



Leading SEND: Full opening

COVID 19 – September 2020

Aims



- This guide aims to support schools / colleges in the planning for SEND learners as they transition back into school / college following the COVID 19 pandemic.
- It seeks to provide advice and guidance.
- It is based on Department for Education (DfE) Guidance and seeks to extract the **key messages and advice**. It is not a recommended substitute to reading the advice in full.

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Department for Education (DfE) Guidance and related links



- [Guidance for full opening of schools](#)
- [Guidance for full opening of special schools and other specialist settings](#)
- [Guidance for further education and skills providers](#)
- [Early Years and Childcare Settings](#)
- [Safe working in education](#)

Which Guidance?



Government guidance for full opening of special schools and other specialist settings:

- Special schools
- Specialist post-16 providers
- Specialist education settings including Hospital schools

Government guidance for full opening schools:

- Mainstream schools (all ages, including school-based nurseries and boarding schools)
- Alternative provisions
- Independent schools

The following advice is aimed at supporting the mainstream and AP settings to consider the main aspects as part of their whole school planning for full opening in September.

Opening schools guidance



Department for Education (DfE) guidance is presented in 5 key areas. This guidance will highlight key messages that have a **particular relevancy or implication for learners with SEND**. The rest of the DfE Guidance remains relevant and should be read and followed for all learners.

1. **Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19**
2. **School operations**
3. **Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support**
4. **Assessment and accountability**
5. **Contingency planning to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak**

Key Messages



- While coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, this means making judgments at a school level about how to balance and minimise any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience for children and young people.
- Schools should use their **existing resources** to make arrangements to welcome all children back.
- There are no plans at present to **reimburse additional costs** incurred as part of that process.
- Minimise the **number of contacts** that a learner has during the school day.
- Schools should not put in place **rotas**.
- Plan for the possibility of a **local lockdown** and how they will ensure continuity of education.
- With regard to SEN Learners, **Risk Assessments** should be re-visited and reviewed with adjusted provision arrangements put into place where necessary.

Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19.



- Schools should not put in place rotas.
- Schools **must** comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures.
- Schools should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments and draw up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using the system of controls set out. This relates to whole school Health & Safety Risk Assessment (not individual learner risk assessments).

Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19



- **Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach**

As with hand cleaning, schools must ensure younger children and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all learners understand that this is now part of how school operates. Some learners with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not a reason to deny these learners face to face education.

Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19



- **Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible**

All teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable.

Deployment of TAs to best use and for the most effective support needs to be considered by schools as they timetable for the new academic year.

Minimising contact will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These learners educational and care support should be provided as normal.

Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19



■ Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating learners side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space.

Some learners with SEND (whether with education, health and care plans or on SEN support) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

Some schools may keep learners in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport.

Public Health England (PHE) advice to minimise COVID 19



- Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with SEND should provide interventions as usual. Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, and ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors.
- Where a child routinely attends more than one setting on a part time basis, for example because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and an alternative provision setting or special school, schools should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified and allowing them to jointly deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the child.

School Operations - Transport



Dedicated school transport, It is important to consider:

- How learners are grouped together on transport, where possible this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school.
- Use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and / or disembarking, some learners will benefit from a social story to build this into their new routine.
- Organised queuing, boarding and exiting. Where possible those learners who need adult support with this routine should have the same familiar adult
- Ensure you consider what preparation / use of visuals / social stories will be needed in order for learners to engage successfully with transport.

It is imperative that schools work closely with local authorities that have statutory responsibility for 'home to school transport'

School Operations - Attendance



Working with the local authority schools should:

- Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and other professionals working with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year.
- Use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure learners regular attendance.
- Identify learners who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic.

School Operations - Attendance



Working with the local authority schools should:

- Where learners were accessing a part-time timetable prior to the pandemic a review of provision should be taken, engaging families, learners and external professionals to establish the best way to re-engage. If part-time timetables are to be used this should be with agreement from the learner / family and external agencies. There must be frequent and specified timescales for review and a clear aim to increase the amount of time engaging in education.
- We recognise that some learners with Education Health Care (EHC) plans will need preparation for their return to full provision. This might include, for instance, visits to the setting, social stories, and any other approaches that settings and local authorities would normally use to enable a learner with SEND who has spent some time out of education, to return to full time attendance.

School Operations - Attendance



- Where a learner is **unable to attend** school because they are complying with **clinical and / or public health advice**, schools should be able to immediately offer them **access to remote education**. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity.
- Some learners who are no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).
- Work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

School Operations – Deployment of Staff



- Schools should ensure that appropriate support is made available for learners with SEND, e.g. by deploying teaching assistants and enabling specialist staff from both within and outside the school to work with learners in different classes or year groups.
- This should come from schools existing resource.
- Head teachers should ensure that staff have appropriate skills, qualifications and experience to meet the needs of the learners they are supporting.
- Any redeployment of staff to support catch-up provision or targeted interventions should not be at the expense of supporting learners with SEND.

School Operations – Safeguarding



- Schools should consider revising their child protection policy (led by their Designated Safeguarding Lead) to reflect the return of more learners.
- Schools must have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, [keeping children safe in education](#) and should refer to the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers guidance](#).
- Designated safeguarding leads (& deputies) should be provided with more time, especially in the first few weeks of term. This is to help them provide support, to staff and learners regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns and the handling of referrals to children's social care and other agencies where these are appropriate. Agencies and services should prepare to work together to actively look for signs of harm.

School Operations – Safeguarding



- **Communication with school nurses** is important for safeguarding and supporting wellbeing, as they have continued virtual support to learners who have not been in school.
- It is likely that as learners return to school/college, there will be an increase in the number of disclosures made.
- Schools/colleges will want to ensure that systems for learners to talk with adults e.g. through worry boxes/bubble time are available and made known to learners.
- The Safeguarding Policy Appendix went out to schools at the beginning of the summer term and can be accessed [here](#).

School Operations – Educational Visits



- In the autumn term, schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. These trips should include any trips for learners with SEND connected with their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits, travel training etc.).
- Trips should continue to be risk assessed following the setting's own processes and must consider the additional control measures required at the time of the event

Curriculum, Behaviour and Pastoral Support Curriculum



Key principles underpinning curriculum planning apply equally for learners with SEND;

1. **Education is not optional** – all learners receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life
2. **The curriculum remains broad and ambitious** - all learners continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment
3. **Remote education**, where needed, is **high quality** and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision. Schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate learners remotely, where this is needed.

Curriculum, Behaviour and Pastoral Support Curriculum



Key principles underpinning curriculum planning apply equally for learners with SEND;

- Aim to return to the school's normal curriculum in all subjects by **summer term 2021**.
- Ensure that planning includes the learning needs and objectives of learners with SEND.
- **EHCP Provision** must be delivered as specified within the learners plan.
- **Develop remote education** so that it is integrated into school curriculum planning: Remote education may need to be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some learners, alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of a local lockdown. All schools are therefore expected to plan to ensure **any learners educated at home** for some of the time are given the support they need to master the curriculum and so make good progress.

Learner Well-being and Support



- Learners may experience a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus outbreak, i.e. anxiety, stress or low mood. This may particularly be the case for vulnerable learners, including those with a social worker and young carers. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. Some may need support to re-adjust to school; others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return; a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school.

Schools should consider the provision of pastoral and extra-curricular activities to all learners designed to:

- Support the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement.
- Address and equip learners to respond to issues linked to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Support learners with approaches to improving their physical and mental wellbeing.

Learner Well-being and Support



- Schools should consider how they are working with school nursing services to support the health and wellbeing of their learners; school nursing services have continued to offer support as learners return to school. School nurses as leaders of the [healthy child programme](#) can offer a range of support including:
- Support for resilience, mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, bereavement and sleep issues.
- Support for learners with additional and complex health needs.
- Supporting vulnerable children and keeping children safe.

Pupil Well-being and Support:



Resources, advice, training

- <https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-support-for-schools-parents-and-learners/mental-health-and-wellbeing/school-staff>
- <https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/>

Behaviour Expectations



- Schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules/policies arising from Covid-19.
- Schools should set out the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how these will be enforced. This is particularly the case when considering restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules. This should also take into account any EHCP requirements on managing an individual's SEN.
- Schools will need to consider the impact on learners with disabilities and complex needs to assure themselves that this cohort of learners are not unintentionally discriminated against.
- Adverse experiences, lack of routines and support from classroom discipline may contribute to lack of engagement upon return, this may lead to increase incidence of poor behaviour. These learners and those with other additional vulnerability are likely to need additional support and access to services such as educational psychologists, social workers and counsellors.
- Provision for children who have SEND may have been disrupted during partial school closure and this may impact on behaviour. Schools will need to work with local services to ensure the services and support are in place for a smooth return to schools for learners.

Assessment and Accountability



- Please refer to the [schools guidance for assessment and accountability information](#).
- In addition consider for learners with SEND what are the gaps and what support, pre-teaching and intervention may be utilised to help minimise the impact of this period.
- Review the learners individual learning objectives and ensure that these are still appropriate and relevant, updating where needed. Have any learning objectives been achieved during this time?
- Discuss with the learner, family and appropriate staff the reviewed plan and provision to ensure that maximum progress can be made during the autumn term.

Assessment and Accountability



- Access Arrangements

Schools should continue to plan and assess for access arrangements in their usual way, collecting relevant evidence as appropriate.

Contingency Planning to Provide Continuity of Education in the Case of a Local Outbreak



- For individuals or groups of self-isolating learners, remote education plans should be in place. These should meet the same expectations as those for any learners who cannot yet attend school at all due to coronavirus. See section on [remote education support](#).
- Schools are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September.
- In developing these contingency plans, schools should:
 1. Recognise that younger learners and **some learners with SEND** may not be able to access remote education without adult support, therefore, schools should work with families to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum.
 2. Design at-home learning and support for learners with SEND (especially those with EHCP's) which could involve a range of professionals, to design or adapt interventions or learning materials. E.g. this might involve designing a speech and language intervention that parents can deliver at home, or adapting or selecting online learning materials.

Key messages for EHCP's



- Recent relaxation for delivery of provision within EHCP will cease on 1st August. From this date schools / settings must ensure they are able to deliver the provision as specified within the EHCP.
- There is no expectation that learners with EHCP's should repeat a year due to missed education time.
- There is no expectation that learners will need to stay in education for longer as a result of Covid-19.
- In a very small number of cases it will be appropriate for a learner to extend their current educational provision or have their EHC plan extended. In most cases this would consist of an individualised programme for a term or half term.
- In **all circumstances**, this will be considered by the local authority, following a review of the learners needs and EHC plan. There will need to be evidence gathered by the school of updated assessments or professional reports evidencing the need. It is not expected that the impact of Covid 19 requires a significant change to a learners specials educational needs.

Key messages for EHCP's



- Risk assessments should be reviewed to ensure that learners transition back into education is smooth and successful. Settings should engage with external support where this is needed to support the risk assessment and / or transition back.
- Risk assessments may also prove useful if learners have to self-isolate, or if a local outbreak of coronavirus requires a setting to return to more limited attendance, or temporarily close.
- Whether individual risk assessments are used to help plan for the autumn term or not, education settings should involve families in planning for their child's return to school from September.

Key Messages from Health



- Health practitioners are aware of the importance of supporting safe return to school, and are already actively reviewing learners' health needs and collaborating in multi-agency discussions about learners returning to school.
- Schools should actively seek support from Public Health colleagues using local and regional networks.

Key Messages from Social Care



- Access to social care assessment has not been changed by Covid-19.
- Referral routes remain the same (MASH for safeguarding concerns and the Single Point of Access for Disabled Children's Services).
- Children with allocated social care workers will continue to have regular contact from those workers.
- Should the social care provision within an EHCP be unable to be carried out, the family or school should contact the child's allocated worker or team.

Remember.... we are here to support you



[DCC SEND & Coronavirus pages](https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/send/)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/send/>

[Devon's Local Offer](https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer>

[Babcock LDP support](https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-support-for-schools-parents-and-learners)

<https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-support-for-schools-parents-and-learners>

[Health and Social Care](https://www.devon.gov.uk/care-and-health/)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/care-and-health/>

Questions



If you have any questions please contact:

SEND Helpline **01392 287248** (12-4pm daily)

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