



# **Support and Guidance for September 2020**

## **School Opening**



## **Information and guidance to support schools and parents for September opening.**

This document aims to support schools and parents in alleviating unnecessary anxiety about the return to School for all pupils in September.

The rationale behind this work is to provide a one stop document, created by collating information from various gov.uk articles that have been directed at educational settings over the last 5months.

There are 5 key areas that have been covered, these include:

- Understanding Coronavirus
- The basic principles of preventing the spread of Coronavirus.
- Government guidance to support school opening in September.
- Guidance for infection prevention and procedures to follow.
- Extra Resources and support for staff and students

## **What is Coronavirus?**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Most infected people will develop mild to moderate illness and recover without hospitalization.

**Most common symptoms:** Fever, new continuous cough, loss or change to sense of smell or taste.

**Less common symptoms:** Aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, headache, or smell, a rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes.

**Serious symptoms:** Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, loss of speech or movement.

## **How to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.**

- [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water often, for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards – [catch it, kill it, bin it.](#)
- Clean objects and surfaces you touch often (such as door handles, kettles and phones) using your regular cleaning products
- Wearing a [face covering](#) when in shared spaces.
- Keep windows open in the room you're staying in and shared spaces as much as possible.
- If anyone shows any symptoms of Covid 19, they must stay at home, including children.

### When to Self-Isolate:

- You have any [symptoms of coronavirus](#) (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste).
- You've tested positive for coronavirus – this means you have coronavirus
- You live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive
- Someone in your support bubble has symptoms or has tested positive
- [You're told by NHS Test and Trace that you've been in contact with a person with coronavirus](#)

### How to isolate:

**Isolation period is 14 days!**

**Self-Isolate for 10 days from when symptoms started.**

**If test is positive but individual is asymptomatic continue to self-isolate for further 10days.**

**14 days Isolation for anyone who has been in contact with a positive/ confirmed case.**

- **Do not** go to work, school or public places – work from home if you can
- **Do not** go on public transport or use taxis
- **Do not** go out to get food and medicine – order it online or by phone, or ask someone to bring it to your home
- **Do not** have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for people providing essential care
- **Do not** go out to exercise – exercise at home or in your garden, if you have one

### Covid 19 and Young people:

Scientific evidence shows that coronavirus (COVID-19) presents a much lower risk to children than adults of becoming severely ill, (a [recent study](#) shows the low number of Covid outbreaks in schools) and there is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults. Of course, there will still be risks while coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, and that is why schools and colleges need to put in place a range of protective measures.

In order to effectively manage the risks, things will be a bit different when children and young people return to school and college for the new academic year. This government guidance sets out some of the changes and protective measures that schools and colleges will need to put in place and what parents, carers, children and young people will need to do to help ensure schools and colleges are as safe as possible for everyone.

Parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) need to refer to the [guidance](#) for full opening of special schools and other specialist settings

Children attending nurseries and childminders were able to return from 1 June, they returned to their usual practice without limiting group sizes. Early years settings are on average much smaller than schools, allowing a less restrictive approach to mixing than in schools. Beyond this change to groups, early years providers will be following the same protective measures as schools.



Swindon Education Psychologist have been supporting schools in the borough, by preparing them for the wider opening to pupils in September. They have delivered [‘Managing Transition in Schools’](#) webinars. The webinars have been well attended by teaching staff from all tiers. The feedback from the sessions show they were well received, with positive comments about supporting the health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.

### **Government guidance for September school opening.**

Returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children’s future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.

The [guidance](#) intends to support schools, both mainstream and alternative provision, to prepare for the wider opening in September. It applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), infant, junior, middle, upper, school-based nurseries and boarding schools. We expect independent schools to follow the control measures set out in this document in the same way as state-funded schools. The guidance also covers expectations for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), including those with education, health and care plans, in mainstream schools.

In relation to working in schools, whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, the Office of National Statistics’ analysis on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) related deaths linked to occupations](#) suggests that staff in educational settings tend not to be at any greater risk from the disease than many other occupations. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.

Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), and this guidance explains the steps schools need to take to reduce risks still further. As a result, we can plan for all children to return and start to reverse the enormous costs of missed education. This will be an important move back towards normal life for many children and families.

Schools should follow, this guidance, which has been developed with advice from PHE, to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at school. The [public health advice](#) in this guidance makes up a PHE-endorsed ‘system of controls’, building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

In this guidance system controls provides a set of principles and if schools follow this advice and maximise use of control measures, they will effectively minimise risks. All elements of the system of controls are essential. All schools must cover them all, but the way different schools implement some of the requirements will differ based on their individual circumstances. Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by PHE, we have said ‘must’. Where there is a legal requirement we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

There cannot be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach where the system of controls describes every scenario. School leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities, and to

make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk. The system of controls provides a set of principles to help them do this and, if schools follow this advice and maximise use of control measures, they will effectively minimise risks.

This week the government released new information on [face covering in school settings](#). The guidance is to support school leaders in making the executive decision about whether facing coverings should be compulsory in their school and which students can be exempt from wearing them.

We expect schools and trusts to work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would, when agreeing the best approaches for their circumstances. Where the personal circumstances of parents and/or staff create added concerns, schools and trusts should discuss these, and we have offered advice in this document about how to do this. We want all pupils and staff to be back in schools, and believe the conditions are right for this, but some people will understandably have worries that should be heard and addressed.

**Schools Operations** – the guidance is to support schools with managing the daily and routinely procedures so they are Covid safe.

### 1. School Transport and Public Transport

Social distancing has significantly reduced available transport capacity. This guidance sets out a new framework for supporting transport to and from schools from the autumn term.

- by dedicated school transport, we mean services that are used only to carry pupils to school. This includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry school pupils only
- by public transport services, we mean routes which are also used by the general public.

### 2. Attendance

School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

### 3. School workforce

Where schools implement the system of controls outlined in this document, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, PHE and DHSC confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.



As a result, on current evidence, PHE and DHSC advise that schools are not currently considered high risk settings when compared to other workplace environments. Rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) are now reduced to levels below those seen when shielding was introduced, and shielding measures were paused on 1 August 2020, with the exception of areas where local lockdown means that shielding will continue. It is therefore appropriate for teachers and other school staff to return to their workplace setting. Accordingly, we expect that staff who need to will attend school.

School leaders should explain to staff the measures the school is putting in place to reduce risks. We anticipate adherence to the measures in this guidance will provide the necessary reassurance for staff to return to schools.

Clinically vulnerable staff can return to school in September. While in school they should follow the sector-specific measures in this document to minimise the risks of transmission. This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distance.

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools. Employers should conduct a risk assessment for pregnant women in line with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW).

#### **4. Safeguarding**

Schools should consider revising their child protection policy (led by their Designated Safeguarding Lead) to reflect the return of more pupils. 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](#)

#### **5. Educational Visits**

In the autumn term, schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. These trips should include pupils with SEND connected to their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits, travel training etc.). This should be done in line with protective measures, such as keeping children within their consistent group, and the COVID-secure measures in place at the destination. Schools should also make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support delivery of the curriculum.

#### **6. School Uniform**

Schools should return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

## 7. After School Clubs

Schools should consider resuming any breakfast and after-school provision, where possible, from the start of the autumn term. We recognise that schools may need to respond flexibly and build this up over time. Schools can consult the guidance produced for summer holiday childcare, available at [protective measures for out of school settings during Covid19 outbreak](#), as much of this will be useful in planning extra-curricular provision.

## 8. Resources and Tips

The [flow chart](#) below are guidelines and procedures from the South West Public Health Protection Team, to help you in understanding the basic principles of preventing the spread of infection. Contact details for the Health Protection team should you have any queries and the procedure to follow should you have any suspected cases in your school.

The [power point presentation](#) is detailed information to support educational settings, created by Public Health England, Health Protection Team. The presentation includes; infection control and understanding the key principles of how to protect staff and pupils. The presentation also includes some scenarios schools may encounter. This is a useful pack for School leaders to share with their staff, to prevent anxiety and provide reassurance. An [editable version](#) of the presentation is available for settings to personalise.

Transitioning back to the new school year can be stressful for some pupils at the best of times and for some children who have not been to school since March this may cause additional stress and anxiety. At the same time for some children returning to school will improve their mental health and wellbeing after a long period away from the structure of school and their friends. It is therefore essential that staff are aware of and vigilant to the signs of poor mental health or wellbeing, can intervene early and know when and where to seek help if required. Many schools have received ELSA training, have access to [Kooth](#) on line support, TaMHS and CAMHS, Educational Psychology and School Nursing Services. In addition there are a range of services provided by our third sector partners for children and young people including bereavement support provided by [Cruse](#). A full list of support can be found [here](#).

Some extra tips to share with parents:

- Talk about the positives of going back to school
- Talk about the things they have done during the lockdown period
- Talk about connecting with their friends before going back
- For younger children plan a countdown game i.e. so many sleeps before going back
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings
- Encourage the importance of frequent hand washing and practise maintaining social distancing
- Share any information sent by the school or on the school website about going back to help prepare them for the changes
- Put a routine in place in the run up to going back, ask them what they think the routine will look like



## Health and wellbeing for all

Further support and resources to help staff, young people and assuring parents, please visit the [Health and Wellbeing during Covid - 19](#), page on the [Healthy schools website](#).

Having and sharing a cohesive, comprehensive plan about how your school is planning and preparing to address the return of pupils, is another way of reassuring parents to help alleviate concerns. The head at Commonweal has shared the document which has been sent out to all parents of Commonweal pupils – [Unlocking Commonweal](#).

Staff emotional wellbeing is equally important, therefore school leads need to ensure their staff are ready and confident to welcome the children back. All school staff should be familiar with the support available for them and be familiar with the support and guidance the school can provide to parents and pupils. We have created a new page [staff wellbeing](#) on the Healthy schools website to guide schools and support staff.

If not all, most of Swindon's population will have seen the Swindon campaign, 'it's up to us Swindon', as a reminder it will be good to share the key messages across the school and with parents, by displaying these in schools entrances and by sharing on the school website. We are sharing links to the; [posters](#), [leaflets](#), [screensavers](#) and [social media graphics](#) should you wish to use them. Also a [blank version](#) for schools to personalise their own messaging.

***Please note government guidance's are changing frequently, so we have created [Covid19 guidance updates](#) page in the [news](#) section of the [Healthy schools Website](#), which will keep you informed and updated.***

Links to support with further guidance on wider school opening:

[Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support](#)

[Assessment and accountability](#)

[Contingency Planning for Outbreaks](#)

[Health and Safety risk assessment](#)

[Education health and care plans](#)





**Acknowledgments:**

DFE – [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) – education and childcare](#)

Swindon Borough Council – [Swindon It's Up to Us](#)

PHE – [Health Protection Team South West](#)

Secondary School – [Commonweal School](#)

Test and Trace - [NHS](#)

[Swindon Healthy schools](#)

Swindon Education Psychologist