

# All possible measures to be taken before schools and colleges close

Today (28 August) the government has published detailed guidance for schools on contingency planning for areas with local lockdowns in place.

The guidance sets out that all possible measures should be taken before any restrictions are imposed on schools to maintain consistent education for children and young people.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our primary focus remains supporting all schools to welcome back all pupils for the start of term and we thank teachers and staff for their hard work in preparations

We hope that we won't have to implement the guidance set out today because the local lockdown measures we have introduced so far are working. Changes to school attendance will only ever be an absolute last resort.

However, it is important that both government and schools prepare for a worst case scenario, so this framework represents the sensible contingency planning any responsible government would put in place.

The updated [CONTAIN](#) guidance sets out four tiers of restrictions for education settings, for use as an absolute last resort in areas subject to local restrictions.

All schools, colleges and other education settings are opening for the start of term, with all those in areas subject to local restrictions currently at Tier 1 – fully open to all pupils full time, with face coverings required in corridors and communal areas for pupils in Year 7 and above.

Local authority leaders and directors of public health, alongside national government, would be at the centre of any decision making to move out of Tier 1 for education settings.

They would take all other possible measures, including implementing restrictions on other sectors, before considering restricting attendance in education.

If all other measures have been exhausted, Tier 2 would advise secondary schools and colleges in a restricted area to use rotas to help break chains of transmission of coronavirus, while primary schools remain open to all pupils.

Tiers 3 and 4 introduce remote learning full time for wider groups of pupils, with vulnerable children and children of critical workers continuing to attend.

The government asked schools in July to ensure they were able to provide high quality remote education that mirrors in-school education, in case any pupils were required to self-isolate or local restrictions were needed. These plans should extend to rotas if ever required.

All children are due to return to school for the autumn term and schools have been putting in place protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission.

School staff have been working to implement increased hygiene and handwashing with children remaining in consistent groups, using measures such as staggered break times to keep groups apart.

To further reassure parents and teachers that all proportionate measures are being taken to make schools as safe as possible, the government has announced that in areas of the country currently subject to enhanced restrictions, staff and pupils in secondary schools should wear face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

From this week, schools and colleges have begun receiving home testing kits, each receiving a pack of 10 tests, with more available to be ordered if needed. The home testing kits are to be used in exceptional circumstances such as an individual with symptoms who may have barriers to accessing a test elsewhere and the home kit would significantly increase their chance of getting tested. This will enable schools and colleges to take swift action to protect others if the test result is positive.

Schools are also receiving packs of PPE to use in the very limited circumstances it may be required, such as when it is not possible for a staff member to maintain 2m distance from a pupil with a suspected case of coronavirus.

This week the Chief Medical Officers from all four nations in the United Kingdom made it clear that the risks to children contracting Covid-19 in school or college is extremely low and that the risks associated with not being in school or college outweighs that of not being there.

The Department for Education has also published further [guidance](#) to help schools plan for potential Tier 2 restrictions, which will involve secondary year groups operating a rota system in order to reduce pupil numbers on-site.