

New guidance for schools, colleges and early years

The Government has today (Wednesday 4 November) published [guidance](#) for education settings ahead of national restrictions coming into force from Thursday 5 November, building on the guidance first published in July.

During the national restrictions, face coverings should be worn by students and staff in secondary schools and further education colleges in communal spaces, outside of classrooms, where social distancing cannot be maintained.

The guidance is clear that primary school children do not need to wear face coverings, and older children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities may be exempt from wearing them, depending on their need. No one should be excluded from education for not having a face covering.

Primary schools continue to have discretion to recommend staff and visitors wear face coverings in communal spaces where social distancing cannot be maintained, but this is not a requirement and it is for individual schools to make these decisions locally.

The requirements in relation to face coverings were already in place for schools in Local Alert Level High and Very High areas.

Schools should work to implement the guidance as soon as possible, but have until Monday 9 November if they require additional time.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We must put the interests of our children and young people first, especially when the benefits of being in the classroom are clear.

Children are settled back into their routines and schools have protective measures in place keep their staff and pupils as safe as possible.

Education is a national priority and we cannot allow it to be disrupted again.

The guidance published today continues the Government's approach to prioritising pupils' full time education in school. There are currently no plans for school closures or to implement rota systems. Any changes to attendance would be implemented as a last resort.

Our [existing guidance](#) published in July sets out a range of measures to reduce the risk of transmission, including physical distancing between staff and pupils and increased ventilation in classrooms where possible.

Evidence has highlighted the risks of not being in education on young people's development and mental health. As the UK's Chief Medical Officers [have made clear](#), the wider risks to children being out of school is far greater than the risk of catching coronavirus at school.