

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

September 2021

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. This means it's your legal duty as a parent to send your child to school regularly if they are registered at one. If you have concerns about your child attending, you should discuss these with your school or college.

Remote Education

FE providers are expected to provide remote education for students aged 16 to 19 who cannot attend on-site for COVID-related reasons (e.g. because they need to self-isolate).

Colleges will use their best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours as possible, recognising this may not be possible if your child's course involves practical teaching and training which involves:

- specialist equipment and supervision
- work experience and placements

Control Measures

[...] Colleges have their own health and safety risk assessments and keep them under review. As part of this, there are certain control measures that we have asked [...] colleges to continue to maintain to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their setting. All [...] colleges will have outbreak management plans in place outlining how they would operate if there was an outbreak in the setting or local area. Central government may also offer local areas of particular concern an enhanced response package to help limit increases in transmission. You can ask your [...] college for more information.

Face Coverings

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school or college.

Testing

We ask that you support and encourage your children to test twice a week at home, every week, with Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. This will help us reduce the transmission of COVID-19 among our children. Please report and upload test results online, even if they are negative or void, as this allows us to understand the virus and take additional action when needed. In addition to regular twice weekly testing:

- Children who receive a positive LFD result should isolate and book a PCR test to confirm their result.
- Children who are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace should take a PCR test and continue to go to school while they wait for their result.
- In response to potential outbreaks, your school, college or local health team may advise additional testing. For example, if your child is identified as a close contact, they may be asked to take daily LFDs, while they wait for their PCR result. In this scenario, they should continue to attend school as long as their LFD results remain negative.

Self-Isolating

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, NHS Test and Trace will inform affected individuals, children or their parents or carers that they have been in close contact with a positive case, and advise them to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.

Children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend school who have been identified as a close contact should continue to attend school as normal. 18-year-olds will be treated in the same way as children until 6 months after their 18th birthday, to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Vaccination

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on. The COVID-19 vaccination programme for children aged 12-15 years has now started. Thousands of young people across the country have already taken the opportunity to receive their vaccine. If your child is 12-15 years old, a consent form and information leaflet from the NHS will be sent home allowing you to provide consent for your child to receive their vaccination at school. We remind you that 16- and 17-year-olds can book their vaccination through the National Booking Service or find a convenient walk-in site. Please do help your 16- and 17-year-olds to book a vaccination for yourself if you have not done so already, or if you have missed a second dose.

Financial Support

You may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from your local authority if your child has been advised to self-isolate by their education or childcare setting (even where they have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace). Further information on claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is available.

Wellbeing Support

Some children and young people may be experiencing feelings of anxiety, stress or low mood as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Encourage your child to talk to you or their teacher if they are feeling anxious or stressed. Online resources to help you support your child with mental health and wellbeing, include:

- MindEd - a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health
- Every Mind Matters - an online tool and email journey to support everyone in taking action to look after their mental health and wellbeing
- Bereavement UK and the Childhood Bereavement Network - information and resources to support bereaved pupils, schools and staff
- the DfE blog - includes mental health resources for children, parents, carers and school staff

Public Health England's (PHE) advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing includes actions you can take to support your child and emphasises the importance of taking 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Youth Sport Trust and Sport England have advice and support on helping children and young people stay physically active. NHS mental health services remain open and have digital tools to connect with people and provide ongoing support. Please use your local children and young people's mental health service when needed.

Get free, confidential support at any time by:

- texting SHOUT to 85258
- calling Childline on 0800 1111
- calling the Mix on 0808 808 4994

Find help online through:

- Young Minds - information on COVID-19 and mental health
- Think Ninja - a free app for 10 to 18 year olds to help build resilience and stay well
- Every Mind Matters - building resilience and supporting good mental health in young people aged 10 to 16

PHE has also launched new e-learning which can help parents and carers to support their children and young people in emergency or crisis situations.

Barnardo's See, Hear, Respond service, provides support to children, young people and their families who are not currently seeing a social worker or other agency, and who are struggling to cope with the emotional impacts of COVID-19. Use the See, Hear, Respond self-referral webpage or Freephone 0800 151 7015.

Report any safeguarding concerns you have about any child. Contact the NSPCC helpline.