

All schools to receive carbon dioxide monitors

CO2 monitors will be provided to all state-funded education settings from September, so staff can quickly identify where ventilation needs to be improved.

Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and is important in preventing the spread of Covid-19.

Backed by a £25 million government investment, the new monitors will enable staff to act quickly where ventilation is poor and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working.

The majority of c. 300,000 monitors will become available over the autumn term, with special schools and alternative provision prioritised to receive their full allocation from September given their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

The government has also launched a trial of air purifiers in 30 schools in Bradford, which is designed to assess the technology in education settings and whether they could reduce the risk of transmission.

As students in England return to classrooms from next week, this is just one of the measures that will be in place in schools to help reduce transmission. Students and staff will also be asked to continue twice-weekly testing, with two on-site tests provided for secondary and college students as they return.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Providing all schools with CO2 monitors will help them make sure they have the right balance of measures in place, minimising any potential disruption to education and allowing them to focus on world class lessons and catch up for the children who need it.

By keeping up simple measures such as ventilation and testing, young people can now enjoy more freedom at school and college.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We are all enjoying the return to a more normal way of life and getting our children back into school is a really important part of that process. We want to ensure schools are both safe and comfortable for students and staff – and have been clear that good ventilation is crucial.

As well as offering vaccines to 16 and 17 year olds and regular

testing, we continue to work with the Department for Education to manage COVID-19 in schools and colleges. This includes the pilot we are running to test different air cleaning methods in school settings.

CO2 monitors are portable so schools and other settings will be able to move them around to test their full estate, starting with areas they suspect may be poorly ventilated.

The programme will provide schools and other settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across the indoor spaces in their estate, assessing all spaces in a relatively short space of time.

More details will be available following the completion of procurement, however all schools and colleges are expected to receive at least partial allocations during the autumn term, enabling all settings to monitor areas where they believe airflow may be weakest.

As the monitors are rolled out the department will provide guidance on their use.

Secondary schools and colleges will be conducting on-site covid testing of their pupils, which can start before the start of term. They can stagger the return of pupils over the first week of term as needed to support the delivery of testing. Pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.

ENDS