

Dear Parents and Carers,

Last Monday (22nd February) the Government published a four-step roadmap to ease restrictions across England and provide a route back to a normal way of life.

In this briefing, the reopening of schools was announced and prioritised. It stated that in the week commencing the 8th of March:

- All primary, wraparound provision and further education would return.
- Phased return for secondary alongside testing (over the course of week beginning Monday 8th although this may have been happening prior to that date in some schools and settings)
- Higher education students (on practical courses only)

There are two main measures that will affect schoolchildren, depending on their age, for which guidance is changing. These are testing and face coverings as below.

Testing:

Currently, only staff are being requested to frequently test for Coronavirus. As schools return from the 8th March testing will expand as set out below:

Setting	Testing process.
Nursery staff	Introduce twice weekly home testing in private nurseries from 22 nd March 2021 Continue for maintained nurseries Childminders to access community testing
Nursery and primary school pupils	No testing
Primary school staff	Continue twice weekly home testing
Secondary/ Further Education Pupils	For all students, including those over 18 years old in further Education provision: • Test on return (three tests at the onsite test centre – 3-5days apart) * • Following this, twice weekly home testing will be introduced • Retain small onsite test centres in schools for those unable to test at home. *Note: schools due to their staffing and structure may roll this out with different processes and time frames from the 8th March.
Secondary/ Further Education staff	Introduce twice weekly home testing to replace onsite testing
Independent learning providers and adult community learning providers	Testing by demand through the online portal.

As testing will initially include secondary and further education pupils in school, arrangements need to be in place with parents for you to collect your child should they, or one of their classmates, test positive and collection is required at short notice.

Face coverings.

The Government is strengthening the use of face coverings across all sectors, as per the diagram below. In all circumstances the use of face coverings would only be recommended where a 2m social distance could not be maintained. These will be reviewed by the Government at Easter.

New face covering guidance:

Sectors	Cohort	Current Guidance		New Guidance		Symbol	
		Classrooms 	Communal Areas 	Classrooms 	Communal areas 		
Early Years & Primary	Staff & Visitors	✗			✓	✓	Classroom, teaching spaces, lecture theatres – not including during physical activity
	Children	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Communal areas including corridors and staff rooms
Secondary & FE	Staff & Visitors	✗	✓	✓	✓		Face coverings are recommended.
	Students	✗	✓	✓	✓		Face coverings are not recommended.
HE	Staff & Visitors		✓	✓	✓		Use of face coverings at the discretion of the headteacher, setting leader or provider. Face coverings should only to be considered where social distancing cannot be maintained between staff/adults , not between adults and children.
	Students		✓	✓	✓		

What does that mean for you as a parent/carer?

Testing: In Secondary schools and further Education: Following consent, your child will be tested in school for Coronavirus every 3 – 5 days for the first few weeks. Their return to school may be staggered to allow this, meaning you may have to take them in, be tested and return home before they can return to school fully. If they test positive in these initial tests they must self-isolate for 10 days along with everyone in the household.

After these initial tests in school, your child will then receive their own kits to start testing at home. If they test positive, they are legally required to remain home to self-isolate with their household, and book a PCR test via the national portal (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>) to confirm

this result. If this is negative, they can return to school. If positive they and all members of the household must continue to self-isolate.

As in previous terms, if a child who has been in school tests positive, those in their class will be sent home to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of last contact with the child who has tested positive. In this instance, the rest of your family or household will not need to isolate, but you should all be alert to the child who is isolating becoming unwell, or becoming unwell yourselves.

Impact on transport.

For all school ages: Any child using bus transport with a positive Coronavirus case will be sent home to self-isolate. The 2m rule, in which only contacts within 2m of the positive test would need to self-isolate, will no longer be used on school buses - due to the more infectious UK variant. All pupils on buses will now need to isolate if one passenger tests positive.

National Guidance – top three symptoms

For all school ages: Coronavirus has three main symptoms; these are a cough, loss or change in sense of smell or taste or a high temperature. When anyone displays these symptoms, it is most likely a Coronavirus infection. We would therefore ask that pupil or student to isolate with their household, book a PCR test (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>). If positive, the child must self-isolate for 10 days (from start of symptoms) and the other members of your household for 10 days (from start of first person in house with symptoms).

If your child becomes unwell or is unwell following a negative test (secondary schools/ further education).

If any child tests negative for Coronavirus but then goes on to feel unwell, we will be continuing with previous guidance – before Coronavirus – that children who are unwell should not be in school. We will ask for them to remain home and test again, either by home test kit or by booking a PCR test.

This is especially important when they develop a cough, high temperature or a loss of, or change in, taste or smell – as this is very likely to be Coronavirus. Symptoms like sore throat, muscle aches and severe fatigue are possibly a seasonal cold, but many children (and their families) with positive Coronavirus tests have only had these lesser symptoms.

We do understand that this new guidance may be inconvenient to you, but it is necessary to ensure that we can maintain education provision for your child(ren) and to prevent the transmission of the virus into the community.

We want to keep your child, your family, and your local community safe so that we are able to not only keep schools open for as many children as possible but also to play our very important role in helping the country to come out of lockdown and get back to doing the things that we enjoy and miss so much.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all that you have done to help keep your child or children away from school throughout this period of lockdown. We do not underestimate

how hard it must have been. Nor do we underestimate how important it was in the collective effort to control the spread of the virus. So, for that, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and we look forward to continuing to work with you to help keep everybody safe and to lead the country out of restrictions in the coming weeks. Thankyou.

Yours sincerely



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