Dear Early Years and Childcare Providers

Please find below Government updates from the Christmas and New Year period.

For the benefit of those not already signed up to receive the Department for Education daily update emails, we also include below Sunday’s update as the information relates to the start of term and the ongoing situation with the Omicron variant, as well as providing a link to the letter from the Secretary of State for Education.

**Government Updates for the Sector**

[Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=8f038374-95ec-474a-b9fb-712ec047ef08&utm_content=daily) 2 January 2022

Updated the list of vulnerable children and young people, and who this includes.

[Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=4904ee7f-b26a-4cf8-80d0-b0b7b7cbe71d&utm_content=daily) 2 January 2022

Updated the face coverings section to include the use of face coverings in classrooms and indoor activity rooms for adults and children aged 11 and above.

[Reported COVID-19 notifications by registered early years and childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=14afdb5b-4031-41bb-b623-09ab3366508e&utm_content=weekly) December 2021

Added data for weeks beginning 29 November and 6 December.

**Government Updates for Families**

[COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=b341a7a0-82ca-4c58-ba32-45d95b7b275b&utm_content=daily) 24 December 2021

Now includes the infographic below to explain the new self-isolation guidance after testing positive for COVID -19.



[Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=8e3b5a79-f37c-4fef-9c52-2030480828bf&utm_content=daily) 2 January 2022

Updated the face coverings section to include the use of face coverings in classrooms and indoor activity rooms for adults and children aged 11 and above.

We hope you all managed some rest and relaxation over the festive period and look forward to working with you in 2022.

The Early Years & Childcare Service

**From:** DfE information <dfe.information@notifications.service.gov.uk>
**Sent:** 02 January 2022 07:16
**Subject:** 2 January – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update to all education and childcare settings and providers

This is your email to keep you updated on the government’s response to COVID-19. If you have colleagues who would like to receive this email directly, please ask them to use this subscription form. Today’s email includes: • message from the Secretary of St…

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| This is your email to keep you updated on the government’s response to COVID-19. If you have colleagues who would like to receive this email directly, please ask them to use this [subscription form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=yXfS-grGoU2187O4s0qC-QqN_lFznWdElvOZAsgLa61UMlVaSEZWQVA3RDE1VU05SlVOQVFDNVlINy4u).Today’s email includes:

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| * message from the Secretary of State for Education to all education and childcare leaders
* information for all education settings on testing after the holiday period
* information on the changes to the self-isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19
* information on daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19
* information for education settings on the provision of remote education
* an update on Ofsted inspections due to take place in January
* advice on COVID-19 vaccinations for at-risk 5 to 11 year olds, booster doses for at-risk 12 to 15 year olds and all 16 to 17 year olds
* updated guidance on the use of face coverings in secondary schools, colleges and universities
* an update for all education and childcare settings on the availability of air cleaning units
* an update to the definition of vulnerable children
* information on exams and assessments taking place in January
* information on the update to the educational setting status form for return in January
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Message to all education and childcare leaders from the Secretary of State for EducationToday, the Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, has [written](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/02/an-open-letter-from-education-secretary-nadhim-zahawi-to-education-and-childcare-leaders/?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) to all education and childcare leaders to provide an update on the return to education and childcare following the holiday period. He also thanked all education staff for their ongoing dedication in keeping education and childcare settings open.Testing for students after the holiday periodAs all settings are aware, we have asked that secondary school students undertake one on-site test, on return in January. This will help boost testing participation and reduce transmission after a period of social mixing during the holidays. Students should then be strongly encouraged to continue testing twice weekly at home and to [report all results to NHS Test and Trace](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) and to their setting. Further education and higher education students, and staff in all education and childcare settings, should take one self-test at home either the evening or morning before they return in January, then continue to test twice weekly at home. Colleges should continue to make LFD tests available to students and staff who need them to enable them to test prior to, and at, the start of term. Even if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, they are strongly encouraged to take part in LFD testing on-site through ATS or at home once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection.To support on-site testing on return, schools can use the [bulk upload](https://coronavirus-testing-for-organisations.service.gov.uk/register-organisation-tests?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) service to register test kits and report results for up to 100 tests at a time. Positive results should be reported within 24 hours after the test, negative results must be reported within 7 days. Further guidance on bulk uploads can be found on the [secondary schools and colleges document sharing platform](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cT6adcSVsLer0kvcSuI4QcBYdlmdgb5x).Settings were invited to order tests before Christmas and will have received these in advance of pupils returning. If you run out of test kits, you can order more through the [online ordering platform](https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) for education settings. Please call 119 if you require further advice or support. We continue to work closely with UKHSA to ensure education settings are able to receive adequate supplies of test kits. Please only order the test kits your setting requires. There is currently huge demand for LFD tests, and we need to ensure that there are sufficient supplies for critical workers. Updated guidance to support you with asymptomatic testing is available on the [secondary schools and colleges document sharing platform](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jYv0MjFyIIbzgPn_1S10OuRgfrj_b5_P).Information on the changes to the self-isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason. Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8.Health and social care workers, including those working in education settings, should follow guidance for their sector on taking LFD tests on day 8, 9 and 10. For more information, visit [COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19). Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation. Further information is available in the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19). Daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19People who are fully vaccinated, or children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19, and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. They can continue to attend an education or childcare setting while waiting for the PCR result. If the test is positive, they should follow the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).A reminder that the current requirements on remote education continue to remain in placeAs students and pupils return to education and childcare settings following the holiday period, the current requirements for remote education continue to remain in place.We recognise that the high rates of COVID-19 may cause difficulties with the availability of staff. Our shared priority is to keep education settings open and children and young people continuing face-to-face education. Where workforce issues arise, you may wish to use existing teaching, temporary and support staff more flexibly where required to ensure your setting remains open, whilst ensuring that you continue to have appropriate support in place for pupils with SEND. As pupils do not need to be kept in consistent groups, you may wish to consider combining classes. We are working with school leaders to share [case studies on developing and adopting flexible learning approaches](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VXAfORN-5yMvPRlv0ZJpmfaumzyHiUWQ) and will add to these over the coming days.Where there is a need for remote education, live streaming is the preferred method for providing this wherever possible. There should be regular feedback and checking in with students and pupils.Further advice and support is available through our [remote education service](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) and you can also access bespoke one-to-one support from the [EdTech Demonstrator network](https://edtechdemo.ucst.uk/?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).Ofsted inspections due to take place in JanuaryOfsted inspection continues to play an important role in providing independent assurance as settings respond to the pandemic. It is right though that these arrangements are kept under review, and adjustments made where appropriate.Ofsted has already confirmed that it will not be inspecting secondary schools during the first week of term in January, unless there are urgent concerns, as schools undertake on-site pupil testing.In addition, for a temporary period from the start of January, Ofsted will not ask school, college and early years leaders, who are also Ofsted inspectors, to undertake inspections.Ofsted will also encourage early years settings, schools and colleges that are significantly impacted by COVID-related staff absence to ask for their inspection to be deferred.Ofsted inspections of children’s social care, local authority SEND services and joint targeted area inspections will continue, with deferrals taking place where appropriate. Ofsted’s regulatory work will also continue.All of these measures will be kept under review.Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for at-risk 5 to 11 year olds, and booster doses for at-risk 12 to 15 year olds and all 16 to 17 year oldsOn Wednesday 22 December, the government accepted advice from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-issues-new-vaccination-advice-for-children-and-young-people?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed. The NHS is working through updated guidance and will set out how this is going to be operationalised shortly.In response to the threat from the Omicron variant, the JCVI advised that a Pfizer booster vaccine should be offered to:

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| * children aged 12 to 15 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of immunosuppressed individuals, and those who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose
* all young people aged 16 to 17 years old
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The NHS will communicate how eligible children and young people can get their boosters shortly. Vaccines are our best weapon against this virus and our booster programme has accelerated rapidly, with almost 30 million doses of boosters or third doses administered, and more than half of adults jabbed, securing vital protection. Vaccination reduces the likelihood of infection, helps break chains of transmission and is safe and effective – so we encourage all those eligible to consider taking up the offer. Updated guidance on the use of face coverings in education settingsFrom today, Sunday 2 January, it is recommended that face coverings are worn in classrooms where pupils in year 7 and above are educated. The advice is short term only, to support pupils and teachers as they return to school this term and builds on the existing proportionate guidance that recommends face coverings for all adults in communal areas of all settings. We are updating our guidance to reflect this. The advice on face coverings in classrooms will be in place until Wednesday 26 January, when Plan B regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed. It is therefore recommended that all settings have a small contingency stock of face coverings available if an individual has forgotten or damaged their own. To support this, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has begun delivering face coverings to settings. Most secondary schools should have received their delivery by the end of last term. Deliveries for the remaining secondary schools, early years settings, primary schools and further education settings will resume from Friday 7 January. These face coverings are being provided by DHSC at no cost to your setting. For any queries or complaints relating to deliveries or missing items, please contact the DHSC PPE helpline, provided by UNIPART, on 0800 876 6802, identifying yourself as an education setting. Lines are open 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week. Alternatively, you can email dfeppequeries@unipart.com and your query will be handled by the helpline team. For further information on face covering policy, please refer to the operational guidance for your setting. Alternatively, you can call the DfE COVID-19 helpline on 0800 046 8687.Please share this message with relevant colleagues or staff. Funded air cleaning units for education and childcare settingsThe Department for Education (DfE) will make up to 7,000 more air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state funded education settings, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. This is in addition to the 1,000 DfE funded air cleaning units previously announced for SEND and alternative provision settings, and the 350,000 CO2 monitors already delivered to settings.All state funded primary and secondary schools, further education colleges and early years settings can apply for a funded air cleaning unit if they meet strict eligibility criteria. Special and alternative provision settings, including SEND units attached to mainstream units, that were not successful or did not apply during the first round are also eligible to apply during this round. Further details, including the eligibility criteria, can be found in the [guidance on applying for an air cleaning unit](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K9jZhgH1fjbBvYKg2b4sjIMiVWrQK1vH/view).Applications for all settings will close at 9am on Monday 17 January. If your setting is not eligible for a funded unit, the [air cleaning marketplace](https://find-dfe-approved-framework.service.gov.uk/list/air-cleaning?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) remains open, enabling you to purchase units at a suitable specification and competitive price.Update to the definition of vulnerable childrenFor many children, continuing to have the protective factor of face-to-face education is vital. Throughout the pandemic, settings have continued to provide on-site places for this group of children. As has been the case since March 2020, there are three categories of children and young people who should benefit from on-site provision:

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| * those with a social worker
* those with an Education, Health and Care Plan
* a group of children considered locally, including by settings and local authorities, to be ‘otherwise vulnerable’
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We are updating our [guidance on children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access school or education settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) to include a broader definition of children classified as vulnerable. In addition to the above, this list now includes:

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| * children known to children’s social care services in the past
* children whose home circumstances might be particularly challenging because of domestic abuse, parental offending, adult mental health issues, and drug and alcohol addiction
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The intention of providing a broader definition is to support local decision making about children who might face increased risk inside or outside the home if they are unable to attend their setting, or who could not reasonably continue to learn remotely. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and local assessment will be based on knowledge of family and community risk. We have also written to all multi-agency safeguarding partnerships in England to ask them to work with wider partners including early years providers, schools and colleges to review their plans to support vulnerable children in their areas. We have asked for plans to ensure those who need the protective factor of face-to-face education provision are benefitting from it or that there are checks on children and young people’s wellbeing if they cannot be safely brought into their setting. We have also asked partnerships to check that vulnerable children and young people have re-engaged in their education following the holiday period. Exams and assessments in JanuaryExaminations and assessments in January should go ahead as originally planned. Settings should liaise with their awarding organisation to make sure they have the latest information on adaptations to the delivery of the exams and assessments, and procedures for special considerations.Updates to the educational setting status form from Tuesday 4 JanuaryThe [educational setting status form](https://onlinecollections.des.fasst.org.uk/fastform/educational-setting-status) will reopen on Tuesday 4 January. Please begin completing the form from the start of your term and provide your data by 2pm each working day. Thank you for your continued support.This information remains vital in monitoring and understanding the impacts of COVID-19 in schools and colleges. It continues to be shared and used across government and with SAGE and other health experts, as part of tracking infection and transmission of the virus, and to inform decision-making. From Tuesday 4 January we will be asking schools and colleges to provide information on:

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| * the phased return process, for secondary schools with an asymptomatic test site (ATS)
* the number of pupils or students absent due to attendance restrictions put in place to manage an outbreak within the setting or exceptional circumstances related to COVID-19
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We have updated the [guidance on how to complete the educational settings status form](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-complete-the-educational-setting-status-form?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) to include the updated list of questions for schools and colleges. The information below has not changed since our last updateDepartment for Education COVID-19 helplineThe [Department for Education COVID-19 helpline](https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice service are available to answer any questions you have about COVID-19 relating to education and childcare settings and children’s social care. The Department for Education COVID-19 helpline is open:10am to 4pm – Sunday 2 January and Monday 3 January From Tuesday 4 January:8am to 6pm – Monday to Friday10am to 6pm – Saturday and Sunday Department for Education guidanceOur guidance to support education and childcare providers, local authorities and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic can be accessed using the links below:

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| * [Guidance for early years and childcare providers](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* [Guidance for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* [Guidance for further and higher education providers](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-and-higher-education-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* [Guidance for local authority children’s services](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-childrens-services-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* [Guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* [Guidance for parents and carers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
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