

Contingency Framework – Implementation Guidance

Guidance for education and childcare settings in designated areas on the implementation of the Contingency Framework.

On 30 December 2020 the government announced that in order to help contain the community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), some restrictions to primary education settings are required in certain areas. These are in line with the contingency framework for education and childcare settings.

This guidance provides operational details for primary schools, including the implications for:

- School based nurseries
- Middle schools
- residential and day special schools, pupil referral units, AP academies and AP free schools.
- out of school settings: breakfast, after-school or holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings (including providers of wraparound childcare for children over the age of 5)

Nationally, all secondary schools, middle schools and FE providers have been asked to deliver a phased return to education from January 4. These settings should refer to the guidance available here:

Schools and childcare settings: return in January 2021

Further education (FE) providers: return in January 2021

The geographical areas where this guidance applies are listed in [appendix-Annex A](#).

These restrictions will be in place from 4th January. This operational guidance sets out the actions that these settings should take.

This document should be read alongside the relevant parts of the following guidance:

- Contingency framework for education and childcare settings
- Schools and childcare settings: return in January 2021
- Further education (FE) providers: return in January 2021
- [Actions for early years and childcare providers](#)
- [Guidance for full opening: schools](#)
- [Further education \(FE\) operational guidance](#)
- Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings
- [Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak.](#)
- Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings
- Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings

These local measures will be kept under review and will be reviewed again by 18th January.

People with symptoms or who are self-isolating

No-one should attend education or childcare if they have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household.

Early Years

Early years settings (including nurseries and childminders) should continue to allow all children/pupils to attend as normal. School-based nurseries in primary schools have discretion to follow arrangements for the primary school.

Attendance expectations: Early years

Attendance at early years and childcare settings is not compulsory.

Primary Schools

Primary schools should only allow children of critical workers and those defined as vulnerable to attend.

Attendance expectations

Children of critical workers: Where a critical worker parent or carer notifies a school that their child requires full-time on-site provision, the school should make this available.

Vulnerable children: Vulnerable children are expected to attend full-time on-site provision where it is appropriate for them to do so. This should remain a priority for primary educational providers and local authorities. If they do not attend and it is not a previously agreed leave of absence, schools should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance¹ and whether any adjustments could be made to encourage attendance, considering the child's circumstances and their best interests
- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the child's attendance would be appropriate

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child they should still speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child and ensuring that the child is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

High quality remote education should be provided for all other pupils.

Attendance recording

Vulnerable children: As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full-time they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools should encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes for their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know that the pupil will not be attending. The Department for Education expects schools to grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Children of critical workers: As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, schools should grant a leave of absence (code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

Pupils who are not expected to be in school: All pupils who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

Middle schools

For pupils in years 5 and 6

Middle schools should only allow children of critical workers and those defined as vulnerable to attend.

For pupils in years 7 and 8

Nationally, we have asked all secondary schools to deliver a phased return to education for secondary-age pupils. For pupils in years 7 and 8, middle schools should follow that guidance which is available [here](#).

Attendance expectations: Middle schools (years 5 and 6)

Children of critical workers: Where a critical worker parent or carers notifies a school that their child requires full-time on-site provision, the school should make this available.

Vulnerable children and young people: Vulnerable children and young people should attend full-time where it is appropriate for them to do so. This should remain a priority

for educational providers and local authorities. If they do not attend and it is not a previously agreed leave of absence, schools should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance, and whether any adjustments could be made to encourage attendance, considering the child's circumstances and their best interests
- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child or young person to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the child or young person's attendance would be appropriate

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should still speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person and ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

Attendance recording: Middle Schools (years 5 and 6)

Vulnerable children and young people: As vulnerable children and young people are still expected to attend school full-time they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools should encourage vulnerable children and young people to attend but if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes for their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know in advance that the pupil will not be attending. The Department expects schools to grant such applications for absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Critical worker children: Where critical worker parents and carers notify a school that their child requires full-time on-site provision, the school should make this available. However, as with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, schools should grant a leave of absence (code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

Pupils who are not expected to be in school: All pupils who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

For more information about the use of codes for pupils who are self-isolating, quarantining or shielding, see the annex to the guidance on: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Alternative Provision

AP schools should continue to allow pupils to attend full-time.

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person, whether any adjustments could be made to encourage their attendance, and ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

Attendance expectations: Alternative provision

Pupils of primary or secondary school age: These pupils are encouraged to attend school full time.

Attendance recording: Alternative provision

Pupils of primary or secondary school age: These pupils are still encouraged to attend school full-time. As their attendance is not contrary to any published guidance from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care or any legislation, they should not be marked with Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools should communicate the benefits of full-time on-site provision for this group proactively, and if the parent of a special school pupil wishes for their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know in advance that the pupil will not be attending and that they are making an application for a leave of absence.

The Department expects schools to grant such applications for leaves of absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Attendance recording for pupils who are self-isolating, quarantining or shielding

Code X should be used for pupils who are not attending because guidance about coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department for Health and Social Care says that they should not go to school.

For more information about the use of codes for pupils who are self-isolating, quarantining or shielding, see the annex to the guidance on: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Special Schools

Special schools should continue to allow pupils to attend full-time.

Special post-16 settings should allow students to continue to attend as per their usual timetable.

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person, whether any adjustments could be made to encourage their attendance and ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

Attendance recording: special schools

Pupils of primary or secondary school age: These pupils are still encouraged to attend school full-time. As their attendance is not contrary to any published guidance from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care or any legislation, they should not be marked with Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools should communicate the benefits of full-time on-site provision for this group proactively. If the parent of a special school pupil wishes for their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know in advance that the pupil will not be attending and that they are making an application for a leave of absence.

The Department for Education expects schools to grant such applications for leaves of absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Students in post-16 specialist provision (including special schools and special post-16 institutions): It is important that all special schools and special post-16 institutions are aware on any given day which learners they are expecting to attend. Where a learner they are expecting does not attend, and the non-attendance is unexplained, the setting should follow up with their parents, carers and social workers (where applicable) to resolve any issues or barriers to attendance.

Attendance recording for pupils who are self-isolating, quarantining or shielding

Code X should be used for pupils who are not attending because guidance about coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department for Health and Social Care says that they should not go to school.

For more information about the use of codes for pupils who are self-isolating, quarantining or shielding, see the annex to the guidance on: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Boarding schools

The only pupils and students who should be allowed to attend face-to-face learning are those who would be permitted to do so in non-residential settings under the sector-specific guidance above. All other students should access their learning remotely.

Hospital education

Hospital schools should continue to provide full time education where it is safe and feasible to do so, and in line with hospital infection prevention and control (IPC) measures.

Mainstream schools should continue to support their pupils in hospital, including through remote learning support, to minimise the impact of their hospital stay on their education.

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare

Providers who run community activities, before or after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school or childcare provision (including wraparound childcare) for children over the age of five are able to continue to open for both indoor and outdoor provision. They should only allow vulnerable children and children of critical workers to attend.

Other Considerations

Infection prevention and control

Schools, nurseries, childminders, FE providers and Ofsted registered providers caring for children, should continue to follow the guidance on infection prevention and control outlined in the full opening guidance for [schools](#), [early years](#) or [further education, or the guidance on protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children](#).

These pieces of guidance set out a system of controls including regular handwashing, good hygiene and frequent cleaning which, when implemented, create an inherently safer system where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced.

With reduced numbers on-site, maintaining social distance between staff and pupils may be enhanced. This control remains the same as explained in the full opening guidance: ideally adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other and from children - and where this is not possible avoiding close face to face contact and minimising time spent within 1 metre of others - and pupils should be supported to do the same. Schools should consider if it is possible to implement further measures within the classroom and elsewhere to make maintaining distance easier.

All settings should update their risk assessment, in consultation with staff and unions, to reflect the contingency operating model and review implementation of control measures in light of this.

Technology for Remote Education

We have published guidance for getting help with technology for remote education [_](#).

Where face-to-face education is disrupted, DfE is providing laptops and tablets to schools for some disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 to access remote education. Schools should report disruption through the education settings status form.

Support is also available for disadvantaged children who need an internet connection to get internet access.

The government is funding expert technical support to help schools set up secure user accounts for Google and Microsoft's education platforms. Schools can apply for government-funded support through The Key for School Leaders to get set up on one of two free-to-use digital education platforms, G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education.

Safeguarding

There should be no change to local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which remain the responsibility of the three safeguarding partners (local authorities, clinical

commissioning groups and chief officers of police). We expect all local safeguarding partners to be vigilant and responsive to all safeguarding threats and ensure vulnerable children and young persons are safe – particularly as more children and young people will be learning remotely.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) is statutory [safeguarding guidance](#) that all schools, FE colleges, sixth form colleges and designated institutions must continue to have regard to. Other 16-19 providers are required to comply with relevant safeguarding duties and to have regard to KCSIE by virtue of their funding agreement.

Early years providers must continue to follow the safeguarding requirements in section three of the [Early Years Foundation Stage framework](#).

Schools (ideally led by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy) should review their child protection policy so that it reflects the local restrictions and remains effective. In some cases, a coronavirus (COVID-19) annex or addendum that summarises any key local restriction related changes might be more effective than re-writing and re-issuing the whole policy. It will be important that all staff working in the school or FE provider are aware of the revised policy.

It is expected that schools will have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. However, it is recognised that for some schools there may be operational challenges to this. In such cases, there are two options to consider:

- a trained DSL (or deputy) from the school can be available to be contacted via phone or online video, for example working from home
- sharing trained DSLs (or deputies) with other schools (who should be available to be contacted via phone or online video)

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, a senior leader should take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

Meal options

Schools

Schools should provide meal options for all pupils who are in school and meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who meet the free school meals eligibility criteria. Schools should also continue to provide free school meals or food parcels for eligible pupils who are not attending school where they:

- are self-isolating
- have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- are not attending as a result of implementation of local restrictions advised by government

Schools should work with suppliers to prepare meals or food parcels to be collected by, or delivered to, these eligible children during their time at home. Any parcels should be distributed in line with guidance on [social distancing](#) and local restriction tiers and should meet the school food standards.

The [guidance](#) for provision of school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak outlines how and when children eligible for free school meals should be supported at home. It also contains information regarding best practice arrangements where food parcels are needed.

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme is in place if families report difficulties in accessing food or paying household bills. Access to this support is through local authorities.

Transport

Transport services to education settings should continue to be provided as normal.

The transport to school and other places of education: 2020 to 2021 academic year guidance remains in place. Those involved in the provision of home to school or college transport must do all that is reasonably practicable to maximise social distancing where possible and minimise the risk of transmission. What is practicable is likely to vary according to local circumstances.

Local authorities are not required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport, on dedicated school or college transport. However, distancing should still be put in place within vehicles wherever possible. This means that where fewer children and young people are attending school or college, levels of capacity should generally be maintained. Unoccupied seats could be used to maximise social distancing, for example, through alternate seating or separation between year groups or schools.

Children, young people and staff can continue to use public transport where necessary. We encourage everyone to walk, cycle or scoot wherever possible and safe. This will help to reduce pressure on the public transport network so there is capacity for those who need it most. Where children, young people and staff need to use public transport, they should follow the safer travel guidance (<http://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>).

Annex A: List of local authorities where this guidance applies:

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
[Camden](#)
[City of London](#)
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
[Greenwich](#)
[Hackney](#)
Hammersmith and Fulham
[Haringey](#)
[Harrow](#)
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
[Islington](#)
Kensington and Chelsea
[Kingston upon Thames](#)
[Lambeth](#)
[Lewisham](#)
Merton
Newham
[Redbridge](#)
Richmond_~~U~~pon_~~U~~Thames
Southwark
Sutton
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster
Brentwood
Epping Forest
Castle Point
Basildon
Rochford
Harlow

Chelmsford
Braintree
Maldon
Southend on Sea
Thurrock
Dartford
Gravesham
Sevenoaks
Medway
Ashford
Maidstone
Tonbridge and Malling
Tunbridge Wells
Swale
Hastings
Rother
Milton Keynes
Watford
Broxbourne
Hertsmere
Three Rivers