be unable to access clothing appropriate to local strategies adopted.
- designing seating plans to reflect individual student/staff temperature preferences. This is an approach which has been trialled in some schools and proven to be a useful measure when used in combination with other strategies.
- adjusting indoor heating to compensate for cold air flow from outside (e.g. higher system settings, increased duration)

#### **Mechanical ventilation**

55. Where it is not possible to keep doors and windows open while maintaining appropriate internal conditions in line with statutory obligations, and centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, systems should wherever possible be adjusted to full fresh air. Air recirculation should be avoided or minimised. If this is not possible while maintaining

appropriate internal conditions, systems should be operated to achieve statutory requirements as a minimum. Additional points to assist with the practical delivery of this approach include:

- Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Additional advice on filters can be located in the REHVA Covid guidance.
- Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels.
- Consider starting mechanical ventilation ahead of school day and allow it to continue after classes have finished.

### **Fans**

56. Fan heaters, fan assisted heating systems or air conditioning within a single space may assist in maintaining appropriate temperatures, provided there is an adequate supply of fresh air into the space. This approach should only be used where the balance of adequate ventilation and appropriate temperature cannot be achieved otherwise. Filter maintenance should also be carefully undertaken as noted above. Care should be taken to avoid unregulated use of ad hoc devices which may cause increased risk in terms of electrical load, inappropriate installation, cable trip hazard and potential fire or electrocution risk.

### **CO<sub>2</sub> monitors**

57. Local authorities should consider whether CO<sub>2</sub> monitors may play a useful role in their overall ventilation monitoring strategies, particularly in areas of the school estate that are identified as higher risk or of concern. It is important that local authority advice is sought on the use of monitors to ensure their proper specification, installation, location, calibration and effective use.
58. CO<sub>2</sub> monitors detect the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in a space, which will increase if adequate ventilation is not provided, thereby prompting user intervention such as opening a window or vent. Some schools will have these installed already while others may, in consultation with relevant local authority teams, choose to use portable devices for periodic or ongoing monitoring in areas where particular risks are identified. The most recent scientific advice and research is that an upper level of 1500 ppm should be used to identify and prioritise multi-occupancy, regularly-used areas for improvement.
59. This scientific advice and research also indicates that indoor spaces where there is likely to be an enhanced aerosol generation rate (e.g. loud singing/drama, indoor PE when permitted) should aim to ensure ventilation is sufficient to maintain CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at lower levels (a figure of 800ppm is provided), and should also include additional mitigations such as face coverings for audiences and restricting the size of groups and duration of activities. This advice will be factored into consideration of any wider advice on restart of these activities.

60. Local authorities should consider how to apply lessons learned from parts of the estate with CO<sub>2</sub> detectors installed in other parts of the learning estate. This could be achieved both between schools within a local authority and also by sharing data between local authorities.
61. Relevant local authority teams should provide clear advice on the appropriate use of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors, including procedures to be followed by staff in the event of inappropriate levels being indicated. These should be proportionate and pragmatic, and help ensure both safety and continuity of education. They may include, for example, contact with relevant local authority teams to discuss approaches to improving ventilation in the event of concerns being identified.
62. School operators (e.g. local authorities, leisure trusts, third parties, etc.) should also be aware of additional guidance in relation to ventilation of sports and leisure facilities which may be applicable within school buildings e.g. community use of gyms, fitness rooms, sports halls etc. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-sport-and-leisure-facilities/pages/operational-guide-and-checklist/>

### **Implementation**

63. Local authorities and schools should, in consultation with staff and trade unions, ensure there are clear plans for effective implementation of local strategies. Key points to consider may include:
  - Clarity on responsibility for implementing approaches, with due regard for workload;
  - Provision of instruction or signage, etc. to support implementation (e.g. with clear instructions for window/door/vent opening and mechanical system operation);
  - Pragmatic, proportionate procedures to be followed in the event of any concerns around ventilation or heating. Local authorities may wish to ensure that contact details are provided for relevant local authority teams or health and safety officers.

### **Sharing of good practice**

64. Local authorities are committed to sharing good practice and expert advice across national networks, including the ADES Resources network and SHOPS. Local authorities are currently modelling practical approaches to implementation of the strategies in this guidance in order to achieve the regulatory requirement of 2 air changes per hour in classrooms, and the findings of this work will be shared across networks as soon as they are available.
65. This section of the guidance will be kept under careful review and updated in light of emerging practice.

### **Minimising contact between individuals and groups**

66. The COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues published [scientific advice on physical distancing in schools](#). This advice was reviewed in October 2020. The original 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.”

67. 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.”

68. 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.

69. The sub-group has since reviewed this advice in light of the changed position on infection and transmission rates, the evidence and experience of school re-opening between August and October 2020, and recent scientific evidence. Following that review, the sub-group has concluded that its previous advice on physical distancing in schools should be maintained, and the need for compliance should be strongly reinforced, particularly in areas where lapses leading to incidents have been observed by public health teams (e.g. adult-to-adult distancing).

70. The sub-group acknowledged that the guidance in this section goes further than the sub-group’s July 2020 advice by encouraging distancing between young people where possible in secondary schools, particularly for those in the senior phase. It acknowledged that feedback from independent HSE inspections and public health teams suggests that this guidance is being implemented successfully in many schools and the success of these additional mitigation measures may well be contributing to current low transmission rates observed in secondary schools August-October 2020. The sub-group indicated it would therefore encourage continuation of this precautionary approach wherever possible in secondary schools.

### **Physical distancing between children in primary schools**

71. 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**

72. The scientific advice is that physical distancing between young people in secondary schools is not required to ensure safety in schools.
73. The evidence for this is less clear for older pupils, but at present this approach continues to be advised for secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks, feedback from public health teams, the effectiveness of mitigations and the benefits to all young people of being able to attend school.

However, to provide additional reassurance to young people, staff and parents/carers, where there are opportunities to further minimise risk these should be actively encouraged. As a precautionary approach therefore secondary schools should encourage distancing wherever practicable between young people, and particularly in the senior phase

74. 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 full-time learning in school.
75. Mitigations that schools should consider 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.
  - Encouragement of set seating plans, even across different subject classes, is likely to reduce the number of close contacts needing to self-isolate if a case of COVID arises in a pupil.
  - 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 COVID-19 [guidance for universities, colleges and student accommodation providers](#) on the appropriate approach to these specific circumstances while on campus. This has now been included in updated guidance for colleges.

- In special schools and units, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, the balance of the staffing complement, the groupings of children and young people and their needs, and therefore the staffing and resources required, (PPE, cleaning of equipment), should be considered/assessed throughout the school day and adjusted where appropriate/necessary. Further guidance on meeting the needs of children with additional support needs is provided within continuity of learning guidance.
76. Secondary schools should consider which of these possible mitigations are achievable in their establishment and look to implement as many as is practicable, while also bearing in mind that this distancing is an additional, precautionary step, which goes beyond what continues to be recommended in the latest scientific advice.

### **Minimising contacts (groupings)**

77. 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.
78. 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.
79. Where it is necessary to bring groups together, alternative mitigating actions should be put in place, such as limiting the time spent together. When undertaking fire test drills or procedures where the whole school is evacuated, schools and local authorities should prioritise fire safety, but may consider muster points and whether these need to be altered to ensure a greater degree of separation.
80. 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 as broad and meaningful a curriculum as is possible during the recovery period, and promoting children, young people and staff's health and wellbeing.
81. Examples that schools should draw on when considering the most appropriate approach for their setting 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 which has demonstrated success 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.

82. In special schools and units, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, risk assessments should be conducted in full consultation with staff and their trade unions, aligned to the relevant protection level and reviewed on a regular basis, to consider:

- the minimum space required to ensure the required 2m physical distancing between all adults who might be in a classroom at any time over the day;
- the appropriate mitigations which may require to be adopted according to the nature of activity being undertaken and individual pupil needs;
- the level and balance of risk in relation to infection control and pupils' needs, and the appropriate mitigations needed to address these risks and keep children, young people and staff safe;
- the risk associated with planned learning activities which require adults to be in close contact with each other and with pupils in order to provide support. Appropriate risk mitigation measures should be identified, the resources needed to implement them should be made available, and mitigations should be adopted to reduce the risk identified;
- the risks involved in and the mitigations required to be in place for situations where adults require to be in close contact with each other and/or with pupils in order to provide support and intervene, e.g. in de-escalation procedures;
- the appropriate mitigation measures which should be adopted in situations where opaque face coverings may act as a barrier to communication. Consideration should be given to the use of transparent face coverings or appropriate alternative mitigations adopted which will properly safeguard both pupils and staff. Further guidance on meeting the needs of children with additional support needs is contained within the continuity of learning guidance.

83. 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.

84. 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).
85. 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.
86. It is recognised that break times will also require careful consideration – public health teams report examples of schools where large numbers of pupils have been isolated because of groups mixing at break times. 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.
87. 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.
88. 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. If sporadic or linked cases have occurred in one school, temporary suspension or reduction of attendance at other facilities should be part of this risk assessment, led by the local Health Protection Team.

### **Proportionality**

89. 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

90. 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.

91. Maintaining 2m distancing between adults and children whenever possible will help mitigate risk, but it is acknowledged that this is not always possible, 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 on [reopening early learning and child care services](#) is available.

92. Other than where schools are using ELC models and guidance in the early stage (P1-2), where adults cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face with other adults and/or children and young people, face coverings (or, in certain specific circumstances, PPE - see section on PPE and other protective barrier measures, below) should be worn at all times. This applies to all staff including support staff and classroom assistants. Transparent face-coverings may be supplied by local authorities where appropriate and used where there is a risk of detriment to the child's health and wellbeing. See the section of the guidance on face coverings for further information.
93. Risk assessments should pay particular attention to the position of support assistants or other staff who may have to work in close contact with multiple children and young people throughout the day. In line with the advice above, distancing should be maintained by support assistants, and if that is not possible, face coverings should be worn (including transparent ones where appropriate). As part of risk assessment the need for PPE should be considered (see below) and PPE used accordingly. Where resources permit, if mitigations such as these cannot reasonably be implemented, schools might wish to consider timetabling/organising classes to limit the number of children and young people with whom a support assistant needs to come into close contact during the course of a day.
94. Movement between schools (e.g. of temporary/supply/peripatetic staff etc) should be kept to a minimum. Those providing essential services key to the delivery of children's care or educational plans, for example visiting teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers, youthworkers and those providing therapeutic support, should be able to visit schools; however, appropriate mitigations to prevent transmission of the virus in and between settings should be undertaken. Mitigations should be determined via a risk assessment carried out by the school in co-operation with the service provider.

95. Schools and local authorities should, in partnership with related partners and local public health teams, pay very close attention to any evidence suggesting the potential for emerging bridges of transmission between settings. In the event that any such evidence is identified, they should consult immediately with local public health teams on any requirement to pause or further reduce such movement between schools. They should ensure that appropriate contingency measures are in place for any required period of time to e.g. protect the wellbeing of children and young people and staff.
96. 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).
97. Where movement across locations is necessary to deliver school operations the number of interactions should be minimised, the 2m distancing between adults should be adhered to wherever possible, and face coverings should be worn as set out in this guidance.
98. 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 to keep 2m distancing from learners and other staff as well as wearing face coverings as appropriate.
99. 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.
100. The Strategic Framework notes that travel restrictions between areas of different prevalence will be set out in guidance. Exceptions will apply for essential travel including work and education.
101. 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 2m distancing can be maintained and face coverings should also be worn. This includes at kettle stations and other gathering points.
102. 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**

103. 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.

104. Parents should not enter school buildings unless required. Some approaches that local authorities and schools should 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 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;
  - if parents/carers are dropping off children, they should wear face coverings;
  - 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 – see [advice on car-sharing](#);
  - 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**

105. For the majority of staff in schools, PPE is not required or necessary. Where it is required or necessary, the following arrangements will apply.
106. Where the use of PPE is being considered within an education and childcare setting the specific conditions of each individual setting must be taken into consideration and comply with all applicable legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 which outlines the process of, and legal requirements for, risk assessment.
107. 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 using the [HSE Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) at Work](#) guide, appropriate PPE should be readily available and provided and staff should be trained on its use. The use of PPE by staff within schools, for example support staff, support assistants, staff with vulnerabilities, 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. Where the use of PPE is risk assessed as being required, staff should be trained in how to put on and take off PPE (as required by Health and Safety Regulations) and suitable waste facilities provided.

108. 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. Risk assessments must be mindful of the additional distress children and young people may be experiencing due to measures introduced such as the use of face coverings or PPE due to COVID-19, and the need for continued protection of staff. If for any reason, risk assessments are not in place, then they must be undertaken swiftly in accordance with this guidance and local risk assessment guidance. If there are any issues relating to risk assessment or staff wish to raise concerns they should in the first instance do so with their line manager in line with local procedures. Where concerns remain they can also contact their trade union representative and/or local HR or Health and Safety team. Employers should recognise those concerns and give them due consideration. If that does not resolve the concerns they can be raised directly with the HSE (see Annex C for further detail).
109. Local infection control procedures that outline safety and protocols should also be stringently followed and adequate training provided. This includes procedures for putting on and taking off PPE, the disposal of soiled items; laundering of any clothes including uniform and staff clothing, towels or linen; and cleaning equipment for children and young people, such as hoists and wheelchairs.
110. 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.
111. 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 should be used. 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.
- **Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP):** There are a small number of medical procedures which increase the risk of transmission through aerosols (tiny droplets) being transferred from the patient to the care giver. These are known as aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). Within education settings, these are only undertaken for a very small number of children with complex medical needs, such as those receiving tracheostomy care.
- Staff performing AGPs in these settings should follow Scotland's National Prevention and Infection Control Manual (NSS and HPS) with personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance on aerosol generating procedures, and wear the correct PPE, which is:
  - a FFP2/3 respirator
  - gloves
  - a long-sleeved fluid repellent gown
  - eye protection
- Children and young people should be taken from the classroom or shared area for any AGP to be carried out in a designated room with the doors closed and any windows open. If this is not possible, for example in children and young people who require sporadic care, such as urgent tracheostomy tube suction, individual risk assessments should be carried out. In all instances, efforts should be made to:
  - ensure that only staff who are needed to undertake the procedure are present and that no other children or young people are in the room
  - minimise clutter to make the process of cleaning the room as straightforward as possible
  - clean all surfaces and ventilate the room following a procedure and before anyone not wearing appropriate PPE enters. Clearance of infectious particles after an AGP is dependent on the ventilation and air change within the room. For a room without ventilation, this may take an hour

### Face coverings

112. The Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues 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 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2020. A [further update](#) was published on 30 October
113. 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.

114. Considering the changed position on infection and transmission rates, the evidence and experience of school re-opening between August and October 2020, and recent scientific evidence, the sub-group has since concluded that its previous advice on face coverings in schools and ELC settings should be further strengthened and augmented to manage the main area of risk within schools, which is adult to adult transmission. Their advice has, therefore, been brought in line with current advice in the community, and the need for compliance should be strongly reinforced. This section of the guidance has been updated accordingly.
115. The advisory sub-group has moderated its advice regarding requirements to wear face coverings when adults are interacting within 2m with children in primary schools. However, reflecting a precautionary approach, this guidance maintains a consistent approach to the use of face coverings for adults across primary and secondary schools, with the exception of where schools are making use of ELC models in early stage (P1-2).
116. A definition of face coverings (which should not be confused with PPE) can be found in [Covid19: staying safe and protecting others](#). 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, maintaining distancing between young people in secondary schools where possible and remaining off work and school when COVID-19 symptoms develop, remain vitally important.
117. Unless otherwise stated, the approach to face coverings below should be applied across all primary and secondary school settings. However, as noted earlier in this guidance, schools may opt to apply ELC models in the early stages of primary school (P1-2), in which case the relevant guidance should be followed.
118. 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.
119. Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. Further information on exemptions can be found in wider [Scottish Government guidance](#).
120. Face coverings should be worn by adults wherever they cannot keep 2m distance with other adults and/or children and young people..
121. Face coverings should also be worn in the following circumstances (except where an adult or child/young person is exempt from wearing a covering):
  - at all times when adults in primary schools, and adults and young people in secondary schools (including special schools and independent and grant aided schools), are moving around the school in corridors, office and admin areas, canteens (except when dining) and other confined communal areas, (including staff rooms and toilets); 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).
122. Face coverings should be worn by parents and other visitors to all school sites (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
  123. Classroom assistants and those supporting children with Additional Support Needs, who may routinely have to work within two metres of primary, secondary or special school pupils, should wear face coverings as a general rule (see earlier section on physical distancing). However, the use of opaque face coverings should be balanced with the wellbeing and needs of the child, recognising that face coverings may limit communication and could cause distress to some children – appropriate use of transparent face coverings may help in these circumstances. It is advised that these adults should be very alert to symptoms and follow closely the guidance on responding to COVID-19 symptoms.
  124. Local Incident Management Teams, led by Health Protection Teams, may recommend a further strengthening of the use of face coverings in all classrooms (particularly in secondary schools) when dealing with local outbreaks (see Outbreak Management)
  125. Where local decisions on the strengthened use of face coverings are made, it will remain vitally important to consider the potential impact on children and young people, including via the appropriate use of Equality Impact Assessments.
  126. The impact of wearing a face covering for very young learners and/or learners with additional support needs, including any level of hearing loss, should be carefully considered. 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. Scottish Government [guidance on “Helping Others”](#) sets out supportive approaches when interacting with hearing impaired people. The National Deaf Children’s Society has also [suggested some ways in which communication with hearing impaired learners can be supported](#), in circumstances where face coverings are a barrier to communication.
  127. In classes where any such impacts are anticipated and no alternative mitigations are reasonable, schools should consider the use of transparent / 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. However, as face coverings become more prevalent in wider society, this may be less of a concern.
  128. 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 in [Covid19: staying safe and protecting others](#).

129. There should be regular messaging from schools to adults and children and young people about these instructions, with a clear expectation that face coverings are worn in the relevant areas except for those who are exempt.
130. 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.
131. No-one should be excluded from education solely 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, with any further action taken in line with usual school policy or procedure. "[Included, engaged and involved part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions](#)", provides national policy guidance on the use of early intervention and prevention to promote positive relationships and behaviour.
132. It is not recommended that face coverings are used in secure schools.
133. 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.

134. Enhanced measures apply to schools in local areas at Protection Level 3 onwards - see Annex A for detail.

### **Staying vigilant and responding to COVID-19 symptoms**

135. 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).

136. 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.

137. 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 must also self-isolate straight away and stay at home. Only those developing COVID symptoms should be tested. Other members of the household do not require 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. Ideally, testing should be undertaken in the first 3 days of symptoms appearing, although testing is effective until day 5.
- School staff who opt to undertake asymptomatic testing do not need to self-isolate while awaiting results, as long as no symptoms develop.
- If the test is positive, the symptomatic person must remain in isolation until 10 days from symptom onset, or longer if symptoms (e.g. fever or breathlessness) persist (with the exception of cough or loss of/change of sense of taste or smell, as these symptoms can persist for several weeks after the infectious period). They must otherwise be well and remain fever-free for 48 hours without medication. The rest of the household must

remain in isolation for 10 days from symptom onset in the symptomatic person, even if they don't have symptoms themselves, as they may be incubating the infection.

- 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 must self-isolate immediately. They will usually be contacted by Test and Protect to reinforce self-isolation for 10 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 10 days from the date of last exposure to the case. Sometimes this advice is given locally via the school on the advice of the Health Protection Team.
  - Everyone who needs to self-isolate as close contacts of confirmed cases must continue to do so for 10 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.
  - The Protect Scotland app from NHS Scotland's Test and Protect is designed to help people and reduce the spread of coronavirus. It is suitable for people aged 16+. The app will alert an individual if they have been in close contact with another app user who has tested positive for coronavirus and can help in determining contacts that may have otherwise been missed while keeping people's information private and anonymous. Advice from Health Protection Teams may override advice from the app to self-isolate.
  - Schools are defined as complex settings for contact tracing purposes, meaning any positive case who has spent time in a school during the infectious period will be escalated to the local Health Protection Team. If relevant, the school will be contacted directly by the Health Protection Team to help identify potential contacts and to ensure appropriate decontamination.
138. Symptomatic children, young people and staff can book a test through [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot), the employer referral portal (for staff only – see below) or, if they cannot get online, by calling 0800 028 2816.
139. 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.
140. 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.
141. 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.

142. 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.
143. 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 should 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 there are no 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.
144. 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 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.
145. 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. Ensure that guidance on the use of PPE is followed.
146. 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.

147. 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.
148. Schools should manage single cases and outbreaks (i.e. 2 or more confirmed cases within 10 days) in line with the guidance on outbreak response (below), by contacting the local Health Protection Team.
149. 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**

150. 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.
151. 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 10 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.
152. 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.
153. Detailed guidance on [International travel and quarantine](#) is available, as is the [list of exempt countries](#).

### **Enhanced surveillance, testing and outbreak management**

154. The public health measures set out above will go a long way to ensuring that schools are a safe environment for everyone.

155. There will also be, in parallel, a number of measures, involving testing, identifying close contacts 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**

156. Scotland has an excellent programme of community surveillance. This allows us to monitor actively trends in the pandemic, both nationally and more locally.

157. There is also specific surveillance in respect of schools and children/young people. This draws on COVID-19 related information from a range of sources and covers all school ages and the ELC phase.

158. We have launched an additional surveillance programme (CASS), introducing antibody testing for substantial numbers of educational staff volunteers to identify the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies over time. This will be alongside an infections survey, within a sample of schools, 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 will be young people and staff in S4, S5 and S6. Participation is voluntary and careful consideration is being given to ensuring acceptability in school populations.

159. A further surveillance study will look at risk in teachers which will improve our understanding of the likelihood of COVID-19 infection and illness within this education workforce, and the effectiveness of measures to reduce transmission.

160. 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; levels and changes in antibodies in educational staff; risks in teachers; and asymptomatic transmission among older children and school workers.

161. 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**

162. The effective application of Test and Protect in the school environment will be an important means of preventing any spread of the virus and will be led by the local Health Protection Team. 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.

163. 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 they live with a confirmed case, a suspected case (pending testing of the suspected case), or are specifically advised by the school to do so or contacted by the contact tracing service. If a child, young person or staff member tests positive, they must continue self-isolation for at least 10 days. The HPT will assess what other action is needed, taking into account the close contacts the person has had within the school and wider community and other factors such as the implementation of mitigating measures, eg cleaning, ventilation and PPE.

164. 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 and, if possible, wear a face covering en route (and avoid public transport if symptomatic). The Scottish Government has published [advice for employers](#) on how to support people who are asked to self-isolate.

### **(iii) Outbreak and case management**

165. The management of outbreaks (if schools have two or more confirmed linked cases of COVID-19 within 10 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 that they know how to contact their local HPT and who will usually be responsible for doing so.
166. 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.
167. Schools and local authorities will be expected to work closely with their local HPT to resolve the situation. COSLA and Public Health Scotland have developed a [national toolkit](#) for managing cases and outbreaks in schools. 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 – these are vital to provide reassurance to school communities;
  - providing records of seating plans / school layout / attendance / groups; and
  - implementing enhanced infection, prevention and control measures.
168. The HPT will lead the incident management team (IMT) and agree control measures 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, increased cleaning regimes, the greater use of face coverings, reviewing and

reducing higher risk activities, and/or moving to remote learning approaches. Any discussion of possible school closures will be determined through the multi-agency IMT. Schools should maintain appropriate records to support outbreak control measures, e.g. children, young people and staff attendance, details of pupil groups, seating plans, visitors to schools, and clinically vulnerable/extremely vulnerable children and young people who are attending school.

169. In order to protect pupils and staff and to maintain access to education, confirmation of pupils or school staff with a confirmed COVID-19 test or who have been instructed to self-isolate should be shared in confidence by NHS Scotland and/or Public Health Scotland with the relevant school. To ensure this information is handled in accordance with data protection requirements, local authorities should ensure that an appropriate Data Protection Impact Assessment is in place and that the data handling arrangements in their schools are compliant. A framework data sharing agreement has been developed by Public Health Scotland and local government, which local authorities are encouraged to support and consider when framing their own data handling arrangements and impact assessments.

### **Special considerations for certain groups**

#### **Shielding and people at the highest clinical risk**

170. This guidance applies to those who are at the highest clinical risk from coronavirus (known as the shielding category). Information on shielding including who would be considered within the highest risk group is available in [Covid-19: shielding advice and support](#).
171. The approach to shielding is based on the following principles:
- advice must be proportionate to the level of infections in the local community;
  - it should be set at a level which optimises the benefits of protection and minimises health, social and economic harms;
  - it should be practical, empower people to make decisions which are right for them, and be culturally appropriate and tailored to ensure reach and accessibility.
172. There are new levels of advice to protect people with the highest clinical risk (shielding), setting out clearly how advice will change depending on the rates of infection in local areas. As the levels in a local area change, the protection advice for people on the shielding list in that area will change as well. People at highest risk should still follow the advice for the general public as a minimum.
173. In Protection levels 0 – 2, pupils with the highest clinical risk can continue to attend schools and follow the advice to the general population. Staff with the highest clinical risk can continue to work in schools, 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 maintaining a safe school environment. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, they should wear face coverings and settings must carefully assess and agree with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk, taking account of all relevant clinical and occupational health advice.

174. The majority of workplaces can be made safe. Workplace risk assessments should take account of age, sex, ethnicity, BMI as well as clinical conditions and recommend practical protective measures. The outcome of those risk assessments may include implementation of specific mitigations in the workplace, undertaking different duties, working remotely, including from home, or being advised not to attend work, in line with medical advice to do so. Local authorities should ensure that clinical advice is taken fully into account when agreeing appropriate mitigations with employees.
175. To support individualised risk assessment in the workplace, shielding advice also contains links to the Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on individual risk assessment for the workplace.
176. Information in relation to pupils' attendance and absence is published by [Scottish Government Education Analytical Services](#). This may assist individuals' and employers' understanding of case numbers in relation to schools, which may be helpful as part of risk assessment within the school setting.
177. Enhanced measures apply to children and young people, and staff, at highest clinical risk in schools in local areas at Protection Levels 3 and 4 - see Annex A for detail.
178. It is important that appropriate arrangements for remote learning are in place for children and young people who cannot attend school in person due to shielding (or self-isolation) requirements. Further guidance on arrangements for remote learning is provided in the section on Contingency Planning.
179. Parents/carers may wish to have a discussion with their child's healthcare team if they are unsure or have queries about returning to or attending school because of their own health condition.

### **Support for those who have underlying health conditions**

180. Clinically vulnerable staff (including those who have underlying health conditions, but who would not be on the shielding list) can continue to work in schools, subject to a dynamic risk assessment confirming it is safe to do so. 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 and face coverings should be worn.
181. 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.

### **Considerations related to pregnancy**

182. Schools and local authorities should follow the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists](#) advice to try and keep the risk of exposure as low as is practically possible to pregnant women, particularly in the third trimester. Normal pregnancy risk assessments should also be undertaken, and appropriate attention paid to mental health and wellbeing.

### **Support for children and young people with Additional Support Needs**

183. 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 (where appropriate), and regularly wash their hands before and after contact. Guidance on [supporting children and young people with additional support needs](#) is published by the Scottish Government.

### **Support for anxious children, young people, families and staff**

184. 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 for schools to support ongoing family interaction, 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**

185. 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.
186. 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.

187. 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**

188. 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.
189. Evidence to date suggests there has not been significant transmission in the *educational* aspects of HE / FE settings, while it is clear that there would be significant disadvantage to young people in these circumstances were they not to be able to attend HE / FE to complete these courses. On this basis, the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group have maintained their previous advice on attendance by these students, but noted the need for compliance with protective measures to be strongly reinforced.
190. As set out in the sectoral guidance, schools and college should work together to consider first whether remote or blended learning arrangements can be put in place for school pupils. Where students do attend in person, consideration should be given to maintaining them in consistent groupings (some colleges have put in place arrangements to segregate school students from the wider college cohort). All public health measures that apply in colleges should be strictly observed, including in circumstances where school students are being taught separately from the wider college population.
191. Schools and local authorities should, in partnership with FE/HE institutions and local public health teams, pay very close attention to any evidence suggesting the potential for emerging bridges of transmission between school and FE/HE settings. In the event that any such evidence is identified, they should consult immediately with local public health teams on any requirement to pause in-person attendance at FE/HE institutions by senior phase students. They should ensure that appropriate contingency measures for remote learning are in place for any required period of time.

### **Individual risk assessments**

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

## SCHOOL OPERATIONS

### Promoting attendance and reducing absence

193. It is recognised that some parents and carers may be concerned about their child being in 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](#).
194. 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 ongoing need to reconnect to normal patterns and routines in children's lives will be important and reassuring to them.
195. 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

196. Schools should consider the increased use of outdoor spaces. 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.
197. Suitable facilities may include school playgrounds, local greenspaces and/or community areas, or locations further afield. Advice and support is also available from outdoor education experts. When enhancing existing outdoor space within their own grounds, 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.
198. 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.



199. 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](#). Further guidance is available on the [educational benefit of outdoor education centres](#) (published August 2020).

### **Practical activities, experiments and investigations**

200. 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**

201. 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. Guidelines on [Practical Activities](#) have been prepared by Education Scotland and physical education practitioners to assist with decision-making and the safe implementation of timetabled physical education. These will be updated to ensure appropriate alignment with wider advice including that set out in the Strategic Framework.
202. The COVID-19 Advisory Sub Group on Education and Children’s issues has published advice on PE, music and drama in schools, which has more recently been updated upon the latest evidence. The advisory sub-group has indicated that advice on physical education in schools should remain broadly in line with advice in the community going forwards, in order to ensure consistency and better support compliance. Guidelines on physical education will therefore be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure appropriate alignment.

### **Home economics**

203. Guidelines on safe practice in home economics have been prepared by Education Scotland and practitioners and were published on 14 September 2020 on the [Education Scotland website](#).

### **Guidelines on expressive arts**

204. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children’s Issues published its [advisory note](#) on physical education, music and drama in schools on 10 September, and since [updated it](#) on 30 October. Education Scotland has produced specific [guidelines covering art and design and photography, music \(including singing\), dance, and](#)

[drama](#). These documents set out the hierarchy of risk in terms of the different types of activities and the different kinds of mitigations which can be put in place, providing schools with guidance on how to facilitate these important learning elements as fully as they can while remaining safe within the confines of public health advice. Guidance has been updated to take account of the new Strategic Framework.

### **Senior phase/SQA National Qualification Courses**

205. A number of measures for the awarding of National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in 2020-21 have been confirmed.
206. There will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year and an alternative certification approach will be put in place based on teacher and lecturer judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. The SQA has published [broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation](#) with a clear focus on the quality, not quantity, of evidence. This is accompanied by an SQA Academy Course on quality assuring estimates. After the October break subject specific guidance on the work that learners need to complete will be published by the SQA.
207. Higher and Advanced Higher exams are planned to start on Thursday 13 May 2021 and finish on Friday 4 June 2021, with Results Day on Tuesday 10 August 2021. The SQA will publish the full exam timetable at the end of October. A clear contingency plan will continue to be developed, including key checkpoints up to the February break to assess public health advice and its impact on the plans for these exams.

### **The provision of activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable**

208. 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.
209. Enhanced measures apply to schools in local areas at Protection Level 4 - see Annex A for detail.
210. [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. It has more recently reaffirmed that the need for compliance with associated mitigations should be strictly enforced.

### **Improvement planning and reporting**

211. 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.

212. 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.
213. 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**

214. 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.
215. 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, [updated advice on face coverings](#) received from the Sub Group in w/c 24 August 2020, and the sub-group's updated general advice published xx October. 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.
  - 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.
- Compliance with the above should be strongly reinforced.

### **National transport guidance and local authority arrangements**

216. 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.
217. 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.
218. Some general points for consideration are:
  - local authorities and schools should ensure they maintain an appropriate understanding (e.g. through a survey of families or other engagement) of how children and young people travel to school, 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.

219. 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**

220. 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 31 August]**

221. 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.
222. 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, [updated advice on face coverings received from the Advisory Sub Group in w/c 24 August](#), and further [updated advice](#) published 30 October.
- **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. As far as possible, windows should be opened.

- 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. As far as possible, windows should be opened.
- 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

223. 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](http://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.
224. 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 children being in school full time, 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.

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

226. 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**

227. 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 wear face coverings. As far as possible, windows should be opened.



228. 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.
229. 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**

230. 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.

### **Free school meals**

231. 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**

232. 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**

233. [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](#).

234. 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**

235. Additional workforce capacity will be needed to provide a range of additional support to help with recovery work. The Scottish Government has made additional funding available to local authorities for the recruitment of additional teachers and other staff to support COVID-19 recovery.
236. 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.
237. Schools may require additional staffing and the flexibility to deploy staff appropriately over the current school 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).
238. Additionally, should a locality move into Protection Level 4, there may be additional strain on workforce capacity, for example as a result of fit notes for those in the shielding group or increased requirements for self-isolation. The need for additional capacity in the teaching workforce should be considered in order to deal with such impacts...

### **Workforce capacity**

239. 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.
240. Local authorities should work through the following actions as part of any teaching/auxiliary education workforce planning activities for 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 effectively deployed.
241. 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**

242. If the existing capacity in the teaching workforce is insufficient to meet the challenges of full-time school, partners have agreed that action will be taken to quickly mobilise additional teachers, for what may be a temporary period. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) have made contact with individuals whose teacher registration has lapsed within the last 3 years, including recently retired teachers, to establish their willingness and availability to return to teaching. Should this be required based on local need, GTC Scotland will facilitate contact with local authorities. However, as noted above, existing current teachers (including supply teachers) who have not yet secured permanent employment should be considered first.
243. 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. The GTC Scotland has worked 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. Further guidance has been developed that sets out a range of potential enhanced student support and alternative student assessment approaches. This clarifies expectations for university tutors, local authorities and schools.
244. Local authorities should ensure that capacity in the wider workforce in the school environment is sufficient to meet the challenges of full time 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**

245. 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.
246. 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.

## Supporting the wellbeing of children and young people

247. Given the wider impact of the pandemic, the wellbeing of all children, young people and staff should be the central focus for schools. 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.
248. [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. Children and young people may not immediately disclose these concerns, and therefore there is a need for a sustained approach.
249. Local authority and health board partners must be engaged in local planning to ensure that the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people in school can be met. This will be particularly important in GIRFEC planning, prevention activity including surveillance (vision screening) and immunisations, and health developmental interventions.
250. 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 being back in school, many of them will also have enjoyed the experience of spending more time at home. Children and young people may need additional time and support now they are back in the school environment. For some children and young people who were unable to access therapeutic support, the return to that support will have been welcome, but the changes within school environments, and routines, may continue to impact on their wellbeing.
251. 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.
252. 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

253. 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. This applies to schools and local authorities across all protection levels, and is not reserved only for those areas at the highest levels. Schools and local authorities should prepare and maintain clear, strong contingency plans for providing education remotely and should include the possibility of using online national resources such as digital class. Local authorities and schools should ensure that parents/carers are fully informed of the contingency plans in place. A very practical step is for schools to identify the essential items and information that would be needed in the event of a school closure, for example access to contact information, the correspondence that would be used to inform parents and others of the arrangements for closure and re-opening for example.
254. Throughout the country, schools are finding that numbers of staff and students are needing to spend periods of time self-isolating if they or household members have symptoms, or they are identified as the contact of a positive case. This is leading to significant numbers of young people who need to be able to continue their education while at home, and staff are finding they need to manage classes where a proportion of students are in the room and others elsewhere, where they may or may not have regular access to adequate technology and connectivity. This will be further exacerbated in the higher protection levels if staff, children and young people are required to resume previous shielding activity.
255. Local authorities, schools and teachers will need to consider strategies for managing this scenario in their local context, including considering the use of technology. In making decisions on any such approaches, relevant staff should be fully engaged and there should be careful consideration of workload implications. Consideration should be given to the impact of such arrangements on all children, young people and parents/carers affected, especially those who are vulnerable. Reasonable adjustments may need to be made to ensure accessibility. It is important that schools communicate quickly and clearly with parents / carers in order to develop how this will work, to come to arrangements which meet the pupil's needs as well as the school's capacity, and to agree appropriate arrangements for ongoing communication during any period self-isolation. This should include arrangements for pupils' additional support needs.
256. Resources to support learning in non-school settings have been developed within local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and through national initiatives and partnerships. A variety of options could be considered, for example written work, online tasks using Glow or Google Classroom, access to live lessons through Glow (for example, by communicating through the chat function or through live video links with learners), or access to recorded lessons. Education Scotland, e-Sgoil, ADES and Regional Improvement Collaboratives are working very closely with all 32 local authorities to help strengthen the overall national offer of support for e-learning through partnership working. They begin from the expectation that schools and authorities will have their own plans in place to support remote learning, including e-learning, for individuals and groups but have also developed a

shared national offer for schools to draw on. This offer includes access to live, recorded and supported learning resources and is being promoted as The National eLearning Offer. The e-Sgoil provision is one part of that wider offer, and can respond to requests for additional support from local authorities. It is currently running study support sessions for young people in the senior phase and will continue to do so in response to demand. Live and recorded webinars and blogs for practitioners with advice on learning and teaching online and on making the best use of digital platforms continue to be made available through [digilearn.scot](http://digilearn.scot).

257. Digital infrastructure in the classroom and the home environments will need to be considered, including cameras, microphones, laptops, and access to data connectivity, as well as wider considerations around safeguarding and online safety.
258. If the scientific advice were to be updated in the future to recommend that physical distancing should be introduced for children and young people in schools, or deemed necessary by a local Public Health Incident Management Team, 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.
259. 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 is supplemented by the Scottish Government's £30m investment in digital devices and connectivity solutions designed to combat digital exclusion.
260. 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.

### **Special considerations for certain groups**

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

261. 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**

262. 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**

263. 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.
264. In ensuring the most appropriate arrangements are in place to support vulnerable children and young people, schools and local authorities should consider other professionals who support learning and curriculum delivery. This may include Community Learning and Development professionals such as youth workers, parental engagement workers, family learning/support workers, ESOL tutors, employability workers and homelink workers.



## Communications

265. Communication and dialogue with trade unions, staff, parents/carers and children and young people 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 things run smoothly..
266. 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

267. The main concerns for parents and carers are likely to be the safety and wellbeing of their children in schools and a desire for timely and clear information on the current rules for their child's school and why those arrangements are in place. 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 (the "parent forum" for the school) as well as 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, as is ongoing dialogue and gathering of parental feedback.
268. Schools and authorities should consider how they continue to engage parents and families as part of the school community and in school decision making during the pandemic. 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. There are a range of steps that can be taken to continue and support activities such as Parent Council meetings, parent's evenings and subject choice discussions. Equalities considerations remain key, and may be heightened due to coronavirus restrictions limiting parents' physical access to school buildings. Consideration should be given to matters such as the needs of separated parents (having regard to the appropriateness of both parents being provided with information), parents for whom English is an additional language and parents/carers with disabilities. Further [guidance](#) on communicating effectively with parents and families during Covid-19 is available from the Education Scotland website.
269. National information, Q&As and other material on Covid-19 arrangements, 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 newsletter), [Education Scotland's "Scotland Learns" micro site](#), [Parentzone Scotland](#) website and other sources.

## Children and young people

270. Schools and settings will wish to develop arrangements for good quality dialogue and communication with children and young people. 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. Examples include Pupil Councils, pupil panels and broader pupil participation methods. [General advice on good principles and methods for learner participation](#) is available from Education Scotland as well as a range of third sector organisations.

271. Schools and local authorities will wish to consider the young person information available via [Young Scot's Covid-19 micro site](#) . This information is updated in line with all key updates to guidance. Young person survey work includes the joint work by [Young Scot](#), [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) and [YouthLink Scotland](#) . Further guidance and information is available from [Children's Parliament](#) and [Children in Scotland](#). Practical support on poverty-sensitive approaches is available via the [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland's survey report](#) on the cost of learning in lockdown. Local community learning and development services, Parent Councils and local parent umbrella groups may be able to work with authorities and schools, to ensure that consistent information and advice reaches children and young people.

### **Headteachers, teachers and practitioners**

272. Education Scotland have developed an [Education Recovery webpage](#) that will provide a single point of access to information about education recovery for practitioners and education stakeholders. This resource will be developed to include examples of emerging good practice in COVID recovery, and highlight any published changes to guidance.

## Enhanced and targeted protection in Levels 3 & 4

In addition to the suite of protective measures outlined throughout the core guidance, the following, enhanced protective measures should also be applied for schools within a local area that has been designated as at Protection Level 3 or 4.

These measures have been designed to enhance protections in areas where evidence suggests there may be higher potential risks as prevalence increases, including for those people who are at the highest clinical risk.

It is important to note that these measures are in addition to, not instead of, the protective measures set out in the main guidance.

### Protection Level 3 – Enhanced protective measures

- All staff and pupils should wear a face covering in classrooms during lessons in the senior phase.
- Parents or guardians should discuss with their GP or clinician whether children with the highest clinical risk should still attend.
- The majority of workplaces can be made safe for staff. To ensure this remains the case, employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.

Decisions on appropriate protections should be informed by individual risk assessments, and may include protective measures in the workplace, mitigations such as working remotely (e.g. at home or in different settings), or carrying out different tasks within their usual workplace. If protections cannot be put in place, they can discuss whether they need a fit note with their GP or clinician.

### Protection Level 4 - enhanced and targeted protective measures

The current advice is that children on the shielding list should not attend in person. However, there will be further consideration of how individualised risk assessments can be used to maximise school attendance, and remove barriers to access to regulated childcare services, for children who continue to shield during Level 4 restrictions. It is expected that these should be informed by the secondary care (hospital) clinical team caring for the child or young person.

- The majority of workplaces can be made safe for staff. To ensure this remains the case, employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.

At Level 4, to provide additional assurance, the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter which is similar to a fit note that will last for as long as the local area is under Level 4 restrictions. This letter can be used in the few cases where, following updating of risk assessments and discussions with employers, it is not possible to make a workplace safe for staff. Being in receipt of one of these letters does not automatically mean that staff should not attend work if appropriate protections are in place. Staff should use the period covered by the letter to discuss any concerns further with their employer or an occupational health adviser, and if, following individualised risk assessments, action results in adequate protection in the workplace then they may continue to attend work.

Decisions on appropriate protections should be informed by individual risk assessments, and may include protective measures in the workplace, mitigations such as working remotely (e.g. at home or in different settings), or carrying out different tasks within their usual workplace.

- Schools should be prepared to engage with enhanced testing responses to Covid outbreaks in schools, where recommended by the Incident Management Team.
- Physical education within school settings should only take place out of doors. Schools should consider what types of activity and clothing may be most appropriate in view of weather conditions. While physical education should continue to be considered a priority, if weather is extremely bad then schools may use their judgement as to whether it is safe for children to be outside.
- Pausing of the provision of non-essential activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable. This does not include regulated childcare operating from school premises.

**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, the Boarding Schools' Association 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. This guidance is updated regularly.

### **1. Application**

All schools, including residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities, should have regard to the measures set out in the main school guidance 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. Risk assessments**

Every setting should undertake and update regularly its own specific risk assessment, considering local circumstances, the domestic arrangements of pupils and staff, travel requirements, pupil wellbeing 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 any revisions to term dates, or if young people are required to remain at school over holiday periods, due to risk assessment outcomes.

### 3. Self-isolation and quarantine arrangements

When schools reopened, guidance advised that 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 was also dependent on public health and travel advice.

Schools that can provide assurance that a suitably equipped boarding house can count as “accommodation” for the purposes of public health guidance, may have then been in the position that pupils could 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 were also required to assess specific guidance for those guardians/carers they work with.

This may have included those service children in boarding schools whose parents are serving overseas. This required specific confirmation from residential care and health protection authorities. Schools were asked to consider whether a variation to registration conditions may be required.

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

This guidance on quarantining also applies to international pupils, or those from outside the remit of Scottish public health guidance, who may require to leave the boarding facility / residential hall for more than a day trip, for example during the October break, or Christmas.

### 4. Wellbeing during quarantine

Residential schools have a responsibility to ensure the overall wellbeing of children and young people, as well as for ensuring adherence to Covid-safe practices. Establishments should therefore make appropriate arrangements for children and young people to be active, creative and nurtured, much as they would be able to do if they were in a home family setting, whilst adhering to public health guidance and taking account of all other Scottish Government and relevant governing body guidance.

Where pupils require to leave the boarding facility / residential hall for more than a day trip (for example during the October break, Christmas, or Leave Out at weekends), they can designate a host family to stay with in Scotland. Although it was announced that there should be no social household visits on 22 September 2020, these designated host families, or guardians, are seen to be the extended household for these young people, in the absence of being able to stay with their own family due to travel restrictions, or other barriers.

Guidance on domestic day trips is available for those schools looking for alternative opportunities for educational pupil activity, if pupils are unable to leave the school accommodation, but are not self-isolating. See also section 6 of this guidance regarding minimising contact where pupils are permitted to leave the school premises for non-educational/social purposes e.g. during free time or at lunch time, when they should follow the rules for wider society and rules on group sizes.

## Hand hygiene

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

## 1. 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 guidance. The following special considerations may apply:

- appropriate risk assessments should be undertaken for any new groupings or households formed within the facility.
- 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. Staff may wish to seek ways to facilitate social contact with other households, whilst maintaining social distancing and appropriate hygiene. However, there should still be regular liaison with the local Health Protection Team to discuss this to ensure the contacts are within current national guidance regarding social contact and [gatherings](#), which is reviewed on a three-weekly basis;
- 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 [and rules on group sizes](#). Risk assessments should consider procedures for when children and young people leave and return to school premises, including hand hygiene.

## 2. 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 if travel can be arranged safely.

Students should not travel to the school if showing symptoms.

## 3. Surveillance, testing and outbreak management

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

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

On testing, independent private testing is not recommended by Public Health Scotland.

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 and regularised. This will enable working relationships to be continuous and possible future scenarios to be rehearsed.