

More support for schools and students as plan B comes to an end

New multi-million-pound funding from NHS England will enable all schools to fully support the in-school vaccination programme, and air cleaning units will be provided in all classrooms and teaching spaces that need them, the Education Secretary has announced today, Monday 24 January.

The Department for Education is to distribute a total of £8 million in funding from NHS England to support secondary schools with the vitally important in-school vaccination programme for young people – hosting NHS vaccination teams and passing on materials about vaccination to further boost protection.

This comes as over 50% of 12-15-year-olds – over 1.5 million people – have now had at least one dose of the vaccine.

The government is also committing to deliver up to 9,000 air cleaning units to early years, schools and colleges across the country to improve ventilation in classrooms – up to 1,000 more than originally promised.

Since the government launched its application process, 1,265 education settings have made valid applications to receive an air cleaning unit. The further commitment will ensure every setting will receive the units they need.

The units will help in classrooms and teaching spaces where quick fixes to ventilation are not possible, such as being able to open a window.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Face-to-face education for all students has consistently been my priority, and that is why I am pleased to further strengthen the tools available to schools to manage transmission of the virus, including funding air cleaning units for the small number of classrooms that need them due to poor ventilation, and providing additional NHS funding to free up staff time to engage with the vaccination programme for young people.

My message remains the same as ever – testing, ventilation and vaccinations are our best weapons against the virus – keep testing, and get your vaccination as soon as possible.

NHS vaccination lead for 12-to-15s Nick Hulme said:

The additional £8 million in investment from the NHS will aim to further support schools to roll out the vaccine.

It is vitally important that families get their young ones protected – either in school, through an appointment booked online at a vaccine centre or at one of hundreds of walk-in sites.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Keeping children in school with face-to-face teaching is absolutely essential for their education, health and wellbeing.

Vaccines are the best way to protect students from COVID-19 and, combined with better ventilation, will help keep cases down and schools open.

Young people can get their vaccines at school, through walk-in sites across the country or their parents can book an appointment online – please do not delay.

The number of valid applications for an air cleaning unit is in line with expectations, mirroring the findings of a survey of education settings also published today, which found that only three per cent of settings using carbon dioxide monitors reported sustained high carbon dioxide readings that couldn't otherwise be addressed.

The survey published today on schools' use of carbon dioxide monitors also showed that of the vast majority of settings that are using the CO2 monitors, 95% were able to use them to manage ventilation in their classrooms and teaching spaces.

Special schools and Alternative Provision have already received the air cleaning units they applied for, while all other settings with valid applications will receive them as planned from the start of February.

Further information will be provided to schools shortly with further details on how the NHS funding for vaccination support will be distributed.

The funding for schools to continue to support the vaccine programme will provide secondary schools, special schools and alternative provision with a one-off payment of £1,000 with an additional uplift based on pupil numbers.

These measures – enhanced ventilation, vaccines, as well as regular testing – remain crucial to keeping young people in classrooms, learning face-to-face.