

Preparing your child to return to school

There are lots of new rules in place at all schools to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, and the classrooms may feel different to life before lockdown.

We know that for many of you, the thought of your child going back to school after months of being at home shielding will be worrying. You may have concerns about what your child's school day will look like when they return and how they will cope with any changes, or you might be worried about how your son or daughter's health and other care needs will be met while they are there and if they will remain safe.

It will help if you can prepare your child for school as much as possible. Some children may be feeling especially anxious and vulnerable after the prolonged absence and change to their routine, and some children will have enjoyed the freedom of not having to adhere to a strict routine and timetables.

We have put together this guide of information to help assist you and your child with the return to school.

Firstly, we strongly recommend you read the Department of Education (DfE) guidance which applies to all schools, using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance>

Government guidance has also been written specifically for parents of children in early years, schools and colleges:

<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/what-parents-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19>

In particular, we advise reading the following sections:

Systems of controls

Having assessed their risk, schools must now work through a system of controls. If schools follow the guidance set out below, they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

Prevention

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.
- 2) Where recommended, use of face coverings in schools.
- 3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

- 4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- 5) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- 6) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- 7) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Numbers 1 to 5 must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 6 must be properly considered, and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

- 8) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.
- 9) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community.
- 10) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Numbers 8 to 10 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Attendance Expectations

The normal law on school attendance has applied since September. **Children of compulsory school age (5-16) must attend school.** This now includes children in the clinically extremely vulnerable group who were previously shielding or living with someone who has been shielding from 1st April 2021.

Pupils will not have to attend school if they are required to self-isolate because:

- They have Covid-19 symptoms or have tested positive for Covid-19.
- They are a close contact of someone who has Covid-19.
- They have been advised to shield on clinical or public health advice. This might be because they should remain in **the clinically extremely vulnerable group** and if there is a local rise in infection rates.

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Shielding has ended for those in England on 1st April 2021. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and, therefore, they may be temporarily unable to attend

- pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional are likely to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - you can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#)

Specialists in paediatric medicine have reviewed the latest evidence on the level of risk posed to children and young people from coronavirus (COVID-19). The latest evidence indicates that the risk of serious illness for most children and young people is low. In the future, we expect fewer children and young people will be included on the shielded patient list.

Patients can only be removed from the shielding patient list by their GP or specialist, following consultation with the child and their family, and other clinicians where appropriate.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school.

School uniform

Some schools may have relaxed their uniform policy while only certain categories of pupils were attending. The government has now encouraged all schools to return to their usual uniform policies. Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

Special schools

Actions to minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission will also apply to special schools, with some differences:

- Because of smaller numbers of children, 'bubbles' are likely to be class sized.
- Some children and young people with SEND will need more support to understand the new routines and to follow them.
- Social distancing should be practised where possible, but it is recognised that not all children will be able to follow this.
- Therapists and other visiting staff should provide support as usual.
- Pupils who are dual registered at a mainstream and special school should attend both settings as usual and should not be isolated because of the risk of greater contact.

Separate guidance has been produced for special schools and for residential settings including residential special schools, please use the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Because of Covid-19, temporary changes were made to the law on EHC plans to relax the rules around providing education and health support and to allow extensions to EHC timescales.

Some of these changes have now ended. This means that a child or young person is entitled to the support specified in their EHC plan and local authorities and health services now have a legal duty to make sure the support is provided.

Issues with overheating and concerns over Covid

The parents of those affected by Ectodermal Dysplasia will undoubtedly be concerned with regards to the struggles faced with overheating due to environmental temperatures now being compared to temperatures as a result of Covid-19.

We have put together the letter below, which we suggest is kept with your child's current school care plan and also needs to be discussed with their school and teachers ASAP.

This letter will help to remind staff that all methods of cooling should be carried out as normal, before calling parents and sending the child home due to concerns over Covid-19 - [Temperature and Covid at School](#). **You can also access the letter on the Covid section of our website.**

If you face any issues with your child/children when they return to school, please get in touch with the ED Society and we will do all we can to help and get you the support you need.

<https://edsociety.co.uk/contact-us/>

What should I do to protect myself in school?

(Please hand the following information to your child and guide them through the necessary requirements)

You may be a little worried or very excited about going back to school, either way it is important you are aware, at all times, that Covid may be lurking.



Wash your hands

Use soap and water and make sure you thoroughly wash your hands for 20 seconds. You can count slowly to 20 or try singing the happy birthday song twice. Be sure to wash the tops of your hands and between your fingers. Don't forget your thumbs, and even your fingernails.

Why do we need to wash our hands for 20 seconds?

Simply, the corona has a fatty sticky outer layer which means it sticks very easily to any surface. Soap has a compound which dissolves the fatty layer and the corona either falls off the surface or is killed. It is important that the soap is rubbed into your hands long enough to create a lot of lather, which should then be rubbed over the whole of your hands for 20 seconds to kill all the coronas' or the rubbing knocks them off.

Always wash your hands after you use the bathroom. Wash them whenever you come in from outside, before you eat, after you play with a pet etc. You must make sure you wash your hands after you blow your nose, sneeze, or cough.

If the soap in school affects the skin on your hands, ask your parents to speak to the school to arrange for you to take your own soap to school.

Remember - we touch our face with our hands between every 2 and 5 minutes.

Use hand gel as often as possible

Hand gel should be readily available in all schools.

Cover your sneeze or cough

Remember to sneeze or cough into your elbow, not your hand. Then wash your hands anyway. It's always fun to drown a germ with soap and water! **CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT!**

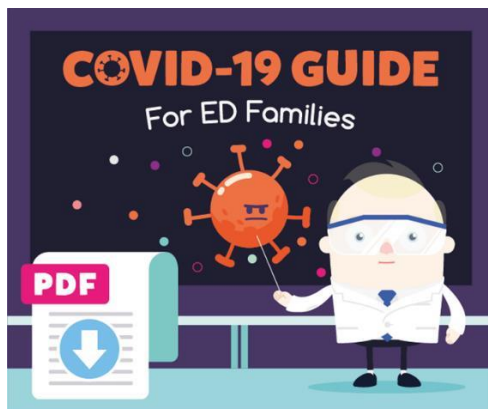


Wear a mask, shield or cloth face covering where required

Ensure all surfaces you are going to touch are cleaned prior to use, especially your desks.

Maintain Social Distancing

Where possible - It's also important to stay at least 6 feet away from people you don't live with when you're out in public.



[Please remember to take a look at our Covid-19 Guide for ED Families](#)