

Early Childhood Education and Care Frequently Asked Questions and Reopening Guidance

Covid 19 [C19] May 2020v7

The summary below outlines the headlines from the DfE guidance.....

Nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, will also be asked to begin welcoming back children from 1 June. Existing arrangements for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers in all settings will continue, and we encourage all eligible children in these priority groups to attend. We are asking nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, to begin welcoming back all children. We are asking schools, colleges and childcare providers to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation. Any educational or childcare settings which have closed should work towards reopening from the week commencing 1 June 2020 to cater for children in nurseries, Reception, year 1, year 6 and priority groups, and to provide some face to face support to pupils in years 10 and 12.

It is still important to reduce contact between children and staff as far as possible, and settings can take steps to achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, and staff where possible, mix in a small group and keep that small group away from other people and groups. For pre-school children in early years settings, the staff to child ratios within Early Years Foundation Stage continue to apply, and we recommend using these to group children.

To support children's early learning, settings should prioritise groups of children who are 3 and 4 years old followed by younger age groups.

No one with symptoms should attend a setting for any reason. Eligible children – including priority groups - are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable (in which case they should follow medical advice). If someone in their household is extremely clinically vulnerable, they should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to, and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions. Families should notify their nursery as normal if their child is unable to attend so that staff can explore the reason with them and address barriers together.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. Early years settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as set out here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

For early years settings, the dedicated schools grant (DSG) should continue to be paid by local authorities for provision of free entitlements. Where parents are accessing hours beyond the free entitlements they are eligible for, early year providers should continue to charge parents in the normal way. The wider business support packages can continue to be used as appropriate, including the loan schemes and the Coronavirus

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Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), on condition that the principles in Department for Education's sector specific guidance continue to be met.

Education and childcare settings should not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus. Face coverings (or any form of medical mask where instructed to be used for specific clinical reasons) should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including children whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way and for a child who becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. Education, childcare and children's social care settings and providers should use their local supply chains to obtain PPE. Where this is not possible, and there is unmet urgent need for PPE in order to operate safely, they may approach their nearest [local resilience forum](#).

We recommend you read the following for a full understanding of the government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Further guidance will follow

Q: What information do I need to tell local authority?

- Family Information Service submit a return to DfE about settings that are open/ closed and the number of children they are supporting. We ask settings to complete a weekly Survey Monkey return to FIS via this link. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/EYCOVID-19> The Department for Education will continue to monitor attendance at early years settings, via local authorities. This is to ensure that we have up-to-date information on available early years and childcare provision during the coronavirus (C19) outbreak, which children are accessing it and to monitor sufficiency in particular areas.
- The LA requests a 'one off' return to list the vulnerable children that could attend your settings and their attendance status. We ask for this return to be updated as circumstances change.
Contact : educationsafeguarding@solihull.gov.uk

Q: How do I report a coronavirus outbreak in my setting?

There is a new online method for reporting outbreaks in nurseries and schools, within the West Midlands to Public Health England. An outbreak is classed as where there are 2 or more people with symptoms within a 14-day period. In these instances please report the outbreak using the following link:
<https://surveys.phe.org.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n4KL97m2I>

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You will then be given links and information on how to manage the outbreak. PHE office for URGENT advice that cannot be located online. .. 0344 225 3560 Option 0, Option 2.

Recovery phase

Q: When can we open?

A: In childcare settings, providers will be asked to welcome back all children below statutory school age from the week commencing 1 June 2020. Demand for childcare is likely to be lower than usual at first, and existing space requirements and staff to child ratios for these age groups should allow for small group working. Where the physical layout of a setting does not allow small groups of children to be kept at a safe distance apart, we expect practitioners to exercise judgement in ensuring the highest standards of safety are maintained. In some cases, it may be necessary for providers to introduce a temporary cap on numbers to ensure that safety is prioritised. From 1 June 2020, childminders can look after children of all ages, in line with usual limits on the number of children they can care for.

Q: How can we help children transition back to our nursery or move to our nursery?

A: Settings need to support children's **well-being**, to be guided by their needs and adjust routines and organisation for those who have remained in the setting as well as those transitioning back or between settings. Visual and online **communications** will help make the unfamiliar - familiar and will support parent-child discussion. Transition communications and information sharing should begin well before the start date where possible. What can families see on your website or in communications before they start? The environment, routines, key people, favourite activities, food routines and provision, and how you will keep children safe and well will be important to share through photographs and video where possible. Can they see a virtual tour and have a video welcome message from their key person or a person they will meet on the day they start? This allows children and families to **prepare for continuity** and have fewer surprises. Much of this will need to be done in small groups, through virtual communications. <https://www.babcockprime.co.uk/improving-schools-and-settings/early-years/early-years-inclusion/a-z-of-inclusion-resources/t-inclusion-resources> -transition kit.

Important information should be provided by the parent or carer to the setting on day one, including emergency contact details, dietary requirements and medical needs to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child. Settings will need to be aware of the additional needs of vulnerable children/ parents.

Consider a shared story/ song that is available on-line, and as a book in some homes, to unify and prepare children for something that they know and can expect on their first day. Ensure children can play in role and act out what they are feeling and their experiences. Young children will not recall the 'familiar' from 6 weeks+ ago so assume they are new to you and you will need to build relationships. Above all, talk to them and their parent[s] about what they have enjoyed doing at home and can continue to experience, and how you can support the child to settle and feel safe. It may be wise for settings to re-visit their '**all about me**' information sharing arrangements with parents; to clarify family, health, contact, well-being and celebration details. There will need to be extra arrangements for information sharing before children start and during the early days of return. <http://evolutionaryparenting.com/daycare-and-cortisol-levels-what-does-this-tell-us/> Also see *FAQ below*

Q: What will I need to consider as I re-open?

A: **Management** of people and spaces –Risk Assessment: Check premises that have been fully shut for safety – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-school-premises-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> Opening times, numbers of children to be supported and staffing arrangements will be a priority and demand-management work in respect of people and resources/ stocks [such as PPE/ hand wash/care]. Safeguarding and welfare arrangements have been relaxed in some areas with the need for settings to use their best endeavours to meet them. Settings continue to have some challenges around sufficiency of first aid trained staff and suitably qualified staff which will continue. Rotas may need to be communicated to parents to ensure they know who their 'key person' is each day and prepare children.

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How will you communicate your 'it's safe here' offer to parents? You will need to remove items that are difficult to clean and keep clean, rotas to frequently clean high traffic/ contact areas, individual towels/ bedding/ etc. so that children don't share and put up posters to remind staff about hygiene practices and expectations. What will you put in place for staff using public transport and larger group times [staff lunch and children's lunch – serve not canteen for now for example]? Can windows be open and outdoor spaces be used more frequently? How will you limit movement between rooms/ spaces? Parent drop off and collection for safe distancing and parent 'meetings' will need consideration. Where will buggies and things from multiple homes be stored safely? What will your 'visitors' policy be? How will you help adults to be calm to support children to feel safe? What will be your new distancing greeting to be friendly but avoid hugs? Will you keep children to key group social 'bubbles' to play together?

Policies may need to be amended for this time. The designated safeguarding lead and special needs co-ordinator, as well as those with specialism for health and safety and behaviour, will be key to supporting children. Staff may also need re-induction training on child protection and safeguarding, health and safety. Communication and consistent messages will be important to build trust and confidence.

Information: Important information should be provided/ refreshed by the parent or carer to the setting on day one, including emergency contact details, dietary requirements and medical needs to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child. Building upon children's interests and celebrations shared from their time away from the setting. There may also be changes to a family context, which settings would benefit from knowing, and which could be relevant to share to best meet child's needs and emotional well-being. What has the child shown that they loved, learned, didn't like during their absence? Settings may be different for those that remember – staff and children may not wear 'uniform' but wear gloves at times and some things may not be available [walks to forest school] as before and families may need to be prepared. Meal times and outdoor play times may be staggered and hand washing more frequent.

Routine amendments: Regular activities and routines may need to be revised based on the context and needs of the children. – experiences during absence / attendance in the previous week, flexibility based upon current needs/ interests, additional hygiene requirements with potentially more children and their use of toys and the setting. How will positive behaviour be supported during this time? We need to be careful in the ways we encourage social distancing but encourage social skills. What visual props can be used for children to understand 'rules' and how can stories, songs, signs and language be used to make these positive rather than 'don't do' messages? Settings will need to ensure that best practices are re-established for effective communication and optimal teaching interactions for staff who have either been off work or working in a different way. Settings will need to consider how to reduce the numbers of parents in a setting whilst continuing to share celebrations, worries and communicate 'all's well here' in other ways such as through electronic communications.

Support for children's **personal, social and emotional** needs will be a priority. Re visit your transition procedures. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/coronavirus-children-in-lockdown/> & <https://emergingminds.org.uk/co-space-study-1st-update/> show emerging findings such as those from the Co-SPYCE study [school and pre-school versions]. Staff will need to be aware of parent partnership information sharing for the home learning offer and how this compliments the settings offer. How will the setting manage toys and things bought from home? They may worry more about those they can't see.

Curriculum: intent> implementation> impact – what are your priorities for the first days/ weeks? Characteristics of learning, PSE, making the unfamiliar> familiar, communication, continuity of their learning from home> school. Consider songs, rhymes and spatial awareness (keeping spaces between you) activities to reinforce key rules and desired behaviour. Children may not have been used to learning in a group and show signs of worry or try to gain control of their experiences in different ways. <https://parentingfromscratch.wordpress.com/2014/08/11/behavior-is-an-iceberg/>

Pupils voice: Settings should ensure they give children a voice through the 100 languages they use to communicate how they are feeling and their needs. They may need to sleep more, need more cuddles,

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need more reassurance, etc. How will key workers get to know children and their needs?

<http://www.ncb.org.uk/resources-publications/listening-way-life-why-how-we-listen-young-children>

DfE guidance

Reduce **mixing** within education or childcare setting by:

- accessing rooms directly from outside where possible
- considering one-way circulation and ways to limit contact in shared corridors
- staggering breaks to ensure that any corridors or circulation routes used have a limited number of children using them at any time
- staggering lunch breaks - children should clean their hands beforehand and enter in the groups they are already in, groups should be kept apart as much as possible and tables should be cleaned between each group. If such measures are not possible, children should be brought their lunch in their rooms
- ensuring that toilets do not become crowded by limiting the number of children who use the toilet facilities at one time
- noting that some children need additional support to follow these measures (for example social stories and songs to support them in understanding how to follow rules)

Use outside space:

- as much as possible
- although outdoor equipment should not be used unless the setting is able to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously. Read <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

For shared rooms:

- use shared areas for lunch and exercise at half capacity. If class groups take staggered breaks between lessons, these areas can be shared as long as different groups do not mix (and especially do not play sports or games together) and adequate cleaning between groups between groups is in place.
- stagger the use of staff rooms and offices to limit occupancy

Reduce the use of **shared resources:**

- by limiting the amount of shared resources that are taken home and limit exchange of take-home resources between children, young people and staff
- by seeking to prevent the sharing of stationery and other equipment where possible. Shared materials and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently
- although practical lessons can go ahead if equipment can be cleaned thoroughly and the classroom or other learning environment is occupied by the same children or young people in one day, or properly cleaned between cohorts

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Covid 19 [C19] May 2020v7

Adjust **transport** arrangements where necessary including:

- encouraging parents and children to walk or cycle to their education setting where possible
- schools, parents and young people following the government guidance on how to travel safely, which will be published shortly, when planning their travel, particularly if public transport is required

This is part of a longer check-list from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Q: What about those children moving on to a new setting? What information should I pass on?

A: Assessment – the statutory assessment arrangements have been relaxed but practitioners will continue to need to observe and respond to **children's needs**. Practitioners will need to be aware of the need to pass on information about children's learning characteristics and development to the next phase of their education in collaboration with [and the permission of] parents. Arrangements for continuity will be different depending on the timing of the next phases of return to education and care. SEN and vulnerable children and their families may need further discussion to support transition.

Face-to-face meetings will probably be reduced and the more the 'new' setting can share information through post, photograph, video, virtual meetings the better. Parents may refer to you to talk through this information. Consider continuing with the actions you usually take in this situation –but at a distance.

Useful weblinks:

www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc - resources and EEF pages

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> - revised and temporary EYFS

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update> - Ofsted

<https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder> - business finance guidance

<https://foundationyears.org.uk/2020/05/vodcast-on-early-years-funding-arrangements-to-support-childcare-sufficiency/> - vodcast

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership 0800 032 3488 offers business support

<https://www.gbslepgrowthhub.co.uk/business-advice/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings> - DfE collections of useful guidance

<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/socialservicesandhealth/childrenfamilies/fis/parentingsupport> - parent support

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-aged-2-to-4-to-learn-at-home-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/socialservicesandhealth/Coronavirus> -support for you

<https://family.co/blog/covid-19/denmark-reopening-child-care-corona/> - we are not promoting the product but the information from Denmark and the associated resources may be useful ☺

For further support please contact:

Solihull Family Information Service - <http://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/eef/>

Solihull EYSAT <https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/education/children-and-young-peoples-send-service/early-years-send-team-2/>

Early Years and Education Improvement - <http://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/support/>

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