

Parents warned about dangers of children missing vaccines

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is urging parents and guardians to ensure their children are up to date with all their routine childhood immunisations including polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations. This comes as new data shows vaccination coverage for young children fell last year for virtually all programmes.

Vaccination rates have fallen over several years and additional disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, beginning in March 2020, is likely to have caused some of the decreases in vaccine coverage seen in 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 compared to earlier years.

It is important vaccination coverage is recovered as soon as possible to levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 95% for all childhood immunisation programmes to help prevent the spread of avoidable serious – and sometimes deadly – diseases such as measles and polio.

The latest vaccination statistics from UKHSA and NHS Digital for children up to 5 years of age in the UK (COVER programme) show coverage decreased for 13 out of the 14 routine vaccination programmes measured in 2021 to 2022.

Only 89.2% of children at 24 months had completed their first dose of the MMR vaccine, which is a decrease from 90.3% in the previous year.

Coverage for the second dose of MMR by age 5 years was also down by nearly 1%.

Coverage for the first dose of MMR at 24 months was less than 90% in 61 (out of 149) local authorities.

Coverage also decreased for the 6-in-1 and 5-in-1 vaccine, which protects against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, disease caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b and hepatitis B, among children aged 12 months, 24 months, and 5 years.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1968 it is estimated that 20 million measles cases and 4,500 deaths have been prevented in the UK.

Measles is highly contagious so even a small decline in MMR uptake can lead to a rise in cases. Since international travel has resumed closer to pre-pandemic levels, it is more likely that measles will be brought in from countries that have higher levels of the disease and cause outbreaks.

Measles can lead to complications such as ear infections, pneumonia, and inflammation of the brain which require hospitalisation and on rare occasions can lead to long term disability or death.

The NHS is running a MMR catch-up campaign so some parents may be contacted

directly.

Low polio vaccination rates in parts of London have left communities vulnerable to the spread of poliovirus, which has been detected in parts of North and East London through sewage surveillance. To date, no clinical cases of polio have been identified but health services have been urged to remain vigilant to any cases of paralysis in children.

A polio vaccination campaign, recommended by the expert immunisation committee JCVI, is under way in London for all 1- to 9-year-olds, either as a booster dose or catch-up and it's important all parents take up this offer as soon as possible to help protect their child.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant epidemiologist at UKHSA, said:

Measles is highly contagious and can be dangerous, and it is extremely worrying that we are seeing levels of uptake of the MMR vaccine falling among young children. It is also vitally important that children get their polio vaccinations to help prevent the risk of paralysis.

I would urge parents to check that all children are up to date with their vaccines, and if not to get them booked in as soon as possible to make sure they have maximum protection against what can be terrible diseases.

Childhood vaccines also boost population immunity levels, helping prevent outbreaks, so by taking up all vaccinations for our children, we play our part in keeping these diseases confined to the past.

Anyone who is unsure if their child is up to date with all their routine vaccinations should check their child's red book (personal child health record) in the first instance. If you are still not sure, or if you need to bring your child up to date with their vaccines, contact your GP practice to check and book an appointment.

To find out more about childhood vaccinations, please visit the [NHS website](#).

[Child Safeguarding Practice Review](#) **[Panel: third national review](#)**

Letters between:

- interim chair of the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Panel, Karen Manners QPM

- panel member Mark Gurrey
- Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson
- Minister for Safeguarding, Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Children and Families, Will Quince, and Minister of State for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan

The panel's letter announces a national child safeguarding practice review into non-accidental injury in children under one. It also gives further details about the review including:

- terms of reference
- details of panel members carrying it out
- timescale

Gavin Williamson's letter welcomes the announcement of the review.

The letter from Rachel Maclean, Will Quince and Gillian Keegan sets out the action the government is taking in response to the review.

[DBS and Premier League support football club safeguarding activity](#)

News story

DBS and the Premier League are working to enhance football clubs' approach to safeguarding vulnerable people.



The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is providing tailored support to [Premier League](#) football clubs as part of an ongoing joint project. The aim of this project is to develop the clubs' approach to safeguarding vulnerable groups, including children.

As part of this project between the Premier League and [DBS' regional outreach](#)

[service](#), football clubs will:

- be able to access bespoke information and guidance relating to DBS processes and legislation, including eligibility for DBS checks and the legal duty to refer
- receive training throughout each season to support the safe recruitment of employers and volunteers working with children, young adults, and adults at risk
- be able to connect with a regional outreach adviser from within DBS, who can offer support and share best practices, enabling direct communication between football clubs and DBS
- have access to resources, publications, and other relevant information relating to DBS products and services, alongside other safeguarding materials to help prevent incidents and protect individuals via the Premier League Safeguarding Hub

The Premier League – which is also working closely with the [NSPCC](#) – is seeking to help clubs and their community organisations implement effective safer recruitment procedures and practices, ensuring staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and adults at risk.

Eric Robinson, CEO of DBS, said:

Our Regional Outreach Service will be providing clubs with a single point of contact for all DBS-related queries and questions, as well as the opportunity to access tailored, DBS training for their staff and volunteers. Our team also collates feedback to ensure future improvements can be made to DBS services and processes.

DBS is committed to working with organisations through our Regional Outreach Service so we can keep the most vulnerable in our society safe. Any organisation of any size can access free support. Find out more by accessing [the regional outreach guidance on our website](#).

Jess Addicott, Head of Safeguarding at the Premier League, said:

Our work with DBS has been invaluable in providing clubs and their community organisations with additional support with their and safer recruitment procedures and practice. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work in this space to create safe environments and cultures.

[Making Recruitment Safer in football](#)

Published 29 September 2022

Grading exams and assessments in summer 2023 and autumn 2022

I promised to set out as soon as possible the arrangements for grading next summer, to provide clarity for students, teachers, schools, colleges, universities and other users of qualifications.

This summer was an important step back towards normality. Our plans for 2023 take us a step further, whilst also recognising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I've visited schools and colleges up and down the country and I've seen young people's admirable resilience and dedication.

I can confirm that, in 2023, we will return to pre-pandemic grading as the next step in getting back to normal. But giving the 2023 cohort some protection against any impact of COVID-19 disruption is the right thing to do.

We are, therefore, putting in place the same protection that was given for the first cohorts of students taking reformed GCSEs and A levels from 2017 onwards. That meant not disadvantaging students who might have performed less well because they were the first to sit new exams.

Exams and other formal assessments give students the fairest chance to show what they know, understand and can do, because the rules are the same for everyone. It's important that we get back to normal so that grades set young people up for college, university or employment in the best possible way, and help them to make the right choices about their future.

Students' interests drive our decisions – both this year's students and past and future students. For us, that means qualifications that maintain their value, now and in the future, and stand the test of time.

I set out below what this decision means for students, the protection we will build in for the 2023 cohort, and what those teaching and advising students need to know, particularly those predicting grades for UCAS applications.

Pre-pandemic standards for GCSE, AS and A level with protection for students

Students in the 2023 cohort have not experienced national school and college closures during their 2-year courses of study, but we know they have experienced some disruption. That's why we're putting in place some protection for this cohort.

As in any year, grade boundaries for every specification will be set by the senior examiners after they have reviewed the work produced by students in the assessments. But those senior examiners will be guided in their decisions about where to set grade boundaries by information about the grades achieved in pre-pandemic years by cohorts of students, along with prior attainment data. That means the 2023 cohort will be protected in grading terms if their exam performance is a little lower than before the pandemic.

Broadly speaking, therefore, a typical student who would have achieved an A grade in their A level geography before the pandemic will be just as likely to get an A next summer, even if their performance in the assessments is a little weaker in 2023 than it would have been before the pandemic.

We expect that overall results in 2023 will be much closer to pre-pandemic years than results since 2020. This decision means that results in 2023 will be lower than in 2022. At this point in the academic year, we can't be precise about results in specific subjects and specifications. Entries have not yet been made and students have not taken any exams. But there is no pre-determined 'quota' of grades.

November 2022 GCSEs

Some students will re-sit GCSE English language and/or maths in November. This will include students who wish to improve on their grade from summer 2022 or who had planned to enter in summer 2022 but were unable to do so.

For this reason, exam boards will align November 2022 grading with the standards from summer 2022. Aligning standards in November with the preceding summer is the approach that we took in 2020 and 2021.

Vocational and technical qualifications

For vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) taken in schools and colleges, alongside or instead of GCSEs and A levels, awarding organisations are expected to take account of the approach used in general qualifications so that students taking VTQs are not advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison. For these VTQs this means a return to pre-pandemic standards.

In T Levels, we have asked awarding organisations to be generous in the first years of awards, to reflect the fact these qualifications are new.

Predicted grades for UCAS

Teachers this term are predicting grades for their students to use for their UCAS applications. In line with [UCAS guidance](#), many students will already have been given an indication of their predicted grades by their teachers.

It can be challenging for teachers to predict grades accurately at the best of times. In summer 2022, predicted grades were at their highest level. We expect predicted grades in summer 2023 to be much closer to those seen in pre-pandemic years. **For 2023, we recommend that teachers use the familiar**

pre-pandemic standard as the basis for predicting their students' grades. That familiarity will make it easier for teachers to generate predictions for their students that are aspirational but achievable, in line with UCAS guidance.

UCAS and universities have told us that accurate predictions, determined in line with pre-pandemic arrangements, will enable them to be more confident in offer-making. Universities will take account of how exams will be graded when they make their offers. That is why this grading decision is in the interest of students. To be clear, this decision has no effect on the availability of places.

Background

Last September I set out a provisional 2-year decision. I said that we planned to get back to pre-pandemic grading in 2023, and that 2022 results would broadly reflect a mid-way point between 2021 and 2019. Students were starting out on their 2-year programmes of study and it was important that they, and their teachers, should start with a sense of how they'd be graded at the end. At that time, no exams had happened for over 2 years and the disruption caused by the pandemic was keenly felt. I said then that we would review our position following the release of 2022 results, before confirming the approach for 2023.

Summer 2022 saw the welcome return to exams and other formal assessments, taken by more than a million students, which was a milestone in society returning to normal.

In 2023 and beyond, students will again have the opportunity to show what they know and can do in exams and formal assessments. Students up and down the country have told me over the past year that this is what they want.

The government and Ofqual have already confirmed some of the arrangements for 2023.

As public health measures are no longer in force, Ofqual confirmed in May that the usual [pre-pandemic arrangements for non-exam assessment \(NEA\), fieldwork and practical science are now back in place for the 2023 cohort](#). The Department for Education confirmed at the same time the return to full subject content coverage for all GCSE subjects, so that students can study the full curriculum.

[A summary of the arrangements for all GCSE, AS and A levels in 2023](#) can be found on our website.

The Department for Education (DfE) has asked us to continue to require exam boards to provide formulae and revised equation sheets for A level mathematics, physics and combined science exams. DfE has also asked us to permanently remove the requirement for exam boards to include unfamiliar vocabulary in GCSE modern foreign language assessments. We are consulting on both of these proposed arrangements.

DfE and Ofqual are also keen to build resilience in the exam system and learn lessons from the arrangements last year. A consultation has been launched which proposes that schools, colleges and exam centres should build collecting and retaining evidence of student performance into their normal arrangements for preparing students to take exams.

For VTQs in the academic year 2021 to 2022, awarding organisations decided which adaptations were appropriate for their qualifications in accordance with [Ofqual's rules](#).

Some adaptations were in response to public health restrictions which are no longer in place, so these adaptations are no longer necessary. Awarding organisations may decide to continue to use practices developed during the pandemic which worked well, such as remote assessment or remote invigilation, and we are keeping these arrangements under review.

For VTQs used alongside or instead of GCSEs and A levels, awarding organisations were expected to take account of the approach to adaptations used in general qualifications to ensure that students were not advantaged or disadvantaged. In light of the announcements for GCSEs and A levels for 2023, we do not expect any further adaptations to be used in VTQs.

[Exams head back to normality in 2023](#)

GCSE, AS, and A level exams in England will largely return to pre-pandemic arrangements next summer as young people continue to recover from the pandemic.

In line with the plans set out last September, Ofqual has [confirmed](#) a return to pre-pandemic grading in 2023.

To protect students against the disruption of recent years, and in case students' performance is slightly lower than before the pandemic, senior examiners will use the grades achieved by previous cohorts of pupils, along with prior attainment data, to inform their decisions about where to set grade boundaries.

This mirrors the approach used in the first years of reformed GCSEs and A levels in 2017, when early cohorts were protected against the impact of changes to the qualifications and means, for example, a typical A level student who would have achieved a grade A before the pandemic will be just as likely to get an A this summer.

The government is also confirming that students should continue to be provided with support in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science with formulae and equation sheets, but not with advance information of exam content, as was the case last year.

The decisions reflect the reduced levels of disruption this cohort have experienced compared to the cohorts of the previous two years. Ofqual has launched a consultation on the plans for formulae and equation sheets today.

Education Secretary Kit Malthouse said:

Students working towards their qualifications next year expect fairness in exams and grading arrangements, which is why we are transitioning back to pre-pandemic normality.

Schools are doing a great job in supporting students to catch up and get back on track including through the National Tutoring Programme, which continues to provide one-to-one or small group tuition to students that need extra help.

Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton said:

This summer was an important step back towards normality. Our plans for 2023 take us a step further, whilst also recognising the impact of Covid.

I've visited schools and colleges up and down the country and I've seen young people's admirable resilience and dedication. Giving the 2023 cohort some protection against any impact of Covid disruption is the right thing to do. Our approach to grading in 2023 will provide a soft landing for students as we continue the process of taking the exam system back to normal.

Ofqual already announced [earlier this year](#) that pre-pandemic arrangements for non-exam assessment, fieldwork and practical science have been reinstated. The department confirmed at the same time that schools and colleges this year will be teaching the full content of qualifications to students taking exams in 2023.

Arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications were [confirmed](#) in May 2022.

Ofqual does not expect any further adaptations to be used in VTQs. Awarding organisations are expected to take account of the approach, including in relation to grading, used in general qualifications so that students taking VTQs are not advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison.

UCAS Chief Executive Clare Marchant said:

We welcome today's announcement by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

As an independent charity, UCAS's aim is to help students make informed decisions about their future that are right for them,

whether pursuing university, college or an apprenticeship, and this early clarification means students will be able to apply with confidence in the 2023 cycle.

Higher education admissions is becoming more competitive, with a 1/3 increase in 18-year-olds forecast to apply by 2026. This decision will support teachers and advisors in giving the best guidance to their students, as well as enable universities and colleges to make offers with certainty.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said:

The move back to a grading profile in line with pre-pandemic levels, with some protection, is the right thing to do now. It gives certainty to everyone in the system – students, parents, teachers, advisers, employers – but we also need to be alert to the ongoing impact that pandemic lockdowns have had for many young people on mental health, confidence and study skills and make sure they get the support they need.

A series of further consultations relating to qualifications next year and in future years has also been launched today:

- The department and Ofqual are jointly consulting on guidance to schools and colleges about gathering assessment evidence to support resilience in the general qualifications system. The guidance proposes schools and colleges gather evidence in a way that aligns with their normal arrangements for preparing students for exams, helping ensure preparedness should a scenario ever again arise where it would be unsafe or unfair for students to sit exams.
- The department and Ofqual are both consulting on plans to remove the expectation that students engage with unfamiliar and abstract material, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, within modern foreign language (MFL) GCSE assessments from 2023 onwards. The Department's consultation covers the curriculum, while Ofqual's covers how it is assessed.
- The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) are consulting on the exam timetable for next summer, which seeks to maintain some of the space built into the exam timetable last year between the first and last exams in the same subject. This spacing was well received by schools and colleges in 2022 and reduces the chance of students missing all exams in a subject due to circumstances such as illness.

The department's decisions on next year's arrangements reflect that schools

remained open to all pupils through the last academic year, with this year's cohort having the opportunity to benefit from time in the classroom with teachers and interventions such as the National Tutoring Programme, compared to students from the previous two cohorts.

The government is investing nearly £5 billion to support students' recovery from the impact of the pandemic, including £1.5 billion for tutoring programmes and almost £2 billion in direct funding, largely targeted at those that need help most.

Over 2 million courses have now started through the [National Tutoring Programme](#), including 1.8 million so far across an estimated 80% of schools – helping children to catch up with learning loss.