

Covid - Frequently Asked Questions

Issued September 2021



The government's priority is for us to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. To achieve this the Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines for the re-opening of schools in the autumn term with many of the previous restrictions such as working in bubbles removed, schools are no longer required to undertake contact tracing as this responsibility has moved to the NHS. There may be occasions if there is a local outbreak that more stringent measures will be put in place.

You **must** follow the schools risk assessments which have been reviewed to reflect the changed circumstances. All secondary schools have set up testing centres but the utilisation of these has changed. In the first few weeks all returning students will be encouraged to have 2 tests, with a gap of 3 to 5 days between each test; after this process they will be asked to undertake regular home testing. Tests will only be undertaken with consent. Staff Lateral Flow Testing should continue with the home testing kits twice a week. The DfE will review this need for testing at the end of September.

Q1. Do I need to wear a face covering or other PPE?

The guidance on face covering has changed. Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport.

Certain tasks that require PPE are set out in the PPE Guidance and the First Aid guidance or risk assessments. The Trust will provide the appropriate PPE for these situations.

Staff that work in the testing centres will be provided with PPE supplied by the NHS.

Q2. Do I have to get vaccinated?

You are strongly advised to receive two vaccinations to protect yourself, your colleagues, and pupils.

Q3. What measures are the schools putting in place to ensure it is a Covid secure environment?

We are following the governments guidance. The key, continuing measures are to:

- Ensure good hygiene for everyone.
- Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
- Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
- Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The details of how these measures will operate on each site will be contained in the risk assessments. All our schools will also have a Contingency Plan (also known as an Outbreak Management Plan) which may need to be implemented if:

- 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



The contingency plan may include actions such as the re-introduction of face masks, additional social distancing measures, remote working, etc., all of which will retain the key focus of delivering high quality education for the children.

Q4 I fall into a vulnerable category will I be required to come into school?

Yes.

Those who are **clinically extremely vulnerable** and have previously received a Shielded Patient Letter have now been advised that they do not need to shield. The school will undertake an individual risk assessment with anyone in this category or the **clinically vulnerable** category to identify whether any additional measures need to be put in place.

Q5. A member of my household falls into the clinically extremely vulnerable / clinically vulnerable category; will I be expected to come into school.

Yes

Q6. I am in need of an operation and the hospital have said I have to quarantine before it, will I still get paid?

Where a member of staff has a planned surgery or other in-patient hospital care, they may have to go into quarantine for a number of days before admission. In these cases, the Trust will continue to pay your salary, but you will be expected to work at home wherever possible.

Q7. My childcare arrangements have broken down / my child cannot attend their school due to Covid

You should refer to the Leave of Absence Policy, this now falls under normal arrangements.

Q8. I am pregnant, am I still expected to attend the workplace?

All pregnant workers are required to have an individual risk assessment to identify specific risks such as manual handling or exposure to radiation. With regard to the risks associated with Covid the evidence suggests that before 28 weeks of pregnancy and with no underlying health conditions, you should be able to continue to work as normal. From 28 weeks you are no more likely to catch Covid but there is an increased risk of complication if you do catch the disease. Your individual risk assessment will therefore consider how to minimise your contact with others, this may include home working or other adaptations.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>

Q9. I don't feel safe returning to school; how can the Trust help?

All our activities have been risk assessed and steps taken to either remove or mitigate the risk, we will follow government health and safety advice, and this will continue to be reviewed. We understand that this may be a difficult time for all colleagues and that there may be anxieties around returning to the workplace. The Trust is committed to employee wellbeing and have an Employee Assistance Programme (Health Assured) to offer free counselling and support to colleagues and members of their immediate family.

Employee Assistance Programme www.healthassuredeap.com or 0800 028 0199.
Username: creative Password: education



Q10. How will I know what arrangements have been made for the operation of the school?

You will receive training on the application of the measures we have taken to make the workplace Covid Secure and to return to full opening.

Q11. What if I have Covid-19 symptoms?

The Trust will continue to adhere to the government guidelines regarding self-isolation. If you have Covid-19 symptoms you should isolate and arrange to have a PCR test as soon as possible to see if you have COVID-19 and should inform the school of the outcome of the test so that the relevant measures can be implemented. If your test is negative you can stop self-isolating and return to work as long as you are well. If your test is positive you will need to follow the medical advice to isolate.

In accordance with government guidance after 10 days, or longer, if you still have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste, you must continue to self-isolate until you feel better. You do not need to self-isolate if you only have a cough or loss of sense of smell/taste after 10 days, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

If you are too ill to work, then the normal absence reporting procedures will still apply.

If you live with someone that has the symptoms or you have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, you should self-isolate for 10 days in accordance with government guidelines. However, you should not need to self-isolate in the following circumstances:

- you are fully vaccinated
- you are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Q12. If I am required to self-isolate in accordance with government guidelines can I work from home if able and will I continue to be paid as normal?

It depends.

In most situations you will not be required to isolate – these are set out above. If you fall into one of these categories and you are still required to self-isolate you will be expected to work from home and will be paid. However, if you have chosen not to have the vaccination which means that you have to self-isolate you will not receive normal pay. You may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay and can find the details on the government web site:

<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

You may also be entitled to a one-off track and trace payment <https://www.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>

Q13. What will happen if a child at the school becomes unwell with COVID-19 symptoms

If a child becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms they should be sent home to self-isolate, and the parents should be asked to arrange for a test. If the test is negative they can return to school when they feel well but if the test is positive, they should follow the government guidance and must continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of their symptoms



and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 10-day period starts from the day after they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.

Q14. I want to plan a holiday what are the implications?

Travel within the UK should present no difficulties. Holidays abroad may present a higher risk. The government classifies other countries into red, amber or green and these classifications can change at any point. The requirements for return to the UK vary dependant on the classification and if you test positive for Covid before leaving the holiday destination you will not be allowed to fly. If you are unable to return to work because of your travel plans it is unlikely that you would be paid during your absence.

You should discuss your travel plans with your line manager if you are in any doubt about the risks.

Q15. I work on a full-time contract and I have not been able to go on holiday during the summer period, can I carry forward my annual leave?

Our annual leave year runs from September to August, and we expect that people will have had the opportunity to take a break from work so that they could use up their annual leave entitlements. The government has relaxed the rules around the carryover of annual leave so that workers in sectors that are unable to take leave because they are needed to fight the COVID-19 virus do not lose their statutory annual leave entitlement, this does not apply to most of our workforce. In exceptional cases, where the Trust needed you to work, and you were not able to take a break you may be allowed to carry over any untaken leave into next year.

Q.16 The school has set up a Testing Centre do I have to have a Lateral Flow Test (LFT)?

This is voluntary, and you must give consent to be tested. Staff will be supplied with home test kits for twice weekly testing. This is to try and detect those that have the virus but are asymptomatic and this should help to reduce the spread.

For further information to DFE have produced a comprehensive guidance for schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

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