

## September reopening: recap and plans

- We want to ensure that all children and students can experience as much normality and stability in their education and care settings as possible.
- Maximising face to face attendance in education settings will counter the detrimental impact of the last 18 months
- Under 18's will no longer be required to isolate if they come into close contact with a positive case. High numbers of absences in the last school year were due to close contact with a confirmed case, but most pupils who isolated did not have Covid
- The risks of severe illness from COVID-19 are extremely low in children and young people.
- Clinically vulnerable children and those children with clinically vulnerable adults in their households will begin to receive vaccinations.

## Key changes since Step 4

- Schools, colleges and out-of-school settings no longer expected to keep pupils in **bubbles** or **reduce mixing in groups**.

### Bubbles and social distancing



- No longer recommended in education and childcare settings.
- **Are recommended on dedicated school or college transport** in line with government expectation to wear face coverings in crowded areas when prevalence is high.
- **Singing, wind and brass instrument playing** can be undertaken.

### Face coverings



- **From 16 August**, fully vaccinated adults and under 18s identified as close contacts are not required to self-isolate unless they are symptomatic.
- Close contacts will instead be advised to take a PCR test. If positive, NHS Test and Trace will inform the individual of next steps.

### Self Isolation



- **For education settings that are open over the summer holidays, continue testing twice weekly at home.**
- Two on-site tests at the start of the **Autumn term**, then a transition to twice-weekly home testing.
- **Year 6 students transitioning to year 7** will be offered 2 ATS in the **autumn term** but will not need to test over summer.

### Testing



- Education and childcare settings are not asked to undertake routine **contact tracing** for children and young people.
- Contact tracing will be limited to **close contacts** identified by NHS Test and Trace.
- Settings may be contacted in exceptional cases to help identify close contacts.

### Contact tracing



- We **continue to encourage Covid-19 vaccine** uptake in education.
- DHSC have now accepted advice from JCVI that **routine vaccination should be offered to 12–15-year-olds** with underlying health conditions or who are household contacts of the immunosuppressed.
- Also, **16 and 17 year olds will be offered the vaccine.**

### Vaccines



## Attendance

- Towards the end of the Summer 2021 term, we saw a reduction in attendance in all schools – largely due to a high number of pupils isolating.
- Given the change in policy, **we do not expect that pupils isolating will be as significant a cause of absence in the new school year.**
- **Ensuring attendance is as high as possible** remains a key focus for the department
- **Barriers to attendance remain** beyond what we might see in a normal year – including continuing anxiety about Covid-19, exacerbated mental health issues amongst pupils, and pupils who remain abroad.
- **School attendance is mandatory and the usual rules continue to apply.**
- Tackling **persistent absence** remains a priority. Best practice advice remains available here: [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/improving-school-attendance-support-for-schools-and-local-authorities)
- The department expects the number of **pupils abroad** to continue to decrease and is working with other government departments on communications to dissuade more school children/families from travelling to red-list countries.
  - *If the department provides the content, do LAs have local comms channels which could be used to remind parents of government foreign travel advice?*
- The **Educational Settings form** will remain in place for schools to report attendance data on.

## Testing

- All secondary school pupils and college students should receive **2 on-site lateral flow device tests**, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.
- Following the two initial on-site tests, students will be able to collect their home test kits and continue **twice weekly testing at home** until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.
- The approach to regular asymptomatic testing in education and care settings will be **reviewed at the end of September**.
- NHS Test and Trace plan to introduce **new lateral flow devices** (educational settings will receive Innova, Orient Gene or Acon Flowflex) to make testing quicker, easier and more accessible.
  - Orient Gene and Acon Flowflex self-test kits both require nasal only swabs
- To help schools to plan for on-site ATS testing on return in the autumn, we have published an **updated workforce planning tool** on the [secondary schools and colleges document sharing platform](#).
- The **testing workforce support offer** is summarised in the [orange guide on the document sharing platform](#).

## Contact tracing

- Education settings are **no longer asked to undertake routine contact tracing** as NHS Test and Trace are now taking an active role in notifying individuals identified as a close contact of a positive case of Covid-19.
- From 16 August 2021 **under 18s and fully vaccinated adults** are no longer required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact.
  - they should be advised to take a **PCR test** and follow relevant public health advice
  - there are **no requirements to self-isolate** whilst awaiting test results, unless they are symptomatic
- Settings must not provide any **personal information** if asked to by parents and/or close contacts that would be a breach of GDPR or data protection legislation.
- **In exceptional circumstances, education and childcare settings may be contacted by NHS Track and Trace** if deemed necessary by local health protection teams in response to a local outbreak

## Escalation/Contingency Framework

- The government has made it a national priority that **education and childcare settings should continue to operate as normally as possible** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Measures affecting education and childcare may be necessary in some circumstances, for example:
  - to help manage a COVID-19 outbreak within a setting
  - if there is extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and other measures have failed to reduce transmission
  - as part of a package of measures responding to a Variant of Concern (VoC)
- Action should be taken if either of the following thresholds are reached:
  - 5 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
  - 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period.
- Actions that settings can take are set out in the [Contingency Framework](#). Settings can phone the DfE helpline (08000 468687, option 1) for additional public health advice however this is not a requirement.
- All education and childcare settings should have **outbreak management plans** (sometimes called contingency plans) outlining how they would operate if any of the measures described in this document were recommended for their setting or area.

## Key documents

- [Schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance](#)
- [Contingency Framework](#)
- Best practice advice for schools and LAs to support them to improve school attendance: [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities](#)
- Testing guidance:
  - [Document Sharing Platform](#)
  - [guidance for schools](#)
  - [guidance for specialist settings](#)
  - [guidance for early years and childcare providers](#)
  - [guidance for further education](#)
  - [guidance for higher education](#)
  - [guidance for children's social care services](#)
- [Contact tracing FAQs](#)