

**SOCIAL DISTANCING OPTIONS**

**ANNEX E: SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE**

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**CURRENT MEASURES**

- As of 20 March schools and childcare have been closed, except for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. This summer's set of exams and assessments has been cancelled. Eligibility for provision of places in schools was defined as children with one critical worker parent and all vulnerable (defined as Children in Care, children with a social worker, with an Education, Health and Care Plan, and other vulnerable). The guidance was clear that this also applied to independent schools, including boarding schools, FE colleges and childcare settings.
- The SAGE modelling to inform the 18 March schools closure decision was based on a pupil population of 10-20%, with which the critical worker/vulnerable children policy was consistent.
- Parental and employer response to the 'Stay at Home' campaign has contributed to less than 2% of the pupil population attending **school** (4% of eligible vulnerable children and 2% critical workers' children, as of 6-9 April). SAGE modelling for 14 April review of social distancing was based on this actual pupil population, not the intended pupil population, and their advice was not to seek to alter the measure.
- On **early years** provision, around 1/3rd of childcare settings are open, and attendance is higher than schools, with approximately 5% of children of critical workers aged 0-4, and 6% of vulnerable 0-4 (LA returns to DfE, 16 April). This is still very low. The long-term sustainability of the childcare market is at risk.
- On **further and higher education**, most colleges and universities have independently moved to a remote teaching model and developed alternative approaches to exams. The Office for Students has reduced regulatory requirements on the HE sector and published non-prescriptive guidance on maintaining quality.

**Part 1: INITIAL PRIORITISATION PROPOSITION**

1. The initial proposed prioritisation is therefore to **limit the pupil population to certain age groups**, as below, and in all instances to continue to provide places for **children of critical workers and vulnerable children** (and more strongly encourage them to take up these places, as some institutions have discouraged attendance, for example, where only one parent is a critical worker). The overall choices about which pupils are provided school places depends on whether the priority is to educate children (by selecting key transition and GCSE years), or to provide school places to enable parents to go to work (by selecting younger children). The tone of wider public communications, PPE and testing will all have an impact on intended outcomes.
2. In any scenario the public message would have to reinforce safety (for the pupils, and for parents at work). The 'Stay at Home' message has been potent, and no school can guarantee effective social distancing, particularly for younger children. In any scenario, given the lead in time and the proximity to the summer holidays, we will need to develop and incentivise summer childcare and education offers, including through universities and colleges, the NCS, youth clubs and camps, and sports, music and arts settings.

3. The **initial prioritisation proposition** is as follows:
  - a. to **actively encourage children currently eligible** to go to school
  - b. to provide school places, additionally, to all **children in Reception and Years 1, Years 5 and 6**. (These years are priorities for both education and for getting parents to work.
  - c. beyond that, to **provide school places to children in years 10, 11 and 12**, prioritising key transition and assessment years. (If prioritising return to work, this would be providing provision to all primary, i.e. adding years 2, 3 and 4 instead of 10, 11 and 12).
  - d. to provide **online learning for all key stages**, alongside **online access measures** for all school children
  - e. to implement **further steps for delivery**: on workforce preparedness (e.g. staffing supply, PPE concerns), supply chains (school meals, cleaners, cleaning supplies), attendance interventions/pastoral support (to overcome pupil and parental resistance or anxiety), coordinated by REACT teams (regional groups formed of DfE, Ofsted and local partners)
4. Further alternative would be to apply these measures to enable a wider and more equal return to some school provision for all age groups, whilst continuing to limit the number of interactions, as we have seen in many Asian countries.
5. Further restrictions would be possible if necessary to further reduce the pupil population.
6. In all circumstances, extra support will be needed for **vulnerable children** not attending school (ensuring secondary Alternative Provision settings are open and safe, and more emphasis at LA level on ensuring those with EHC plans are physically in school).
7. The following will also be needed in the medium terms:
  - a. Insights on cohort impact (e.g. attainment gap, FSM and other vulnerable groups)
  - b. Focus on transition (onboarding of 2020/21 Reception, Year 7 and Year 12 pupils)
  - c. Focus on qualifications (e.g. lost time for practicals)
  - d. ITT – finalising qualifications of 2019/20 cohort
  - e. Address issues caused by pausing construction work
8. These measures do not currently include provision of childcare for early years (pre-school). The policy solutions to ensure that provision is in place would include financial incentives for providers and reassurance of workplace and child safety.

## Part 2: BENEFITS OF THESE MEASURES

- Economic: The more children in school, the greater the number of parents who can return to work and the larger the economic benefit. 31.27% of children are years R, Y1, Y5 and Y6 combined. 16.25% of children are in years 10, 11 and 12 combined. Primary school represents 59% of all pupils (4.7m). HMT estimates that maximising the number of people who could work, consistent with the NPIs, together with reopening schools for all children, could alleviate up to 80% of the additional hit from labour supply to GDP in Q2. Opening schools for a smaller proportion of children would not have this full impact, but would have economic benefit.
- Better educational outcomes for children at school; supports them to progress to the next stage of education or employment.

- Social: Reduces disproportionate impact on lower socio-economic groups from loss of education, increases safeguarding for vulnerable children. Increases safeguarding for vulnerable children at school.
- Covid Health: Returning students are least COVID vulnerable and the lead option should allow a measure of social distancing (based on pupil population figures above and DfE assumption that a third attendance enables social distancing).
- Non-Covid health: Increased mental health wellbeing for children and parents; better welfare provision and nutrition for vulnerable children; better provision for SEND children.
- Public Services: More public sector workers able to return to work.
- Fairness: Reduces disproportionate impact on lower socio-economic groups from loss of education (particularly falls on BAME community). Reduces impact on women (tend to be main carers), and improves educational outcomes for poor children (early literacy and numeracy dominant factor).
- Sustainability: High, provided managed to prevent return of high R rate.

### Part 3: RISKS OF THESE MEASURES

- Economic: Rationing school attendance to any degree, especially at primary level, will not mitigate the economic impact as much as higher levels of school attendance. Any inconsistency with wider public messaging could further reduce attendance.
- Social: Risk of low public acceptance and loss of trust in government: parents refuse to send their children back to school based on safety concerns, teaching Unions object. Possible confusion over eligibility, especially at borders with DAs.
- Covid Health: Creates “household links”, increasing contact between currently distinct groups, including parents outside school gates. Strict social distancing/safety measures particularly difficult to implement in primary schools and early years settings.
- Non-Covid health: Increased likelihood of other infections.
- Public Services: Puts teachers at greater risk, with the potential to reduce the teacher workforce through infection. Requires near full return of primary teachers and support staff.
- Fairness: Small schools may struggle with social distancing requirements and staff levels, preventing parents from returning to work. Capacity constraints unequally distributed across the country. May be accusations of unfairness at privileging some stages of education over others.
- Sustainability: Sustainable delivery may depend on safer environment measures, protection supplies, capacity constraints. Accusations of unfairness may increase the longer the measures last.
- Other: (i) Extending childcare entitlements to maximise economic impact would require a complementary increase in the provider rate paid by HMG to gain sectoral buy in. (ii) Rota timetabling difficult to implement.

### Part 4: POTENTIAL MITIGATION TO ADDRESS THE RISKS

- Phased implementation: DfE recommends 3 weeks between the decision and implementation to develop guidance fully, manage public acceptance and prepare schools and workforce (e.g. a decision in early May would allow schools to reopen for the second half of the summer term - around the beginning of June).

- Link to overall messaging: Teacher/parent confidence in part depends on a wider message that it is safe to return to work, and therefore for them/their children to attend school.
- Safer environments: Restrict gatherings within schools (e.g. assemblies, PE, drama); staggered start times to avoid crowded transport and reduce adult contacts; increase capacity through repurposing other educational facilities (e.g. universities) to maximise pupil spacing; desk spacing; hygiene regimes; access to appropriate cleaning and PPE supplies. Testing regime would increase confidence that schools were safe environments, including among teachers if focused primarily on the workforce. Given the constraints on implementing social distancing measures within schools, especially primary, an alternative approach would be to accept a higher R rate in schools, as children are less at risk (subject to SAGE advice).
- Segmentation: Medically vulnerable children and children living with a vulnerable adult, adults with underlying health conditions, or those over the age of 70, remain at home; teachers who are extremely vulnerable, have underlying health conditions, or live with those over 70 remain at home and continue online teaching. If reopening resulted in too great an increase in social contact in schools, we could stagger attendance in school (e.g. via a fortnight on/ a fortnight off rota).
- Other: Relaxing statutory requirements on schools, including maximum class sizes; provision of home to school transport to limit adult interaction; re-enforce statutory requirement on parents to send children to school; reiterate advice for pupils not to interact outside of school; ensure consistency of approach and messaging with DAs; introduce provision over summer holidays, via holiday club or Easter models; extend childcare entitlements beyond term-term.

#### **Part 5: IMPLICATIONS OF TRACK, TRACE AND TEST FOR THIS MEASURE**

- Efficient track, trace, and test would reduce the impact of the reintroduction of household links and manage down the R rate. Increases in efficacy if combined with certification.
- Protocols would need to be developed on what action to take when children and staff tested positive, including provision of online teaching.

## ANNEX E2: Eight Theoretical Models

Option	Description	Pros	Cons
1.All key transition and GCSE years, primary and secondary	Key year groups (reception, 1, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12) return full time, to ensure they are prepared for transition in September.	Supports 2m pupils sitting exams in 2021 and those changing school. Fewer in school so fewer teachers required (c127,000), social distancing more feasible. Could be varied e.g. not all groups and/or greater SD with older children. <i>(Note that lesser combinations also possible - e.g. reception, 1, 10, 12)</i>	Not all parents able to return to work. Unfair for other cohorts. SD compliance difficult. Complexity of communication/ implementation.
2.Primary and early years only	To maximise return to work, all primary and nursery settings return first.	Primary (4.7million) children require more supervision. Returning early years protects the financial sustainability of childcare sector. 40% of disadvantage gap has emerged by age 5 and is hard to close.	SD impossible to guarantee in primary and early years. No impact on secondary transitions – into FE, HE or employment - which affects future economy and welfare.
3.Rota system	1/3 of pupils/staff at any time, rotas limiting attendance: 2-weeks on/off model, or pupils and staff on half days.	All pupils will benefit from some face-to-face provision, in addition to remote learning. Opportunity for some targeted support to those struggling or falling behind when out of school.	Consistency easier to implement and clearer to communicate than rotas. Matching staff to needs difficult.
4.Remain partially closed (baseline)	Continue with existing approach until the new academic year.	Embeds online learning. Consistency. Reduced anxiety about contagion may improve learning.	Attainment gap widens. Primary pupils self-guide less well than secondary.
5.More vulnerable children and children of critical workers	Concerted effort to push towards attendance of all eligible pupils.	More parents back to work. Emphasis on narrowing attainment gap.	Largest group currently eligible but hardest to reach. Likely that schools will provide mainly care and supervision.
6.Early years only	All early years and childcare settings re-open.	More parents can return to work. Early literacy and numeracy biggest factor in future achievement (esp. for poor children)	SD near impossible so reducing parental (and child) anxiety about safety essential. Older pupils have less time left to catch up.
7.Secondary only	All secondary-age pupils return to school, full time.	Supports medium-term economy (protects achievement and qualifications of imminent earners)	Fewer parents return, less economic impact.
8. Full re-opening (baseline)	Schools and settings open as normal to all children	All parents can return to work. Fair; face-to-face learning is optimal.	Impossible to social distance.

**Table 1: Teacher and support staff numbers (state funded schools in England)**

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Centrally employed	Total state funded
Total teachers (headcount)	249,963	219,269	25,738	5,002	499,972
Support staff (headcount)	525,883	189,993	70,979	31,881	818,736
<b>No. of schools</b>	17,164	3,417	1,331	-	21,912

*Source: School workforce Census, November 2018*

Represents:

- 249,963 primary teachers and 219,269 secondary teachers in England (as of Nov 18) - 499,972 total;
- Support staff total 818,736 across the school system (including TAs and all other staff employed).

**Table 2: Teacher numbers apportioned by year group**

Year Group	Primary teachers	Secondary teachers
Reception	35,301	
Year 1	36,208	
Year 2	37,184	
Year 3	36,058	
Year 4	35,423	
Year 5	34,808	
Year 6	34,981	
Year 7		36,874
Year 8		35,694
Year 9		34,950
Year 10		40,593
Year 11		39,041
Year 12		16,959
Year 13		15,158

*Source: TAD internal modelling April 2020*

- To estimate a gradual return by year group one can apportion teachers across different key stages, allowing for the smaller class sizes typically seen for older children.
  - For primary this results in around 34-37,000 teachers per year group.
  - For secondary there is more variation, with 34-37,000 teachers for each year of KS3 and around 40,000 needed for each year of KS4.
- This assumes “normal” class sizes, using an average of 27.1 for secondary (20 for KS4 and 18 for KS5), and 21.1 for KS1, or 27.9 for KS2.
- Social distancing measures would likely require smaller classes. Initial analysis suggests to achieve a 2m distance between pupils would require a class size of around 12 pupils per class.