

School Attendance: Guidance for full opening of schools

Frequently Asked Questions

Will school attendance be mandatory from September 2020?

Yes, the Government have advised that school attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.

Which of the usual school attendance rules will apply in September 2020?

All of the usual rules will apply including:

- **parents' duty** to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- **schools' responsibilities** to record attendance and follow up absence;
- **the availability to issue sanctions**, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

What about pupils who are shielding or self-isolating? Will they be expected to attend in September?

The Government state that now much more is known about COVID-19, in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. However:

- **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);
- **shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August**, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#) ;
- **if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield** during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below);
- **some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school** in September (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

What if a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and / or public health advice?

The Government expects schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education and schools should monitor engagement with this activity as set out in Government guidance.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence **will not be penalised**.

What about pupils and families who are anxious about returning to school / their educational setting?

The Government have made it clear that all other pupils must attend school. They state that 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**. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we **recommend settings discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures** they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. **Settings should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies** (for example, if the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

The Government recognise that some children and young people with **EHC plans will need preparation for their return** to full provision. This might include, for instance, visits to the setting, social stories, and any other approaches that settings and local authorities would normally use to enable a child or young person with SEND who has spent some time out of education, to return to full time attendance.

What actions are schools and local authorities expected to take?

The Government are asking schools to **work with families to secure regular school attendance from the start of term** as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

The Government are also asking schools and local authorities to:

- communicate **clear and consistent expectations** around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) **throughout the summer ahead of the new school year**;
- **identify pupils** who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and **develop plans for re-engaging them**. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic;

- **use the additional catch-up funding** schools will receive, as well as **existing pastoral and support services**, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance;
- **work closely with other professionals** as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance

What returns will schools be expected to submit to the DfE and how will attendance be recorded from September?

The Government state they will issue 'further technical guidance' for schools to record attendance and absence, including what data schools will be asked to return to the department.