

# **Covid-19: Guidance for North Somerset Schools**

## **Returning to Full Opening in September 2020**

**REVISED**

*Version 9 – 01/10/2020*

# 1. General Guidance

## Guidance for Schools and Settings

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Department for Education's Guidance on Full Opening of Schools in September 2020](#).

The sections below provide additional local guidance and sources of support to assist you in approaching full opening, and during the initial part of the school year. We will refresh and revise this document as additional resources and guidance becomes available and will provide all updates via Noticeboard.

An appendix at the rear of this document lists all current guidance issues by HM Government, along with selected research resources which may assist schools in planning for reopening and management of infection risk.

Public Health England have developed the [e-Bug](#) resource to support schools' planning for September reopening by:

- Completing **free e-learning** to improve knowledge and confidence to teach children and young people about microbes and how to prevent the spread of infection
- Displaying 'Hand hygiene' and 'Cover coughs and sneezes' **posters** in bathrooms, handwashing stations, classrooms and shared spaces
- Sharing "My Back to School Bubble" **e-storybook** for parents/carers to read with younger children to help them understand new COVID-19 protective measures and tackle anxiety about returning to school
- Using **lesson plans/activities** to teach about hand and respiratory hygiene in an engaging and age-appropriate way

All resources are free and can be accessed from [e-Bug's Covid-19 webpage](#).

## Guidance for children and families

We recognise that returning to school will be challenging for children and their families after an extended absence and given the very different environment which children will experience on returning.

- [The Mental Health Foundation](#) have provided some resources for families approaching returning to school
- [Place 2 Be](#) have developed community resilience-based resources for schools during reopening
- [NHS England](#) has provided advice on coping with returning to school and identifying anxiety
- [Autism UK](#) have provided specific resources for parents of children with autistic spectrum conditions approaching a return to school
- Parents of children with SEND may also find support from our [local parent carer forum](#) who provide events for parents throughout the school year

## **Additional support for children and young people's mental and emotional health and wellbeing**

In responding to concerns about the impact of the pandemic and lockdown on wellbeing North Somerset Council will be delivering a national training package on wellbeing and mental and support for education settings this autumn. The 'Wellbeing for Education Return' training package will be delivered by local experts and will provide schools and education settings with additional support to recognise and understand the range of children and young people's reactions and know how to support them, their parents and carers and their colleagues, accessing appropriate specialist support where needed.

More details about the training will be circulated in September. Schools will be asked to nominate staff to receive the training e.g. mental health lead, pastoral lead, SENCO. The nominee will then cascade key messages, resources and signposting to existing staff and services within their setting. Local delivery arrangements are still being defined but are likely to involve attendance at two twilight sessions in the first half of the Autumn Term.

## 2. Local Contacts

The following North Somerset Officers may be able to provide help and guidance to schools in relation to local queries:

**Table 1 - Key Local Contacts**

<b>Name and Role</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Schools & Early Years C19 Helpdesk	<a href="mailto:sirona.nscovidsupport.education@nhs.net">sirona.nscovidsupport.education@nhs.net</a>	
Health Protection Team	<a href="mailto:health.protection@n-somerset.gov.uk">health.protection@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	
Sheila Smith, Director - People & Communities	<a href="mailto:Sheila.smith@n-somerset.gov.uk">Sheila.smith@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01275 888891
Nicola Dixon, Health & Safety contact for NSC schools and settings	<a href="mailto:Nicola.dixon@n-somerset.gov.uk">Nicola.dixon@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01275 884675
Justin Harvey-Bennett, Premises contact for NSC schools and settings	<a href="mailto:justin.harvey-bennett@n-somerset.gov.uk">justin.harvey-bennett@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01934 427304
Su Turner, HR contact for NSC schools and settings	<a href="mailto:su.turner@n-somerset.gov.uk">su.turner@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01934 634783
Wendy Packer, Liaison support for schools and academies	<a href="mailto:wendy.packer@n-somerset.gov.uk">wendy.packer@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01275 885157
Mike Newman, Liaison support for schools and academies	<a href="mailto:mike.newman@n-somerset.gov.uk">mike.newman@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01275 884663
Sally Varley, Liaison support for schools and academies	<a href="mailto:sally.varley@n-somerset.gov.uk">sally.varley@n-somerset.gov.uk</a>	01275 884857

### 3. Preventing and Managing Cases and Outbreaks

This section details the arrangements for local testing, management of cases and wider outbreaks, and the steps necessary for ensuring that children and staff can work in Covid-safe environments. We appreciate that because every building is different, the arrangements necessary will vary from school to school. A range of advice and support contacts are included who will be able to discuss your specific circumstances.

The latest [Department for Education Guidance for full opening: schools](#) also highlights protective measures for preventing transmission, to support existing risk assessments. This includes the system of controls for prevention such as more frequent handwashing, good respiratory hygiene, enhanced cleaning and minimised contact and social distancing wherever possible.

#### What to do in the event of a case of Covid-19 in your school

The flowchart below details the steps you must take in the case of a **suspected** or **confirmed** case(s) of Covid-19 affecting a child or member of staff.

Department for Education guidance for single cases can also be found [here](#).

In addition to contacting the DfE helpline or the PHE South West Health Protection Team when there is a case in your setting, please also inform North Somerset Council about any suspected or confirmed Covid-19 cases, by emailing the dedicated health protection inbox: [health.protection@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:health.protection@n-somerset.gov.uk). This enables the team to follow up any urgent local support needed and manage communication.

Advisers with the DfE helpline or members of the PHE South West Health Protection Team will work with you to guide you through the actions that you need to take. Based on the advice given, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with any individual who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious.

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The DfE helpline or South West Health Protection Team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between children and staff in different groups. This should be a proportionate

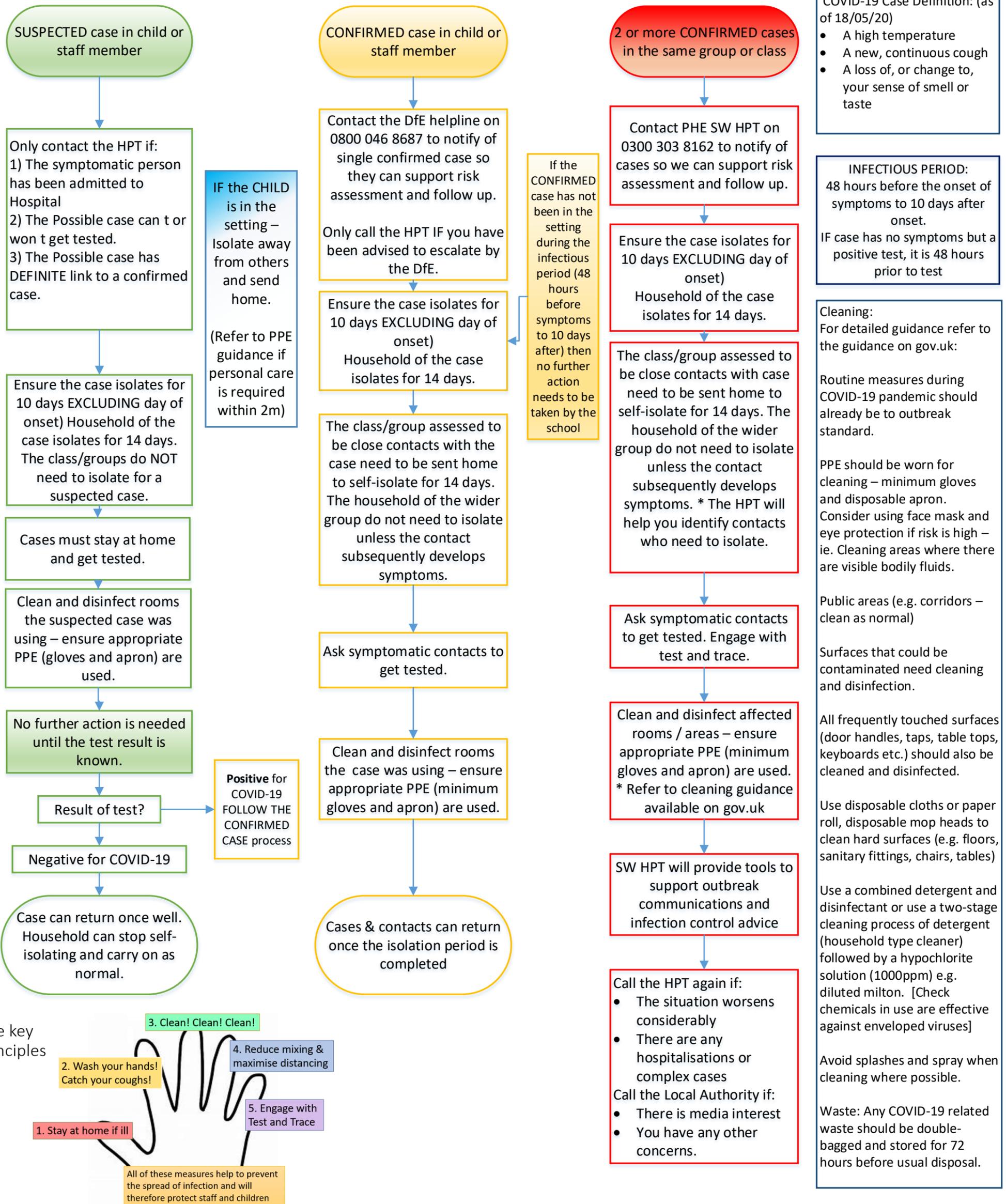
recording process. Schools do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

A template letter will be provided to schools, on the advice of the Health Protection Team, to send to parents and staff if needed. Schools must not share the names or details of people with Covid-19 in such communications. The health protection team can also provide support with communications and media enquiries.

Pupils and staff experiencing Covid-19 symptoms should call 119 or use the [online portal](#) for a test and should visit <http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for all the latest advice and information

If you are uncertain about your plans or arrangements for managing suspected or confirmed cases, or have other queries or concerns regarding Covid-19 you can also contact the [Schools & Early Years Covid-19 Helpdesk](#) for advice. Please note that following a notification of a suspected or positive case in an education or childcare setting, a member of the School Nursing Team will also be in contact after 48 hours to follow up the results of any test results, and to find out if you need any further support.

Prevent the spread of infection by maintaining high standards of hygiene, including hand washing and regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces. This will help prevent COVID-19, as well as other infectious diseases, spreading in schools.  
 If you have any infection control concerns or questions please call the **Department for Education helpline on 0800 046 8687**.  
 You should only call the HPT on 0300 303 8162 for confirmed outbreaks or if advised to do so by the Dept. for Education helpline.  
 The HPT do not need to be notified of single confirmed cases at this time.  
 GUIDANCE: Visit [gov.uk/coronavirus](http://gov.uk/coronavirus) for detailed schools guidance and other guidance  
 TESTING: Visit [nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test](http://nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test) or call 119.



## Local Arrangements for Testing

Testing for Covid-19 is now widely available and does not require booking via Local Authorities. Individuals can book a test by calling 119 or by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

## Face Coverings

The latest national guidance for schools regarding face coverings in education can be found [here](#).

## Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In most circumstances, PPE is not required for normal day-to-day school activity, including on school transport (however current guidance on wearing face coverings should usually be observed on public transport). Please use PPE only in the [specific cases outlined in current guidance](#):

- When a child or member of staff displays symptoms of potential Covid-19 infection, prior to them leaving the school site
- Where a child has additional medical needs which may result in splashing or spraying from the mouth or nose, or where a child required Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP)

In the latter case, please make contact initially with the [Schools & Early Years Covid-19 Helpdesk](#) for advice on managing each child's individual needs.

## PPE Provision

The supply of PPE is increasingly stable, and most schools should continue to seek PPE through your normal suppliers of cleaning and hygiene equipment. The Local Authority holds a limited emergency stock primarily to support adult and children's social care activities. North Somerset Special Schools and the Voyage Learning Campus can continue to access supplies via the established online web route.

## IT equipment for vulnerable pupils who need to remain at home during an outbreak

For the 2020 to 2021 academic year, laptops and tablets have been made available by DfE for disadvantaged children in certain year groups who are affected by disruption to face to face education at their school or have been advised to shield because they are clinically extremely vulnerable.

DfE regard disadvantaged children and young people as those in Years 3 to 11:

- with no digital devices in their household
- whose only available device is a smartphone
- with a single device in their household that's being shared with more than one other family member
- who do not have a fixed broadband connection at home

A contact has been nominated in each school who can order these directly if needed. In North Somerset maintained schools this is the Headteacher. MATs may have made different local ordering arrangements. The aim is to deliver the requested devices within two days of the order being placed to ensure continuity of education provision.

[Further guidance on ordering devices is available at the DfE website.](#)

DfE guidance on reopening includes [a list of potential learning platforms and sources of support](#), including SEND resources via Oak Academy.

## **Managing Buildings**

Re-opening will bring challenges regarding the safe use of space and school facilities. Given the vast differences across school premises, it is important that headteachers engage with health and safety advisors in implementing a plan for safe reopening and review any arrangements which were put in place for partial re-opening earlier in the year.

Areas to consider include, but are not limited to:

- One-way systems which ensure safe circulation in common areas and corridors
- Reducing the capacity of classrooms and workspaces to ensure social distancing supporting at least the '*1 metre plus*' rule
- Safe areas for dropping off and collection pupils which allow children, staff, parents and transport providers to wait safely
- Assessment of the safe capacity of spaces such as school halls, sports facilities and playgrounds with clear signage and advice to supervising staff
- A designated room which allows separation of children who show symptoms of Covid-19 whilst advice is sought, and their collection arranged
- Enhanced cleaning routines for all areas including between use by different groups or bubbles, and provision of enhanced hand-washing or sanitising facilities
- Clear, school-specific signage which ensures that arrangements are clear and easy to follow.

We recognise that schools provide a base for many key groups in the community, not least those which support more vulnerable children and young people. While it is important that such groups continue to provide activities and support, doing so presents specific challenges. If schools normally allow use of their premises by outside groups, or rent space to community users, it is recommended that each arrangement is subject to careful risk assessment in line with the principles above. Schools are recommended to reduce the number of different groups using their premises at any time to reduce the possibility that managing space becomes difficult.

## **Visitors to School**

It is recommended that where colleagues or professionals need to visit schools:

- Only essential visits should take place
- They should be arranged in advance via the school office

- Visitors should expect to wear a face covering on arrival, and to respect school's arrangements for this once on the premises
- Visitors should volunteer contact information to facilitate track and trace activity if required
- Visitors should expect to observe social distancing throughout their visit
- Visitors should ensure they work only with the hubs, bubbles or groups of children and staff with whom they have arranged to be in contact
- Visitors should use hand sanitizer or cleaning products wherever provided between activities or during their work

## **Track and Trace Posters and QR Codes**

Schools will not ordinarily be expected to display Track and Trace posters and QR codes for day-to-day use by pupils, staff or visitors on the basis that visitor record and school registers are already kept, and can be consulted to track contacts if necessary.

However should schools open outside normal school business for events involving external visitors or members of the public, or should the building be hired or made available to other groups for use in this way, then use of Track and Trace QR codes should be considered.

[Guidance on creating a suitable poster is available here.](#)

## **Home Testing Kits for Schools and Further Education**

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is making a limited supply of testing kits available, which will be delivered to school prior to the start of term. These kits are provided to allow schools to take swift action in exceptional circumstances when a pupil presents with the symptoms of Covid-19 while at school and:

- you believe they may have barriers to accessing a test elsewhere, and that by giving them a test kit directly, you will significantly increase the likelihood of them getting tested; or
- you believe that if you sent the individual home without a kit, they would not receive a test at all.

If the individual is under 18 this kit should be given to their parent or carer.

From 16<sup>th</sup> September, schools and further education settings will be able to order a re-supply of home test kits at <https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/> using the Unique Organisation Number (UON) supplied by DHSC by email. More information on the use and resupply of kits is available in [DfE Guidance](#).

The best and fastest way of getting a test remains booking via the website or calling 119.

## **Children or staff returning from abroad**

Any children or members of staff who are returning from visits abroad should be advised to carefully check current guidance on their requirement to self-isolate. Advice, along with a list of countries from where a return to the UK requires self-isolation [can be found here](#).

### **What to do should a local lockdown be put in place**

While the aim is to have all pupils back at school in the autumn, every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education.

A local lockdown could be introduced in response to a localised spike of infection (localised outbreak). Local outbreaks are identified and managed through continuous monitoring of the available data and different approaches are required according to local circumstances. Intervention may include the UK government or the local authority closing certain premises or restricting the movements of people and interactions with others.

Analysis of the nature of the local outbreak will determine which measures will be most effective, but under the Coronavirus Act 2020, local authorities may seek support from ministers to use powers to limit schools to set year groups (for example year groups with forthcoming assessments or which are important for transitions between school phases) or close schools (for example close impacted schools with the exception of vulnerable children and children of critical workers). Other examples of local interventions that could be introduced that may affect schools include reintroducing bespoke measures for people who are shielding or mandating the use of face covering in school corridors.

For the list of areas with current additional local restrictions and how local outbreaks will be managed see the [current government guidance](#).

For additional advice on preparing or responding to a local outbreak please contact the [North Somerset Education and Childcare Helpdesk](#). Should a wider lockdown be put in place, further guidance will be issued by DfE on the expectations for schools and childcare settings.

### **Managing Anxiety**

Managing staff who remain highly anxious as they return to school and striking the balance between managing this while ensuring school is fully staffed will be complex. It is important to engage with your HR team regarding management of risk for staff who may be more vulnerable to experiencing negative outcomes following Covid-19 infection. This is particularly important where employees are pregnant, have existing conditions or are part of a [clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable group](#).

Some schools are planning virtual tours or videos about the changes which pupils will encounter when they return. Some examples and resources are below:

- [BBC Newsround](#)
- [A Safe Return to Learning – by teenagers with SEND](#)
- [Worcestershire animation for primary schools](#)
- [Returning to School – Virtual Tour Example](#)

We recognise that Special Schools will have specific challenges in meeting the health needs of some pupils on their return. Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) CCG has began a series of meetings with special schools and health providers to find solutions for these groups of students. It is recognised that putting specialist support in place may mean that their return is not immediate.

DfE advise that a widespread national campaign encouraging and supporting parents and children around returning to school will begin in late August. We will ensure that North Somerset's Marketing and Communications team reinforces these messages though social media and other channels.

### **School Attendance**

From September, DfE presume that all children will be attending school. We recognise that this will be a huge challenge for some parents and children, and our focus in North Somerset will be on supporting, encouraging and enabling rather than enforcement. If you are concerned about any child's attendance and wish to discuss the situation, please contact the [Education Inclusion Service](#) for advice.

For some groups such as the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, we are aware that extra reassurance may be necessary to help parents feel that it is safe for their children to return to school. [Rachel Ballin, our Traveller Advisory Teacher](#) can support schools in these circumstances.

### **Recording Attendance**

From the beginning of the new academic year, schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (set out on page 9 of the attendance guidance), in addition to the new category of '*not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)*':

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for '*not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)*' should be recorded using code X
- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak
- [Detailed guidance on recording and monitoring attendance](#) has been published by DfE.

## **4. Home to School Transport**

The Integrated Transport Unit is responsible for providing around 2600 students with home to school transport, currently spanning 180 different contracted routes which represents a significant logistical challenge, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Providing Home to School Transport presents a range of additional

challenges in the current circumstances, including the need for social distancing, facilitating track and trace, and the reduced capacity of public transport. Usual traffic patterns have also changed and will result in differing journey times this year, therefore we ask for patience while we settle routes into routines in these unprecedented times.

We recognise that there are raised anxieties associated with using transport, and we are doing all we can to alleviate this.

### **Active and alternative travel arrangements**

The DFE and DFT are promoting the use of active travel, which includes walking cycling as the safest form of travel. The council have worked hard to identify and install measures to support this as the most sustainable form of travel now and beyond the pandemic.

The ITU are also receptive to discussing alternative measures where there is an identified need such as parental mileage payments or Personal travel budgets, please contact us to discuss these options.

### **Transport capacity**

In line with guidance issued by the DFT and DFE closed door home to school transport services can operate at full capacity, public transport remains at a maximum of 50% capacity on all modes. Where possible transport has been arranged to reduce infection by limiting transport by school, year group or specific 'bubbles'. The Integrated Transport Unit continues to work closely with schools and parents to ensure that these remain reflective of need and the available resources to allow transport to function and students to travel to school arriving in a stress-free state and ready to learn.

It is critical that students only utilise the transport they have been assigned from as an infection control measure.

In addition, the ITU have engaged with the local rail operator and provided a rail replacement coach service for entitled students travelling from Yatton to Backwell, to ensure that there is enough space for other students that rely on this vital corridor between Weston-super-Mare and Bristol. This will be kept under review each term in line with our emergency funding.

ITU staff will continue to seek innovative means of providing transport for specific groups and should schools have further requests, please contact [Huw Thomas Jones](#) in the first instance.

### **Face coverings**

North Somerset Council in conjunction with the schools has made it policy that all mainstream students should wear face coverings unless there is a medical exemption or identified need as part of an EHCP. This goes over and above

guidance issued by the DFE and DFT. The ITU are happy to discuss exemptions on a case by case basis where supported with professional advice.

### **SEND Transport**

The ITU recognise that Covid has had far reaching implications for students with SEND, including disruption to applying for school placements and transport, we have worked hard to provide a service that will meet or exceed expectations even in cases where applications have been later than desired. The ITU will continue to refine its services to reflect emerging needs, and secure additional resources where required. The Covid-19 situation has limited our access to drivers and Personal Assistants on vehicles, in the event of an outbreak it may be necessary to suspend transport at short notice. We strongly advise that parents and schools have contingency plans in place for this eventuality, including [consideration of remote learning needs](#). The ITU will make every effort to ensure services are maintained however safety must always be our first priority.

### **Outbreak Control Protocols**

In the event of a localised outbreak being identified, the ITU will supply manifest information to schools and public health officials to quickly identify people who may need to isolate or be tested.

The OCT Meeting and school must inform the ITU if there are any identified people accessing school transport services, and if there are any urgent remedial actions required, such as vehicle cleaning or staff impacts.

The nominated individuals in the ITU for Instances of Covid, are [Huw Thomas Jones](#), [Lee Murphy](#) and [Carl Nicholson](#).

### **Additional funding for School Transport**

The Department for Education has announced time-limited Covid-19 funding for to create additional home to school transport capacity from September, this is anticipated to run for the first term at present.

### **Communication with parents and carers**

The added complexity of arranging transport has led to some delays in details reaching parents, for this we apologise, we recognise this has resulted in some anxieties, we are working hard to rectify this at this very busy time, most transport has settled well and students are now enjoying routine access to school.

Should you have any need to contact us, please email: [schooltransport@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransport@n-somerset.gov.uk) or telephone: 01934 634715

## 5. Catch-up Funding and Programmes

Many schools will be delivering catch-up programmes starting in September with various assessment strategies and 'recovery curriculum' planned for when pupils return. Core skills such as reading will be a focus. Some children will need help to focus for longer periods of time, having become used to small snippets of learning while at home. Building resilience and supporting pupils' mental health will be one of the priorities for schools in September.

DfE has announced a [Catch-up Premium](#) calculated on a per-pupil basis and payable to:

- primary, secondary and all through local authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools
- local authority-maintained special schools
- special academies and free schools
- special schools not maintained by a local authority
- pupil referral units
- alternative provision (AP) academies and free schools
- local authority-maintained hospital schools and academies
- independent special schools

along with funding paid to Local Authorities to support pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans who are educated in independent special schools based on the number of such pupils in their area.

Payment will be made in three tranches, the first part-payment occurring in Autumn 2020, with subsequent payments based on update pupil numbers early 2021 and again in summer 2021.

This funding is also accompanied by the [National Tutoring Programme](#) (NTP). Schools can register their interest in this programme at the [NTP website](#).

The DfE has also announced that Year 7 Catch Up Funding will no longer be available as a separate payment but will be factored into the National Funding Formula for future years.

## **6. Inspection, Data and Information Collection**

### **Department for Education**

Whilst exact arrangements have not been confirmed, it is extremely likely that DfE will continue to seek information about attendance and school opening through their portal. Both the LA and schools have requested that the Department considers the burden schools will be managing on reopening, and they have confirmed an aim to keep this to a minimum. However, they would greatly appreciate school's continued assistance in submitting this data which has proved invaluable in helping inform government planning and keeping the health and well-being of children and staff at the forefront of decision-making.

### **North Somerset Council**

From the initial closure of schools, we put in place processes for tracking contact with vulnerable pupils, providing a link between school's work to provide remote support and colleagues in the SEND and social care teams. We are reviewing this process now and anticipate that we will not collect this information in the same way once full reopening has taken place. We are currently considering how the existing collection of attendance data can be used to support a similar system in future.

We will carefully consider the impact on schools of any additional data we are likely to require and will weigh this against the necessity of obtaining information.

### **Ofsted**

The guidance on full opening sets out Ofsted's intention to conduct a programme of non-graded visits to some schools during the autumn. During these visits, inspectors will discuss how the school is bringing pupils back into full-time education – this may include plans schools have to spend their catch-up funding.

Ofsted will undertake similar non-graded visits to Local Areas to understand how Covid-19 has impacted SEND services across health, education and care.

Ofsted plans to resume routine inspections in January 2021, with the exact timing being kept under review.

# Appendix – Guidance and Relevant Research Links

## Department for Education Guidance:

- [DfE Guidance for Schools and Other Education Settings](#)
- [DfE Guidance for Children’s Social Care](#)
- [DfE Guidance for Early Years and Childcare Settings](#)
- [DfE Guidance for Further and Higher Education](#)
- [Implementing Protective Measures in Education & Childcare Settings](#)
- [Managing School Premises during the Covid-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Providing Free School Meals during the Covid-19 Outbreak](#)
- [School Attendance during the Covid-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Changes to Exclusions during the Covid-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Catchup Premium Funding Guidance](#)
- [Home Test Kits for Schools and Further Education Providers](#)
- [Recording attendance in relation to Coronavirus during the 2020-21 school year](#)
- [Get laptops and tablets for children who cannot attend school due to Coronavirus](#)

## Research and Information:

- [UK Government Coronavirus Dashboard](#) (provides data on cases, testing and healthcare at a national, regional and local authority level)
- [National Covid-19 Surveillance Reporting](#)
- [Infection rates: The R number in the UK](#)
- [University of Bristol Back to School study: What young people, parents, carers and teachers think about secondary schools re-opening](#)
- [Guidance and information on areas subject to local restrictions](#)