

Millions of students back in class

Over seven million children were back in schools and colleges last week, as [new data](#) released today (Tuesday 16 March) shows the full scale of national school returns.

Primary schools opened to all pupils on Monday 8 March, and as of Monday 15 March, 94% of children were back in the classroom with their teachers and friends.

Secondary schools had the option to stagger the return of their students over the week beginning 8 March to help facilitate testing for students before they returned to education.

As of 15 March, 89% of secondary school pupils were in school, the highest rate of attendance since the start of the pandemic.

The asymptomatic rapid testing programme is helping stop outbreaks in their tracks and reducing transmission within schools.

Students, school staff and families can have confidence in the lateral flow tests used in the rapid testing programme, after new analysis published last week found the tests result in fewer than one false positive for every 1,000 tests carried out.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It is fantastic to see the overwhelming majority of children have now returned to the classroom, with all the benefits that face-to-face contact with their teachers and friends is proven to bring.

I do not underestimate the preparation that has taken place to ensure our children could return safely and continue with their education and I am so grateful to the teachers and school staff who have made the transition so seamless – as well as managing testing and maintaining all the wider protective measures still in place to help keep everyone safe.

The rapid testing programme in secondary schools and colleges is in place to help find the people who have the virus but who, in one in three cases, do not have symptoms.

After the first three tests have been taken in school or college, students will be provided with tests to use at home on a twice-weekly basis.

Parents and carers of all primary and secondary school children should test themselves via twice-weekly home tests, as the government continues to encourage everyone eligible to access testing to help break chains of transmission and reduce cases of the virus.

Rigorous safety measures remain in place in schools and colleges, including maintaining distance between staff and students where possible, good ventilation and regular hand washing.

Secondary school and college students are also being asked to wear face coverings indoors wherever social distancing cannot be maintained as an additional safety measure, until a review at Easter.

Data published today also shows the department has delivered just under 1.3 million devices, helping children and young people across the country while they were learning remotely and supporting schools with technology for the months and years to come.

All remaining devices are available to order for schools that have not yet done so.

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