



To all Headteachers

**Children, Young People and
Education Directorate**

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Dear Colleague

The news of a second national lockdown will have caused anxiety amongst children, parents, and school staff. I appreciate that many of you, and your staff, will have concerns about how you can safely keep your schools open while experiencing increasing absence and staff shortages. I know that as headteachers you are leading your communities through these uncertain times, reassuring people about their safety, the safety of others, and holding true with your beliefs that children need to be in school. We all know the situation will continue to evolve, national guidance and policy will change, and you will continue to be confronted with new challenges. Throughout this pandemic you and your staff have demonstrated great resilience and risen on every occasion to support children and young people. We are here to help you continue to do so.

The Government guidance relating to the lockdown and the restrictions it will place on our daily lives has been published [here](#),

On Sunday, the following line was placed in all existing guidance for schools and education settings: *This guidance will be reviewed and updated shortly following the announcement by the Prime Minister on 31 October.* To date the existing detailed [national guidance](#) specific to school and other education settings has not been altered and [guidance for Education and childcare settings](#) published this afternoon suggests that it is unlikely to be.

'Schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in this guidance.

We would expect schools to ensure any changes required in light of national restrictions are in place as soon as practically possible, and by Monday 9 November at the latest.
[Guidance for Education and childcare settings](#)

We will continue to signpost schools to new or altered guidance and cascade local information.

Schools have sought guidance on several key issues this week; below we have set out our guidance on these based on the national restrictions and the current DfE advice to schools.

Attendance

Pupil attendance remains mandatory and the usual rules on attendance apply. Attendance this term has been high with the number of unauthorised absences being lower than many expected, this reflects the work school leaders and staff have undertaken to provide assurance to children and their families. With another national lockdown there is the potential that attendance decreases due to parental or pupil anxiety.

It is important that schools record attendance accurately and consistently to ensure that the scale of any issues can be identified, and that individual children and families are supported appropriately.

This means that the X code should continue to only be used in the circumstances related to coronavirus set out in the [Government guidance](#):

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

Unauthorised absence should continue to be recorded as such.

Clinically Vulnerable Members of School Community

The [guidance](#) related to the lockdown provides advice for individuals in the Clinically Vulnerable and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable groups. For individuals over 60 or Clinically Vulnerable the advice is that they may continue to attend their workplace and should:

- Be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise your contacts with others
- Continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual and maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace

The list of conditions that would categorise somebody as clinically vulnerable is [here](#).

For those who are defined as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) (CEV) to coronavirus – that is, people with specific serious health conditions, the Government is advising that they work from home and are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible, but are encouraged to go outside for exercise. The Government will write to everybody who is clinically extremely vulnerable to set out detailed advice while the new restrictions are in place. We advise schools to discuss individual cases with their personnel advisory service where these staff are not able to work at home. For LA, community and controlled schools,

KCC's position as an employer is that CEV staff unable to work from home are expected to go onto special leave on full contractual pay.

Our view is that the schools should regularly review the risk assessment for all staff regardless of whether they fall in a group or request one. The fact that a lockdown has been initiated and new advice issued about clinically vulnerable and extremely vulnerable individuals means this would be the appropriate time to review risk.

Regularly reviewing risk assessments to see what is working, what has changed and what is not working is one of the ways schools will be able to encourage staff into a safe working environment and counter concerns or claims that they are unsafe. Updating risk assessment should not be an arduous task as most of the current assessments will still be relevant, but by keeping them under constant review it shows how the employer is taking the matter seriously. Covid and the risks associated with it in the workplace are dynamic and therefore so should the application of risk assessments.

Children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance.

Lettings

Ofsted-registered wraparound settings that provide childcare so that parents can work will be able to open, whether they operate in schools or in community centres or other public buildings.

Other lettings in schools, including those offering extra-curricular activities such as art or sports, will not be able to operate.

Where schools are offering extra-curricular activities (that is, before and after school clubs) they should only do so where it is reasonably necessary to support parents to work, search for work, or undertake training or education, or where the provision is being used for the purposes of respite care.

Childcare and Staff Availability

A number of schools have expressed concern that the lockdown will limit the childcare options for staff. The childcare settings and services that will be allowed to continue during the lockdown are:

- Early years settings and childminders remain open, and you can continue to use these settings as normal
- You can access other childcare activities (including wraparound care) where reasonably necessary to enable parents to work, seek work, attend education or training, or for the purposes of respite care for carers
- Nannies will be able to continue to provide services, including in the home
- Parents can form a childcare bubble with one other household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is 13 or under
- Some households will also be able to benefit from being in a support bubble, which allows single adult households to join another household

If these childcare options do not adequately address the needs of school staff, then we advise schools to seek advice from their HR advisory service on individual cases and the remedies available given the specific contractual obligations of each employee.

Volunteers

The guidance issued for the full opening of schools last term advised that volunteers may be used to support the work of the school, as would usually be the case. It is unknown whether the Government will alter this guidance; in the absence of altered national guidance our advice is that schools can continue to use volunteers where it is necessary for them to do so and review and update risk assessments accordingly.

Mixing of volunteers across groups should be kept to a minimum and avoided entirely if possible, and they should remain 2 metres from pupils and staff where possible.

It is important that they are properly supported and given appropriate roles. Where schools are using volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in the volunteer section in part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](#). Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Schools can work with external coaches, clubs, and organisations for curricular activities where they are satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Face Coverings

In primary schools and education settings teaching year 6 and below, there is no change to the existing position. It is not mandatory for staff and visitors to wear face coverings. In situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible (for example when moving around in corridors and communal areas), settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors.

In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This was already the case for pupils in year 7 and above, and staff and visitors for those schools that were in areas where local alert level 'high' and 'very high'.

Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college.

Managing Confirmed or Suspected Cases - Flowchart

Please find below the latest flowchart issued by Public Health England, the flowchart now reflects the introduction of the DfE helpline in September, there has not been any other changes to how schools should manage confirmed or suspected cases.



K edu settings
flowchart V4.1.pdf

Support for students who have to defer their studies

Yesterday the Government published details of a range of opportunities for students who had planned to start higher education this year but who have had to defer until next year to gain new skills, undertake work placements, additional learning and career development support. It can be found [here](#)

Children's Community Health Services

Children's Community Health Services (NELFT, EKHUFT, MCH, KCHFT and MFT) do not currently have any plans to reduce capacity within children's health services and providers are looking at alternate ways to support adult services should we see a significant increase in hospital admissions rather than redeploy staff providing support to children.

Providers have been trying to minimise out of school appointments for children and do offer virtual school-based appointments where clinically possible. There is still a clinical need for some children to receive support in a setting outside of the school; health providers have reported that there has been an increase in the cancellation of these appointments, with some parents concerned that their child will not be able to return to school following an out of school appointment.

It is very important that children are able to attend their medical and health appointments and we encourage schools to reassure parents that their child will be able to return to school during the day on return from a medical appointment.

Finally, our message to all headteachers is that you have been, and continue to, manage this situation with the safety of staff and pupils as the principal consideration and I thank you for this. We are here to support you and will continue to endeavour to keep you updated in a timely fashion as more information becomes available.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Matt Dunkley'.

Matt Dunkley CBE
Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education