



Dear Colleagues,

To keep you all up-to-date with the latest information on Coronavirus (COVID-19), and help protect yourself and others, we will be issuing regular updates.

We have now completed the new dedicated COVID-19 information area on the HES portal, where all communications and updates from the Local Authority and central government relating to COVID-19 will be organised. All early years providers and schools can access this area by using the following link: <http://hes.org.uk/Page/17045>.

The items in this update are intended for all education providers - where the guidance is only relevant to a particular phase of education or type of provider, this is indicated.

Re-opening of Schools and Early Years Providers

The Local Authority has developed a 'Return to School Planner' for use by school leaders to support the planning of a phased return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The word version of this planner is attached to this update.

It is not an exhaustive list of every single challenge, but references the initial planning framework issued by the DfE (see below), and highlights the key areas that schools should consider in advance of re-opening to increased numbers of pupils – alongside rigorous risk assessment. Whilst national or local government will determine some of these areas, much else is a matter for local leaders and governors who know and understand their school communities and premises.

The Local Authority has received a number of contacts from school leaders, concerned about their ability to offer a full provision to children for a number of reasons, including staffing issues, or limitations of their school site, and have asked if there will be a consistent LA approach for how children will return, especially as parents/carers are likely to compare the offer.

The DfE guidance is relatively clear on their expectations – for this initial phase of re-opening they are asking early years providers to re-open for all their children, and primary schools to re-open for full year cohorts (nursery, R, 1, 6), albeit there is a recommendation that classes in schools are to be split (cap of 15) to adhere to social distancing. Secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges are asked to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 students who are due to take key exams next year, alongside the full time provision they are offering to priority groups.



The Local Authority isn't proposing a blanket approach as a lot will depend on the individual schools' risk assessments, staff availability, and site capacity, as to whether it is needed to prioritise year groups (as per the DfE guidance) or implement other arrangements (such as spilt days, part-time timetable etc). In addition, there is the local context to consider, as we are already seeing a wide variation in the numbers accessing provision currently, and we expect this to continue even with this first phase of re-opening.

Ultimately, the safety of staff and pupils is paramount, and school leaders are best placed to decide the safest way they can open based on their own risk assessments, and the Local Authority will support their decision.

Early next week, the Local Authority will be hosting a series of Cluster Skype calls for Primary schools to discuss any concerns that you have – invitations to these will follow shortly. This will give school leaders time to consider the vast amount of guidance issued this week, and complete your initial planning and risk assessments.

The Local Authority is developing a range of public communications so that parent/carers expectations can be managed, and are clear on what this 'new' school offer may look like. We will provide a letter that you can share with parents in which we will explain that different provisions will exist and that these are based on safety.

The Local Authority Health & Safety team are also developing a template Risk Assessment document for use by school leaders, which we expect to circulate later this week.

Actions for Education and Childcare Settings to Prepare for Wider Opening

The government has also updated the [guidance](#) they issued yesterday to now include an initial planning framework for schools in England. This planning framework has been designed to support those in schools and academy trusts, including mainstream, special, and alternative provision, to prepare and decide arrangements for more children returning to school.

The framework has been created to help school leaders and trusts to start to think through the steps they might need to take to open their schools for more pupils, and as a starting point from which schools and trusts may choose to develop their own plans.

This framework will be developed further and the DfE will work with the profession to produce more detailed guidance ahead of 1 June 2020, alongside updates to existing guidance as necessary ahead of 1 June. They will also be producing operational guidance for childcare settings and colleges, in addition to further advice for schools.



This guidance should be read alongside [Actions for educational and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#) and [Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#).

Further Guidance

Please ensure that you are regularly checking the national guidance.

Guidance on 'Self-Isolation' for people with confirmed or possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>.

Please go to [NHS.UK/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) for information about the virus and how to protect yourself, and the latest information and advice about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is also available on the [government website](#).

Information for educational settings is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>. However, we expect this advice to change in the coming days due to the change to the Delay phase of the response in the UK. Should new information for schools be published, this will be cascaded to all establishments.

The Department for Education has a helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and young people can contact the helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk