

# Schools and colleges to reopen in full in September

Current restrictions on group sizes will be lifted to allow schools, colleges and nurseries to fully reopen to all children and young people, as Covid-19 infection rates continue to fall.

Covid-19 secure measures will remain in place to reduce the risk of transmission, with schools being asked to keep children in class or year group sized 'bubbles' and encourage older children to keep their distance from each other and staff where possible. This is alongside protective measures such as regular cleaning and handwashing.

Where there is a positive case in a school or college, the Public Health England local health protection team will advise on the appropriate action, which could include small groups of young people and staff being asked to self-isolate for up to 14 days. Where there are two or more confirmed cases in a two-week period, health protection teams may ask a larger number of other children or young people to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure.

Where an outbreak in a school is confirmed, for specific detailed investigations a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive. Testing will first focus on the person's class, followed by their year group, then the whole school if necessary.

All staff, pupils and their families will continue to have access to testing if they develop Covid-19 symptoms and schools will be provided with easy to use home testing kits for children and staff who would otherwise be unable to get a test.

Schools will be expected to have plans in place to offer remote education to pupils who are self-isolating.

For nurseries, childminders, and other early years providers, restrictions on group sizes will be lifted from 20 July, increasing capacity from the start of the summer holiday.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know these past three months have been some of the most challenging that schools have faced. What they have achieved to make sure that young people are kept safe and can continue to learn during this period is remarkable, and I am incredibly grateful for that.

Nothing can replace being in the classroom, so ever since schools, colleges and nurseries closed to most children, we have been

working hard to ensure they can reopen as soon as possible. We have already seen more than 1.5 million children and young people return, but we must make sure all pupils can go back to school in September, giving them the opportunity to thrive and fulfill their potential.

I want to reassure parents and families that we are doing everything we can to make sure schools, nurseries, colleges and other providers are as safe as possible for children and staff, and will continue to work closely with the country's best scientific and medical experts to ensure that is the case.

The guidance published today (2 July) provides schools, colleges and nurseries with the details needed to plan for a full return, as well as reassuring parents about what to expect for their children. The guidance has been developed in close consultation with the sector and medical experts from Public Health England.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Jenny Harries, said:

Thanks to the hard work of everyone, including our teachers and all school staff, there has been a decline in the rate of COVID-19 transmission in our communities.

A child's education is essential to their healthy development – we know that missing too much school can have a negative impact on children's mental and physical wellbeing.

Everybody wants children to be safe and thankfully as we have learned more about COVID-19, the evidence has shown that the risk of severe disease in children is low. However, although the number of COVID-19 cases has declined, it is still in general circulation – so it important we ensure schools implement sensible precaution to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19 and minimise any risk to teachers and their pupils.

Schools will need to work with families to secure full attendance from the start of the new academic year, with the reintroduction of mandatory attendance.

To ensure pupils can catch up on lost learning, schools will be required to resume teaching a broad and balanced curriculum in all subjects, making use of existing flexibilities to create time to address gaps in knowledge. Schools should consider how all subjects can contribute to filling gaps in core knowledge.

This will help pupils catch up and will work alongside the financial support provided to primary and secondary schools through the Government's £1 billion Covid catch-up package. This is on top of the £14 billion that we are investing in schools over the next three years.

Exams will take place in 2021 and Ofqual is consulting on arrangements for those exams, including measures to mitigate any impact on pupils from time out of school.

Alongside this, Ofsted will carry out visits to schools in the autumn term to discuss how they are supporting the return to education for their pupils, with routine inspections planned to restart in January 2021.

Nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, have already been welcoming back children of all ages since 1 June, with a range of protective measures in place. From 20 July, restrictions on group sizes for nurseries, childminders and other early years providers will be lifted, increasing capacity for more children to return, as set out in updated guidance published today.

The schools guidance sets out a range of measures to protect children and staff. This guidance applies to all mainstream schools, alternative provision, independent schools and boarding schools and sets out advice on how they can minimise contact and mixing. Separate guidance has also been published for special schools.

Schools should implement class or year sized bubbles, as well as encouraging staff and pupils, where they are able, to keep their distance from each other and avoiding touching. All schools should work to implement other policies in line with their own risk assessment and in a way that ensures pupils can be taught a broad and balanced curriculum. Other measures set out in the guidance include:

- teachers to distance from each other and older students where possible
- increasing the frequency of cleaning
- reducing the use of frequently shared items
- minimising contact in corridors

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## **UN Human Rights Council 44: Statement for the Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Thank you, Madam President,

We must focus on the greatest global crisis in a generation. More than half a

million people have died from COVID-19, with untold suffering and damage to our ways of life and economies. The pandemic, and the exceptional measures needed to tackle it, will profoundly affect the enjoyment of human rights. All States must adhere to their human rights obligations. COVID-19 cannot be used as a cover for repression.

The pandemic has affected people differently. While the mortality rate is higher for men, women and girls, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including minorities and disabled people have been disproportionately affected. Members of such groups must be fully included in the response and recovery, to truly build back better.

The UK is committed to supporting a sustainable and inclusive recovery. We recently hosted the Global Vaccine Summit, raising \$8.8bn to immunise 300 million children and support the global fight against COVID-19. We are all in this together.

Beyond Covid-19, we remain deeply concerned about human rights in many countries, including Syria, China – particularly in Xinjiang, Russia and illegally annexed Crimea, and Myanmar. And as last week's Urgent Debate made clear, racism is a scourge that knows no borders. We all have work to do to tackle it.

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## [Comprehensive new funding package for councils to help address coronavirus pressures and cover lost income during the pandemic](#)

- Government announces new comprehensive package of support to address spending pressures and in recognition of lost income
- Further £500 million brings funding given to support local councils with pressures to £4.3 billion, part of a package of over £27 billion to help councils, businesses and communities
- New scheme will also reimburse councils for lost income and allow council and business rates tax deficits to be repaid over 3 years instead of one

A major new support package to help councils respond to coronavirus has been

announced by Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick today, Thursday 2 July, as part of a comprehensive plan to ensure councils' financial sustainability for the future.

The government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to councils over recent months, and councils in England will now receive a further, unringfenced £500 million to respond to spending pressures they are facing.

Recognising that councils are best placed to decide how to meet pressures in their local area, this funding has not been ringfenced.

In addition to this funding, a major new scheme introduced by the government today will help to reimburse lost income during the pandemic and boost cash flow.

Where losses are more than 5% of a council's planned income from sales, fees and charges, the government will cover them for 75p in every pound lost.

Additionally, to enable them to get on the front foot and build much-needed breathing space into their budgets, the government is also bringing in changes so that they can spread their tax deficits over 3 years rather than the usual one.

Overall, in the last 6 months, government has worked closely with local authorities to understand their needs and provided more than £27 billion to help councils, businesses and communities through COVID-19.

This comprehensive support includes:

- £3.2 billion of new funding to councils
- £600 million to adult social care to support providers through a new infection control fund
- Over £20 billion in support for businesses
- £500 million in council tax hardship funds to offer economic support to the most vulnerable
- £300 million to support track and trace

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick MP said:

Councils are playing a huge part in supporting their communities during this pandemic. From supporting the most vulnerable and keeping vital services running to operating local track and trace, council workers have been at the forefront of this great national effort and are the unsung heroes of this pandemic.

Today I am providing a further package of support that takes our support for councils during this pandemic to £4.3 billion to help meet the immediate pressures councils are facing. I know that the loss of revenue from car parks and leisure centres has created huge difficulties, so I am introducing a new scheme to help cover these losses.

This government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with councils and communities as we recover from this pandemic as we renew our commitment to unite and level up the country.

The package also follows the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday of the fast tracking of £96 million of investment through the Towns Fund to help kick-start activity in town centres and high streets, improve outdoor spaces, build cycle lanes and more. £360 million will also be provided to redevelop brownfield sites to provide much-needed housing.

## **Scheme to cover councils' lost income**

Recognising the unprecedented impact the pandemic has had on councils' income from car parks, museums and other cultural assets, the government is introducing a scheme to compensate them for these losses.

This means that all relevant losses, over and above the first 5% of planned income from sales, fees and charges, will be compensated for at a rate of 75p in every pound.

This balances the need to provide compensation given the scale of the income losses, encouraging councils to manage and minimise loss where they can and giving them the certainty they need.

In the next Spending Review, we will determine what support councils need to help them meet the pressures of income loss from council tax and business rates.

As part of this, the Local Government Secretary also announced today a proposal for a phased repayment of council tax and business rates deficits over 3 years, rather than requiring complete repayment of deficits next year.

This will allow authorities to pay deficits off in a reasonable timescale and will limit their cashflow pressures.

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Simon Clarke MP said:

Since the start of this pandemic, local councils have been at the forefront of our national effort to tackle the virus, and they will continue to play a significant role as we look towards our recovery.

We are more committed than ever to unite and level up this country and this package will ensure councils have access to vital, additional funding so they can continue to serve their communities as they so admirably have done to date.

## Further information

Further details on the allocations of the funding will be made in due course.

The new income loss scheme will involve a 5% deductible rate, whereby councils will pay the first 5% of all lost planned sales, fees and charges income, with the government compensating them for 75p in every pound of loss thereafter.

By introducing a 5% deductible the government is accounting for an acceptable level of volatility, whilst shielding authorities from the worst losses.

In the next Spending Review, the government will agree an apportionment of irrecoverable council tax and business rates losses between central and local government for 2020 to 2021.

Beyond the support provided, any council that is faced with an unmanageable pressure or is concerned about their future financial position should contact Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way to additional funding. The devolved administrations will therefore initially receive almost £100 million in relation to this announcement. This comprises £50 million for the Scottish Government, £30 million for the Welsh Government and £15 million for the Northern Ireland Executive.

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## Arrangements for examinations and assessments in 2020/21

On 18 June 2020 the Secretary of State for Education wrote to Sally Collier, Ofqual's Chief Regulator, to set out his Department's broad policy objectives in relation to exams and assessments in the 2020/21 academic year.

The letter outlines the Secretary of State's determination that students sitting examinations or taking assessments next year should be able to progress to the next stage of their education or employment. It also notes his intention that the overall standard and rigour of examinations and assessments should be maintained wherever possible, given the current unique circumstances.

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# Essex beavers give birth to two healthy kits

Back in 2019 a pair of Eurasian Beavers were welcomed back to Essex for the first time in 400 years to help reduce flood risk in Finchingfield.

18 months on we are thrilled to announce the pioneering partnership project with the Environment Agency, Spains Hall Estate, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) has been a big success – and now there are four extra paws to help them continue their vital flood defence work.

The beaver duo, recently named Woody and Willow, have been working relentlessly over the last year in their Finchingfield enclosure on the historic Spains Hall Estate.

They have been building dams to reduce flood risk to the village and creating wetlands which release water during drier periods.

This is complemented by a human-made natural flood management scheme on a second strand of Finchingfield Brook, which features a “leaky dam” approach.

This consists of securing tree branches or trunks across a watercourse, which helps slow the flow after heavy rain.

We are excited to see how much more the beavers manage with the additional help.

Spains Hall Estate Manager Archie Ruggles-Brise said he was excited to see how much more protection the new additions to the beaver family will bring.

He said: “We are delighted that our beavers have settled in so well that they have bred successfully.

“We always hoped that their woodland home would provide the right habitat to support a family, and the arrival of two kits is fantastic news.

“If they are anything like their parents the two kits will become phenomenal dam builders, and we will be watching closely as they expand the wetland and provide even more protection against flood and drought, and provide homes for loads of other wildlife.

“We are fortunate to have wildlife photographer, Russell Savory, keeping a close eye on the family, and providing everyone with such inspiring insights into their watery world.”

The Environment Agency’s Matt Butcher said: “This is a fantastic project for the Environment Agency to be part of.



"It has been really exciting to see how the beavers have engineered their environment by building dams, slowing the flow and holding up water to reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

"The complex habitat they have created along the way is amazing and improving all the time, which makes this a real win-win for people and wildlife.

"The news of the beaver kits has just taken things to another level, and it will be incredible to see what the new members of the family will do to in the coming months and years."

Brendan Joyce, Director of Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, said: "We are delighted to learn of the birth of two beaver kits at Spains Hall"

"We are very proud of our association with this exciting project and I can't wait for the opportunity to get down there and see the beavers at work.

"It will be fascinating to see what effect the new additions to the family will have on shaping the landscape and creating natural features to reduce flooding"

Darren Tansley, River Catchment Coordinator at Essex Wildlife Trust, says "We always hoped that having beavers present would benefit the wildlife on site, but the changes we have mapped over the past 18 months have exceeded our expectations.

"DNA samples from the main beaver pond recorded everything from deer to tiny pygmy shrews and all this to create the perfect environment for their young kits, the first beavers born in Essex since the Middle Ages. We are thrilled by the addition of two more ecosystem engineers in the county."

The gender of the baby beavers is unsure at the moment but Archie Ruggles-Brise is asking social media users to head to his Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/spainshallestate>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/spainshall>) to vote for what they would like them to be called.

Previous press releases on the beavers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-to-return-to-essex-for-the-first-time-in-400-years>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-arrive-in-essex-to-play-their-part-in-flood-prevention>