

Covid restrictions in education settings to end at Step 4

Further Covid restrictions in education settings will end from Step 4, the Education Secretary has confirmed today [6 July].

As part of Step 4, expected to take place on 19 July, 'bubbles' will end for all children under 18, social distancing will no longer be necessary, and schools will not need to stagger start and finish times, though they can continue with existing arrangements until the end of term if they wish.

The lifting of Covid restrictions in schools is in line with the general removal of restrictions for England at Step 4. Schools may choose to continue with these measures until the end of the Summer term.

From 16 August, the legal requirement to self-isolate for contacts of a positive case will end for everyone aged under 18, and for adults who have been fully vaccinated. This means that from the autumn term, only those who test positive will need to self-isolate. From Step 4, NHS test and trace will carry out contact tracing in all education settings rather than being run by the school or college. Those identified as close contacts will be advised to take a PCR test, and only need to isolate if they test positive. Children must self-isolate if they have symptoms of Covid or a positive test result.

Testing for close contacts under 18 will be split into two categories. All Primary, Secondary and College age children should take a single PCR test. Early Years children should only take a PCR test if a member of their household tests positive.

Protective measures will remain in place for the autumn term in all education settings including practicing good hygiene, ventilation, and regular testing until the end of September to strike a balance between relaxing restrictions and minimising further disruption to children's education. Two onsite tests should be taken by each secondary school and college student on return, followed by twice weekly testing at home. The Government will review testing requirements by the end of September.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I am incredibly grateful to everyone working in education and childcare for their tireless work to make the best of what has been a very challenging situation.

While the pandemic is not over, we are moving into a new phase of managing Covid, from strict rules and towards personal responsibility. The measures we will have after summer strike the right balance as we learn to live with the virus so children can get on with their lives and education in the best possible way.

Education settings will continue to have an outbreak management plan and work with local health teams, as is standard practice. Local Directors of Public Health may advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures in the event of an outbreak.

All school trips, drama, music and sporting activity will be able to resume in line with the relaxation of restrictions across society from Step 4.

Education settings still operating over the summer will continue to test twice a week, with asymptomatic test kits still available to families over the summer break.

In line with measures for wider society, the Government will be recommending that face coverings will no longer be necessary in any education setting and social distancing will no longer be necessary, including in schools and colleges. This differs from Step 3 of the roadmap, where face coverings were no longer recommended for pupils and students in classrooms or communal areas.

All education staff are urged to get both vaccine doses if they have not yet done so, helping further reduce any potential disruption as a result of self-isolation. From Step 4, there will also be no restrictions on in-person teaching and learning in universities.

[Further detailed guidance](#) has been published to enable schools and colleges to plan for how they will operate from September.