

Coronavirus (COVID-19): re-opening schools guidance

Non-statutory Scottish Government guidance to support implementation of a phased return to schools under Scotland's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): strategic framework for reopening schools and early learning and childcare provision](#).

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Overview

This guidance has been developed for education authorities and schools, (Primary/Secondary/ASN/School Hostels/Residential) to support a safe, phased reopening of schools in line with the [Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and ELC](#).

It may also be used by grant aided schools and independent schools to support their recovery efforts. Read the supplementary [guidance for residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities](#), developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

The aims of this guidance are to:

- provide clarity of expectation with regard to practical approaches to a safe, phased reopening of schools and
- in so doing, promote broad national consistency whilst ensuring appropriate local flexibility for education authorities, schools and staff to adapt and adopt approaches that best suit their communities' needs and ensure the safety of staff, children, young people and their families.

Recognising the specific context of the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and childcare sector, separate guidance for these settings is being developed. While the broad principles will be similar across schools and early learning and childcare, particularly across the early level, it will be important to provide guidance that supports all providers to implement age appropriate measures to re-open ELC settings.

The guidance has been developed by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland with key partners supporting the Education Recovery Group, including Scottish Futures Trust, education authorities, trade unions and parent representatives. It has been informed by judgements based on the scientific and public health advice available at the time of writing.

This guidance should be read and applied in conjunction with the latest [Health Protection Scotland](#) guidance, the [Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and ELC](#) and the framework document [Coronavirus \(COVID19\)- a framework for decision making](#).

This guidance has been written to ensure consistency with [existing guidance](#) on physical distancing and hygiene that applies to the emergency childcare hubs in operation while schools remain closed. Work to consolidate these pieces of guidance will be undertaken as plans for the continuing operation of emergency childcare hubs and ELC provision are finalised.

Read the [information for parents, carers, children and young people](#).

Where this guidance states that education authorities and schools:

“should” do something, there is a clear expectation, agreed by all key partners, that it should be done.

“may” or “may wish” to do something, the relevant sections have been included as examples of relevant practice that can be considered if appropriate. Local variations are likely.

Nothing in this guidance affects the legal obligations of education authorities with regard to health and safety and public health. Education authorities must continue to adhere to all such duties when implementing this guidance. Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, they must

have regard to the advice relating to coronavirus from of the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation must prevail.

This guidance is not intended to promote a “checklist” approach. Education authorities and schools should exercise their expert judgement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff and children, taking into account local circumstances.

Summary of key scientific and public health advice

To promote transparency with regard to the scientific, public health and wider policy judgements that have informed the development of the Education Recovery Framework and the approach set out in this guidance, a [summary of key scientific and public health advice](#) has been published.

The summary aims to be transparent about those aspects which are not well understood, and make clear that in some cases the science does not provide us with a definitive view on the situation or the best course of action. The Scottish Government also considers a range of other advice when making decisions, including stakeholder views and engagement with the people of Scotland.

This guidance will be kept under review and updated as scientific and public health guidance evolves.

How to use this guidance

Along with the Strategic Framework, this guidance provides an overarching framework for the reopening of schools in Scotland, with the aim of ensuring broad consistency and equity across local areas.

Education authorities should develop Local Delivery Phasing Plans that incorporate the principles and expectations set out in this framework and meet the needs of local communities. Thereafter, individual School Recovery Plans and risk assessments should be developed and implemented on an establishment-by-establishment basis.

In developing these education authority and school-level plans, there should be close engagement and partnership working wherever appropriate between:

- education authorities (including in their role as an employer)
- school management teams, teaching and non-teaching staff, and trade unions (including through LNCTs)
- parents and carers
- children and young people (whose ability and willingness to adhere to local approaches, and willingness to model positive behaviours, will be critical to success)

In accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, local trade unions should be consulted on and involved in the development of risk assessments. Risk assessments should be shared with staff and trade unions.

An indicative outline of a process that may be followed is set out in the diagram below. The stages detailed are not intended to be viewed as a linear process and may be tailored for education authorities' own individual contexts.



Local plans should be clearly communicated to the school community. This is vitally important given the expectation that educational provision may look different in different facilities across and within education authorities (see [communications](#)).

Key principles

The [Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and ELC](#) sets out overarching key principles for a safe, phased return to schools.

The following key principles and requirements are generally relevant to the practical implementation issues covered by this supporting guidance, and should be considered by education authorities and schools:

Scientific and medical advice

Implementation should take full account of scientific and medical advice that it is safe to proceed.

Wellbeing

The wellbeing of all pupils and staff should be carefully considered when determining the approach to the reopening of schools at a local level.

Risk assessments

Risk assessments of individual facilities should be undertaken to ensure that health and safety legislation and guidance is fully adhered to. These should be kept simple and accessible. To support this, the ADES Resources network will ensure that examples of good practice risk assessments are shared across education authorities and schools via existing communication channels. The professional associations will also advise of good practice, particularly in the context of legal health and safety requirements, which must be adhered to as always.

Public health measures

As set out in Scotland's [Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools](#), there should be comprehensive implementation of complementary public health measures whilst, wherever possible, ensuring educational continuity. These include:

Physical distancing, where measures fall into two broad categories:

- increasing separation
- decreasing interaction

Key to implementation is that the number of pupils and requisite staff within the school and the available facilities can allow the required physical distancing to be achieved.

- shielding of extremely high-risk individuals
- infection prevention and control (hygiene measures) such as enhanced cleaning, respiratory hygiene, handwashing
- stay at home guidance for people who have symptoms and/or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, and their household members (household isolation)
- adherence to 'test, trace, isolate and support' (TTIS or Test and Protect) practices
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate
- ensuring educational settings know what to do if someone becomes unwell on-site or one or more coronavirus cases occur

Changing delivery of in-person education

Education authorities and schools should review how they deliver educational services, to assist in the provision of high-quality learning and teaching in a positive learning environment. Changes in what facilities are used, whether additional (risk-assessed) facilities can be recruited to increase the number of children who can attend, and how they are used to facilitate physical distancing and hygiene measures are essential. This must include consideration of the entire day including the journeys between home and school and arrival and departure.

Remote learning

Where capacity constraints and/or safety and wellbeing considerations mean that children cannot learn in schools for some or all of the time, appropriate provision should be made for remote learning pursuant to local circumstances. There should be a particular focus on addressing digital exclusion as part of these arrangements. (see [digital](#))

Build on experience

The good practice that has been developed for emergency childcare hubs in each education authority should be carefully considered when implementing this guidance.

Be prepared for change

Consistent with all Scottish Government guidance relating to implementing restrictive measures to combat COVID-19, any form of physical distancing policy within facilities should not be in place for any longer than is necessary. Education authorities should implement measures with a view to being able to ease them as soon as it is safe to do so, to ensure as many children as possible benefit from in-setting learning. They should not enter into long term contracts for things such as use of alternative premises or staffing if these cannot be appropriately amended as the coronavirus situation improves.

Clear communication

Communication and dialogue with all trade unions, staff, parents/carers and pupils on the reopening of schools should be carefully considered when implementing this guidance, to ensure confidence in the revised arrangements across all school users. The channels of communication (existing or otherwise) through which trade unions, staff, pupils and parents/carers can raise concerns about the implementation of safety measures in individual settings should be made clear.

Determining capacity

Where safe and appropriate to do so, education authorities and schools should endeavour to use all available spaces within facilities (and alternative facilities) to assist in the provision of high quality learning and teaching in a positive learning environment, whilst supporting measures to minimise the risk of infection and transmission. The identification of appropriate transport options and the deployment of available workforce (including teaching and wider workforce) should be considered alongside this.

When considering how many staff, children and young people can safely be brought back into a facility at any one time, education authorities and schools should have particular regard to the guidance on [physical distancing](#), [hygiene measures](#), [school transport](#) and [workforce planning](#). Application of this guidance to particular settings will determine how much capacity there is to welcome staff and children back.

Owing to the requirement to reduce risks of infection and transmission, there may be large variations in potential available capacity within schools across different localities.

Usable capacity will be determined by the design and layout of each setting, indoors and outdoors, when rearranged to minimise risks of infection and transmission. The usable capacity, for example, may be increased in some facilities through the repurposing of other areas such as large dining or games halls which may be suitable for sub-dividing to create additional teaching spaces. Consideration should be given to ensuring a positive learning environment, and the ability to provide staff and supervision when determining the use of each space within a setting.

Depending on each setting this may mean that a higher or lower percentage of the pupil population can be accommodated at any one time.

In large or densely populated schools, it may be much harder to implement a physical distancing policy that allows all pupils to return to school at the same time. Decisions on physical distancing may have an impact on the curriculum offer in the senior phase. This should be considered by each education authority and school.

In small or less densely populated schools it may be easier to implement physical distancing due to the smaller number of pupils. However, there are likely to be other issues to contend with, e.g. home to school transport especially over long distances where pupils need to travel together on buses.

If increasing the physical capacity of a setting is considered beneficial, schools and education authorities may consider using alternative additional spaces.

Approaches may include:

- use of flexible accommodation (e.g. mobile classrooms, geodomes) and temporary shelters to help maximise and enhance outdoor learning opportunities (e.g. polytunnels and canopies). There are many instances where these types of spaces have been used very positively across the learning estate and could be utilised as case studies to help inform local solutions.
- use of local outdoor spaces. Education practitioners may be able to draw on contacts within their establishments or wider clusters to identify appropriate space. The Outdoor Learning Directory features a [map](#) of relevant spaces, and the [Going Out There](#) and [Out](#)

[to Play](#) guidance documents provide comprehensive practical and legal advice for taking learning outdoors and offsite. Practitioners may also wish to contact their education authority outdoor learning lead through the [Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education](#) for further advice and support.

- innovative use of the public, private or 3rd sector estate to increase the number of children and young people who can attend schools. For example, there could be opportunities to use council office space, libraries, leisure centres or cultural venues to increase the effective size of the school.

Use of any additional spaces should not be detrimental to the ability to clean or provide physical distancing and should have adequate toilet facilities and handwashing/hygiene provision.

The availability of additional space across other public sector assets will vary across each education authority area, with many additional spaces already having been identified as part of ELC contingency planning. The use of these other spaces will raise complexities around staffing, cleaning, catering and transport if pupils are split across multiple sites. These should be worked through at a local level if this approach is adopted.

Wraparound or out of school care provision will be required for [key worker](#) families as a school-day only and partial attendance model will not fit with all working patterns. Education authorities should consider the extent to which such provision is currently made within individual schools and other facilities, and the impact this may have on capacity. Arrangements should be kept under careful review to ensure they are equitable and align with the overall approach to easing of lockdown measures.

If schools are currently being used for alternate purposes such as humanitarian or food centres, these services may have to be relocated to maximise capacity for educational purposes. The use of alternative public, private or third sector facilities should be explored to maintain such provision wherever possible.

Free school meals must still be provided to those that qualify, and the ability to deliver these practically should be factored into considerations of capacity. It will be the decision of the education authority whether this is a hot meal, cold meal or whether vouchers/money is provided to parents so a packed lunch can be provided. If a hot meal is to be provided consideration should be given to the safe use of onsite kitchen facilities (in which case physical distancing should be implemented), or offsite facilities. Additional guidance on [physical distancing in education and childcare facilities](#) has previously been published to inform the operation of the emergency childcare hubs, and should be considered when planning and taking forward the measures below.

The needs of individual children should be carefully considered. Some children may require additional staffing, resource or space to ensure they can benefit from a positive learning environment.

Physical distancing

Physical distancing measures fall into two broad categories:

- increasing separation
- decreasing interaction

Physical distancing applies to staff, children, parents (and any others who may attend the school) and any external contractors or delivery people. It is essential that all these groups are taken into consideration.

Special considerations apply to those who are [clinically vulnerable or those who are shielding \(or extremely clinically vulnerable\)](#).

As there is some evidence which suggests that COVID-19 may impact disproportionately on some groups (Minority Ethnic communities), education authorities and schools should ensure that OHS provide practical support and advice to Minority Ethnic staff, particularly where they are anxious about protecting themselves and their families. All Minority Ethnic staff with underlying health conditions and disabilities, who are over 70, or who are pregnant should be individually risk assessed, and appropriate reasonable or workplace adjustments should be made following risk assessment.

Physical distancing should be considered in all relevant areas of schools, including classrooms, indoor and outdoor spaces, and those not used for learning and teaching, e.g. pupils' cloakrooms, entrance halls, staff rooms, kitchens and janitorial areas. Specific risk assessments should be completed regarding the use of kitchens, some of which vary considerably in size. Catering and FM Management teams and trade unions should be appropriately involved in the development of risk assessments.

The implementation of physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. For instance, how physical distancing is implemented for very young children, for children with complex needs or disabilities and for pupils in the senior phase will be different.

This may also be an anxious time for pupils and staff. Education authorities and schools should ensure that the right support is in place to meet the physical and emotional needs of children and staff, and that school staff are aware of the most up to date Covid-19 information on the NHS Inform website.

For children and young people with the most complex additional support needs, schools should involve lead professionals and parents to decide how best to continue supporting them.

Increasing separation – default of 2m physical distancing

The default position for schools is that individuals (or, in some limited circumstances, small groups with consistent membership – see below) should be supported to stay 2m apart wherever practicable and appropriate.

The requirement for 2m distancing reflects precautionary judgements based on public health advice at the time of writing. As the situation evolves, such requirements may be amended or eased. As noted in “key principles”, education authorities should implement measures

with a view to being able to ease them as soon as it is safe to do so, to ensure the maximum benefit from in-setting learning is gained as early as possible.

This 2m rule should be used when determining how many people are permitted to be in a space. In any defined learning space, there should be sufficient floor area to allow for 2m separation between all individuals (including all types of staff and learners of all ages).

For the avoidance of doubt, this applies even in those limited circumstances where alternative risk mitigation strategies (e.g. small, consistent groups instead of 2m spacing between all individuals) are permitted as set out below. This will help avoid overcrowding and align with strategies which people are familiar with in other scenarios. This approach should be applied to both the preparatory stage when staff may be in schools to get ready to return and thereafter.

Limited exceptions

The general 2m rule is subject to the exceptions set out below:

While they should be avoided wherever possible, very brief interactions within 2m, such as limited numbers of people passing each other in corridors or walking through learning spaces to go to the toilet, are considered low risk and are permissible. Use of floor markings in relevant spaces may help minimise the extent of such encroachments.

In certain limited circumstances in which the 2m rule cannot reasonably be applied, an additional risk mitigation approach may be adopted. This involves organising children into small groups with consistent membership, which are appropriate to the size of the setting. If adopting this approach, every effort should be made to decrease interactions and ensure 2m distancing is maintained within such groups if practicable, and between such groups at all times. Once put in place, membership of groups should not change (until further easing of measures is possible based upon the public health situation). The cleaning, hygiene and health and safety measures set out in section 4 of this guidance should, as in all cases, be followed carefully. Physical distancing between the adult staff working with such groups should be maintained. The limited circumstances in which this approach may be appropriate are as follows:

- circumstances in which younger primary school children cannot reasonably be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff whilst maintaining play-based learning
- circumstances in which it may not be possible or appropriate for the 2m rule to be applied to some children and young people with additional support needs, e.g. where close contact with staff is necessary to their wellbeing. In such circumstances, bespoke approaches should be determined by individual or group risk assessments, with full regard to the best interests of children, young people and staff. Guidance on hygiene/health and safety in ASN facilities, including personal care, should be followed (see [hygiene measures](#)).

Additional risk mitigation strategies (2m spacings plus small consistent groups)

There may be circumstances in which, while not subject to the exceptions set out above, older children will inadvertently fail to maintain 2m spacings. This may be the case, for example, during social times or specialised group work (e.g. practical elements of science or technology).

Every effort should be made to support older children to continue to observe the 2m rule in these circumstances. Therefore, as an additional risk mitigation strategy, older children should be organised into small, consistent groups and assigned clearly defined zones or spaces within which they should endeavour to observe the 2m rule as far as practicable (e.g. a marked off area of an outdoor space).

This approach has the benefit of ensuring that the 2m rule continues to be followed by older pupils whenever practicable, but that, when circumstances are such that accidental encroachments are likely to take place, such interactions are limited to a small number of consistent individuals.

Physical distancing in boarding schools

Boarding schools and residential facilities will have their own particular challenges. Read the [supplementary guidance to be considered in relation to these facilities](#).

Practical approaches to physical distancing – use of indoor spaces

Education authorities and schools should consider the following practical approaches to ensuring the effective implementation of physical distancing strategies.

It is important to note that these are intended as high-level descriptions of potential practical approaches. They are not intended as a checklist of approaches and should not be treated as such. The complexities of implementing these approaches in different schools and localities is not underestimated. The impacts of different approaches on staffing requirements, the challenges inherent in reducing interactions for certain age groups (e.g. very young children) and other key issues all require careful consideration to ensure successful implementation:

- where children and young people can reasonably be expected to maintain a 2m distance, the layout of classrooms should be rearranged to support this. Facilities may consider physical markings between each seating position to provide clarity to children and staff.
- for younger children who are unable to maintain a 2m distance, consideration may be given to how to create zones within facilities to maintain small groups of pupils and reduce interactions between them. In these circumstances, consideration should be given to the allocation of resources to the same small group, rather than sharing across groups.
- careful consideration should be given to the removal of unnecessary items in the classroom to maximise capacity and decrease the number of items requiring cleaning. The storage of these items should be considered at a local/individual setting level, with support from education authorities where necessary.

- to provide capacity to accommodate physical distancing approaches, a flexible approach to the use of all existing spaces within the usual setting may be taken. Appropriate consideration should be given to staffing and supervision if this approach is adopted. For example, breakout space, dining space, libraries and indoor sports spaces may be utilised as learning and teaching areas to either accommodate part classes working remotely from teachers or to relocate whole class groups to larger spaces.
- very large spaces may be repurposed to accommodate multiple groups, for example by repurposing a dining hall or games hall to provide general classroom accommodation. Temporary screens may be used to divide the space to provide appropriate separation between groups. If this approach is adopted, thought should be given to alternative approaches to the safe provision of lunches, physical education or other activities usually undertaken in such spaces. This may, for example, require increased use of outdoor facilities to allow PE to be delivered.
- the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff and the provision of positive learning and teaching environments should be considered when repurposing any space to provide additional capacity
- in dining halls, floor markers may be considered to ensure pupils queue 2m apart from each other. Staggered lunch breaks may also be considered.
- all staff rooms, bases and offices should be reconfigured to ensure the physical distancing rule of 2m is maintained
- ensure that any physical distancing measures still allow for hygiene measures to be implemented
- the safe and practical use of toilets should be considered by each school
- ensure there are adequate handwashing facilities accessible to all children. Note there may be an increased demand due to the increased frequency of hand washing.
- cleaning schedules should be reviewed and enhanced

Indicative examples of re-configured classrooms and internal school areas are provided as supporting documents. These are for demonstration purposes only. School design is not the same across the country, with some facilities having more individual classrooms and others more breakout/social space.

Education authorities and schools may wish to draw on the broad principles illustrated in these examples to help inform bespoke local solutions. There should be no restriction on how spaces are configured to best support the educational needs of learners whilst adhering to physical distancing requirements. Education authorities and individual schools will be best placed to consider the right approach for their own individual circumstances.

Practical approaches to physical distancing – use of outdoor spaces

In parallel with the indoor environment, education authorities and schools should consider appropriate use of the outdoor environment to enrich the learning experiences of children and ensure as many children as possible can benefit from formal education at school. Evidence suggests that outdoor environments can limit transmission, as well as more easily allowing for appropriate physical distancing between children and staff.

Effective outdoor learning can be delivered across many subject areas and the 3-18 learner journey, whilst enabling benefits in relation to learner engagement, health and wellbeing and educational attainment. Informal outdoor classrooms set within the natural environment can

often be effective spaces for learning. However, where some level of shelter is required the periodic use of the school building should be considered. With any repurposing of space, particularly in respect of any greater use of outdoor spaces for learning, schools should ensure that pupils with complex needs or disabilities are not disadvantaged

If outdoor equipment is being used, schools should ensure that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously, as well as considering appropriate cleaning between groups of children using it (see [hygiene measures](#)).

How learning and teaching is adapted for an outdoor environment should also be considered. [The Outdoor Learning Directory](#) provides links to a variety of resources that can be filtered by subject area and curriculum level.

Decreasing interaction

In addition to spatial solutions to maintain physical distancing between individuals and/or small groups, the spread of the virus can be minimised through reducing the number and frequency of interactions between users. This is particularly relevant in secondary schools, as primary pupils will tend to spend most of their time with one group of peers and one/two adults.

Education authorities should consider appropriate approaches to minimising interactions between individuals/small groups in schools, including at social and dining times. Pupils should be encouraged to remain onsite for lunch wherever possible, to minimise unnecessary interactions with others off the school premises.

Some approaches they may wish to consider, depending on local circumstances, are set out below.

Circulation/transitions

Some approaches to circulation of school populations and transitions between different parts of the school day that education authorities and schools can consider include:

Teacher movements

To minimise the need for large numbers of pupil transits, it may be beneficial to keep groups of pupils in one location and have teachers move to them. This would require careful consideration, particularly in the senior phase, to align with subject choices and the stage of development for each individual. Reducing the amount of pupil circulation minimises contact with surfaces such as door handles which can help reduce virus spread. Consideration may need to be given to supervision arrangements as teachers move between classes. If teacher movements are not considered feasible, particularly in the senior phase, careful consideration should be given to timetable arrangements (see below) to reduce the number of movements by pupils in a day.

One-way systems

Many schools in Scotland currently manage their pupil circulation by adopting one-way systems within corridors and stairs. This may help avoid bottlenecks and ease travel around the school.

External circulation

As part of an amended circulation strategy it may be beneficial to encourage the use of

external areas to move between parts of the building. This would reduce the density of use of the internal areas and also provide some movement and fresh air. Appropriate solutions would be specific to each location. Increasing the use of outdoor spaces as learning environments could link with this strategy, and the addition of sheltered areas could serve as expanded social zones during breaks. Safety in all weathers and security issues would require to be considered in each location.

Soft changeovers

Regardless of the number of transitions in a school day, the density of use of circulation space may be reduced by having soft changeovers. Consideration may be given to a “no bell” strategy which allows a degree of flexibility on class start/finish times and avoids the intensity of flow which many schools experience. It also provides a calm and managed experience which better prepares staff and pupils for the next session.

Signage/communication

Appropriate signage or verbal communication about the system adopted may need to be implemented if it differs from previous arrangements at the setting. Where available a tannoy system may support this.

Timetabling

Creative timetabling has the potential to reduce physical contact and thereby the transmission of infection. Some approaches that education authorities and schools may consider include the following:

- use the flexibility within Curriculum for Excellence and in particular the use of curricular areas and interdisciplinary learning to structure lessons innovatively, and thereby reduce the need for learners and staff to move between different areas of an establishment.
- prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, some secondary schools in Scotland were adopting a “big block” timetable to reduce the number of transitions in the school day. This allows for more in-depth learning and teaching without disruption and also reduces the amount of setup/clean up time in practical subjects.
- particularly for the Senior Phase, where fewer subjects are generally taken and independent learning is more common, pupils may come into school for a longer session with the teacher or to perform practical elements, with self-directed learning or theory then being completed at home via online learning. A flipped learning approach may be particularly helpful in senior phase.
- timetabling may also be considered at a more holistic level to take account of time spent using indoor, outdoor and digital environments. For example, each pupil could have allocated time learning in each of these environments, reducing the capacity requirements placed on indoor facilities. This would be particularly helpful in primary schools.

Drop off/pick up

The arrangements for parents to drop off and collect children/young people require careful consideration, to ensure that large gatherings of people can be avoided and physical distancing maintained. Parents should not enter school buildings unless required. Some approaches that education authorities and schools may consider include the following:

- staggered drop off/pick up times, so that not all children arrive onsite at one time
- if the school has additional access points, consideration may be given to whether it would be beneficial to open these to reduce congestion
- consideration may be given to where children go as they arrive at the facility. This could include heading straight to their small group's designated learning space/classroom, which could be indoors or outdoors.
- if parents or carers are dropping off younger children, they should be discouraged from gathering outside the school and should maintain distancing of 2m, as far as practicable, when dropping off their children. Appropriate markings may be introduced at the school gates.
- for those arriving by car, parents may be encouraged to park further away from the school and then walk with their children to avoid congestion, or alternatively use active travel routes where feasible. Car-sharing with children of other households should be discouraged.
- where learning spaces can be accessed directly from outside, this should be encouraged to decrease interactions between individuals in circulation spaces
- particular consideration should be given to the arrangements for parents of children with complex needs or disabilities, who may normally drop their children off within the school building

Social time and dining

Education authorities and schools may wish to consider the following potential approaches to minimising interaction at social and dining times and dealing with associated logistical issues. Arrangements in each setting may depend on whether the dining hall is used as an additional learning space and/or whether food is being prepared on the premises:

- staggering break times, for example by different year groups. The appropriate approach may depend on the cohort of pupils in the school on any one day.
- requiring pupils to maintain physical distancing where possible or, for younger pupils, to stay in their small/designated groups during social times, with appropriate supervision to facilitate this.
- increasing the space for dining or implementing staggered dining arrangements, with children and young people eating in small groups and/or entering the dining hall in their designated groups
- consideration may be given to whether it would be beneficial for pupils to stay in classrooms to eat. This could involve children bringing their own packed lunch or a lunch trolley going around the classes to deliver lunch, as opposed to pupils lining up in a main dining hall.
- maximising the use of the outdoor environment for social times/dining, although implementing distancing between pupils/ groups would need to be supervised
- limiting the number of staff using staffrooms and bases at any one time. Numbers will naturally be less than usual if staggered lunch/break times are implemented.

Evacuation procedures

If the layout of facilities is changed, and/or circulation routes or entry/exit points are altered, consideration should be given to evacuation procedures (e.g. in the event of a fire or other incident). Muster points should also be considered to ensure appropriate physical distancing arrangements are maintained between individuals/groups as far as practically possible. This should be included as part of the risk assessment for the setting. Evacuation arrangements for children with complex needs or disabilities should be reviewed in light of any changes.

Orientation

Education authorities and schools should consider how they will support staff and children to orientate themselves to the revised layouts and circulation patterns described above.

They may wish to consider the following approaches:

- a map could be displayed in the educational setting detailing entry/exit points and new circulation patterns, for use by pupils, staff and parents
- drawing on learning from the retail sector, clear signage and colour coding on walls and floors could be implemented prior to return to help with wayfinding, along with taping off of specific areas
- appropriate visuals will be particularly important for younger children and for some children with additional support needs. These will need to be clear and child friendly to enable them to be understood by as many children as possible. These could include signs in braille (with appropriate arrangements made for hygiene) or signs that display meaningful symbols. Any signage that involves direct interaction from pupils will need to be cleaned regularly and further methods of communication should also be considered
- some new schools utilise 3D digital models or 360 photography to allow remote familiarisation prior to occupation. This approach may be considered for returning users to help them orientate new layouts. This would also be useful for those in transition e.g. P7 to S1 in the event they have missed the opportunity for transition visits prior to schools closing.

For children with Additional Support Needs, schools should work in partnership with parents, lead professionals, children and young people to establish what support and plans need to be put in place to meet their needs for both learning at school and at home. Enhanced transitions may be considered for children with Additional Support Needs, such as through visual representations and plans of physical distancing in their schools. Further guidance will be provided on these issues.

Special considerations for people who are clinically vulnerable or shielding

Note: This section of the guidance is currently under review and may be updated.

Pupils and staff who are clinically vulnerable

All schools should follow [the latest guidance on attendance for children, young people and staff who have health conditions or are pregnant, or who live with individuals who have health conditions or are pregnant](#).

Clinically vulnerable people are a wider group of people compared to those who are extremely clinically vulnerable (who should rigorously follow shielding measures). People who are clinically vulnerable are those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the [physical \(social distancing\) guidance](#) and should work from home where possible.

A small minority of children will fall into this category, and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

Staff who fall into this category should be supported to work from home where possible, for example by asking them to support remote education, carry out lesson planning or other roles which can be done from home. If they cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible, although the individual may choose to take on a role that does not allow for this distance if they prefer to do so. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, settings must carefully assess and discuss with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

Pupils and staff who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable

If a child, young person or a member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable as above), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting. Further information, including the list of underlying health conditions that make people clinically vulnerable, is available in the physical distancing guide on the [NHS Inform website](#).

Pupils and staff who are shielding (extremely clinically vulnerable people)

This is a different group to those who are clinically vulnerable (as described above). Those who are shielding are extremely clinically vulnerable and require a different set of measures to keep them safe.

People with serious underlying health conditions are strongly advised to follow shielding measures to keep themselves safe and not to attend school in person. The most up to date guidance and list of underlying health conditions that necessitate shielding should be checked on [the NHS Inform website under the shielding section](#).

When planning for a wider, phased return of pupils and staff, education authorities and schools should consider the distance learning and support needs of both pupils and staff who are shielding.

Pupils and staff who are living with someone who is shielding

People who have household members who are at very high risk of severe illness (requiring 'shielding') should only attend the education setting if they are able to stringently adhere to physical distancing. Such children should have an individual risk assessment conducted before the most appropriate place of care is determined.

When planning for a wider, phased return of pupils and staff, education authorities and schools should consider the distance learning and support needs of both pupils and staff who are living with people who are shielding.

Hygiene, health and safety

As well as adapting the physical space and decreasing interactions in the education setting, education authorities and schools should consider key practices in respect of hygiene and facilities management.

If the school site or building has been closed for many weeks or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, the education authority/school should undertake a health and safety check of the building concerned and deep cleaning prior to reopening where necessary.

Cleaning

All cleaning should be carried out in accordance with [COVID-19 – guidance for non-healthcare settings](#).

Consideration should be given to the cleaning strategy to be adopted in the school. This may be an extension of the cleaning regime that has been used in childcare hubs, with desk surfaces, chairs, doors, light switches, banisters, sinks and toilets being cleaned more regularly. There should be routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g. telephones, keyboards, door handles, desks and tables).

Each setting should be cleaned every night or when pupil “sessions” change, in preparation for a new group of pupils being present the next day/session. This may require a review of cleaning contracts to ensure additional cleaning hours are available.

If pupils are moving between classes, consideration may be given to appropriate disinfectant wipes being provided to enable them to wipe down their desk/chair/surfaces before leaving the room.

Where possible, work-stations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces that are shared. Make sure that each workstation is wiped down and disinfected before the next person uses it.

Careful consideration should be given to removing from schools any soft furnishings/toys that are hard to clean.

Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for sensory rooms and soft play areas, to ensure safe use.

Surfaces in dining halls should be wiped down and disinfected in between each sitting.

Cleaning of the staff areas should be considered as part of the overall cleaning strategy. Staff should use their own cup/cutlery and ensure these are cleaned straight after use.

Any crockery and cutlery in shared kitchen areas should be cleaned with warm general purpose detergent and dried thoroughly before being stored for re-use.

Additional cleaning of toilets should be considered as part of the cleaning strategy. Clear signage regarding the washing of hands after using the toilet should be displayed and appropriate hand drying equipment (hand dryer/paper towels) should be provided.

Clean work vehicles, between different passengers or shifts as appropriate.

Personal hygiene

Schools should encourage all staff, pupils, volunteers, contractors, service users and visitors to maintain personal hygiene throughout the day.

This includes:

- frequent washing/sanitising of hands for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly, particularly when entering/leaving the building and before/after eating
- encouraging pupils/staff to avoid touching their faces including mouth, eyes and nose
- using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins, that are emptied regularly for tissue waste

Regular reminders and signage should be applied to build awareness and maintain personal hygiene standards throughout the day.

Adequate facilities should be available for [hand hygiene](#), including handwashing facilities that are adequately stocked or alcohol based hand rub at key areas (e.g. entry and exit points).

Consideration should be given to the installation of outdoor hand basins or hand sanitisers at entry/exit points, to allow all building users to wash hands as they enter/leave the building at pick up/drop off time and at break/lunch times. Help should be given to those pupils who struggle to wash their hands independently.

Ventilation

Where applicable, ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically reduce/increase ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels.

The opening of doors and windows should be encouraged to increase natural ventilation and also to reduce contact with door handles.

A ventilated space should be available for pupils/staff who become symptomatic to wait in until they can be collected or safely get home.

Adherence to Test and Protect

All schools should familiarise themselves with the [Test and Protect \(Test, Trace, Isolate and Support\)](#) strategy that local health boards and Public Health Scotland are implementing. Test and Protect, as the strategy will be known, has a vital role to play alongside other public health measures such as physical distancing and good hand and respiratory hygiene to enable us together to maintain low levels of community transmission of COVID-19.

Parents, carers and school settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning.

Stay at home guidance

All staff working in education facilities, along with the children and young people in their care, should be supported to follow up to date health protection advice on isolation if they or someone in their household exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, or if they have been identified by NHS contact tracers as a close contact of someone with the disease.

Staff and children who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must be encouraged to stay at home, self-isolate, and contact the NHS for advice on testing. Those who do test positive for COVID-19 will be asked to continue to self-isolate for 7 days and their close contacts, identified through contact tracing, will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days. All NHS Boards will have an enhanced COVID-19 contact tracing service in place from 28 May.

All education facilities should plan as much as possible to minimise the operational impact of individual staff or groups of staff being required to self-isolate. In order to interrupt chains of transmission effectively, it will be important that close contacts remain in self-isolation for the full 14 days, even when they have no symptoms. The success of this public health intervention will depend on the continued willingness of the population to comply with these measures.

People who become symptomatic onsite

All members of the educational establishment including staff and pupils should be continually supported to understand the symptoms to look for and clear advice should be provided on how to respond if symptoms become apparent while on-site.

A ventilated space should be available for pupils/staff who become symptomatic to wait in until they can be collected or safely get home.

Liaison with local public health teams

Schools should contact their local health protection team for advice if they have two or more cases (staff or students) or an increased rate of background illness. Contact details for local public health teams can be found in Appendix 1 of the [Health Protection Scotland COVID-19 Guidance for Non-healthcare settings](#).

Schools should also maintain an accurate register of absences of pupils and staff and whether these are due to possible or confirmed COVID-19.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate

All schools should follow [existing advice on the use of personal protective equipment in educational facilities](#).

The use of PPE by staff within education and childcare facilities should be based on a clear assessment of risk and need for an individual child or young person, such as personal care where staff come into contact with blood and body fluids. Schools and education authorities already have set risk assessment processes for the use of PPE. Following any risk assessment (individual or organisational), where the [need for PPE has been identified](#) it should be readily available and provided and staff should be trained on its use.

Risk assessments should already exist for children and young people with more complex needs, including those with emotional and behavioural needs. These risk assessments should be updated as a matter of priority in light of changes to provision such as environment and staffing. If risk assessments are not in place, then they should be undertaken swiftly in accordance with the [Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing in education and childcare facilities](#) and local risk assessment guidance.

To support those assessments, schools should also develop a clear procedure for what staff should do if a pupil starts to display symptoms of COVID-19 when at school including guidance on the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) adhering to HPS [non-healthcare facilities guidance](#)

HPS non-healthcare facilities guidance makes clear that staff should continue to use PPE in line with current health and safety policies and risk assessments. Staff should only wear PPE when it is appropriate to the task they are undertaking. The exception is where, following an individual or organisational risk assessment it is found that a higher level of contamination, such as respiratory secretions, may be present or the risk assessment identifies that there is an identified need for PPE then it should be readily available and provided in line with [guidance](#).

Facilities management and deliveries

Any work carried out within the school setting should adhere to the principles of physical distancing. If it cannot adhere to the principles of physical distancing, then consideration should be given to possible mitigation measures to minimise the closeness and duration of time that is spent within 2 metres. A risk assessment should be undertaken.

When facilities management staff are permitted to return to reconfigure layouts to ensure physical distancing for those attending facilities, care should be taken to ensure that 2m physical distancing is adhered to when undertaking this work.

Where workers are required to undertake FM/Repair tasks in an establishment, these workers/contractors must undertake these works in accordance with the latest regulations (including any relevant regulations made under UK or Scottish Acts relating to COVID-19 and/or relevant health and safety legislation). If spaces are to be used in different ways from those originally designed/intended, and with less/more overall footfall, consideration should be given to the ongoing facilities management of these spaces.

Procedures should be put in place for deliveries to minimise person-to-person contact. Deliveries should be timed to avoid drop off/pick up times, with methods devised to reduce the frequency of deliveries e.g. ordering larger quantities less often. Settings should consider providing appropriate hand hygiene facilities at drop off points, with clear signage on access rules.

School transport

National Transport Guidance

Read the latest [guidance to the public and transport operators on how to remain safe when walking, cycling and travelling in vehicles or on public transport during the coronavirus outbreak](#). This includes information on the support that Transport Scotland and Sustrans are providing to education authorities on improving routes to better enable physical distancing.

Education authorities should ensure that local arrangements and advice to staff, parents, carers and pupils for travelling to and from their school is consistent with the latest national guidance. Schools should work with their local authority public transport teams to inform their local planning, particularly in respect of options to minimise and, where possible, stagger the use of public transport. Elements that education authorities should consider include:

- encouraging staff, parents, carers and pupils to plan their journey to and from school, and to minimise pressure on public transport and the road network through walking or cycling where possible
- encouraging pupils and parents/carers to follow physical distancing when travelling to and from school, as advised in the above guidance
- encouraging staff and pupils to wash or sanitise hands before and after travelling
- options to minimise the number of staff and pupils travelling at peak times, for example through staggering start and finish times
- ensuring understanding is shown to parents/carers and children who may be delayed in getting to school due to transport issues
- a survey of families to understand how pupils will be travelling to school when they return, to aid in quantifying the potential public transport issues in education authority areas
- additional support for vulnerable families for planning their journey to school
- consideration of measures such as “park and stride” to minimise activity around school gates

Planning by schools and education authorities

Education authorities and schools should give careful consideration to how pupils and staff will get to and from school safely. Returning larger numbers of pupils and staff back into schools will be significantly impacted by the availability of public transport and private service operators (coach and taxi). That capacity is expected to be greatly reduced while physical distancing measures remain in place, and while physical distancing remains in place it will not be possible for pupils to travel by public transport in the same numbers as before. Schools should work with their local authority public transport teams in planning the arrangement for their school.

The use of active travel routes by parents, carers staff and pupils e.g. walking and cycling should be encouraged, with travel by public transport only used as a last resort, even in instances where public transport is currently paid for by the authority. If bikes are stored in bike sheds/racks consideration should be given to the cleaning of these areas and to reducing time spent at the bikes stores/shed.

Many schools rely on school buses to transport children, particularly in rural locations. Consideration should be given to how many pupils a bus will be able to carry for the 2m

physical distancing rule to be applied. Where school transport cannot meet the estimated demand/need, discussions with the relevant bus providers may be held to understand whether additional provision could be made.

Education authorities and schools should consider how physical distancing will be maintained on school transport. The use of face coverings should be encouraged where appropriate. This should complement, not replace, other measures such as:

- maintaining 2 metres physical distance where possible
- encouraging hand washing and good respiratory hygiene
- regular cleaning of vehicles

Taxis and private hire vehicles

Some pupils, including those with additional support needs, rely on taxi transfers to get to school. There should be careful consideration of how pupils with additional needs can be provided with safe, bespoke transport arrangements. This could include the use of perspex shields in taxis or finding larger vehicles for transportation. Education authorities and schools should liaise with their local private hire providers on the measures they are putting in place to protect passengers, including for the arrangements for carrying multiple passengers.

When travel by taxi or private hire vehicle is necessary, passengers should follow the advice of the driver, including sitting in the back-left hand seat of the car when travelling alone. Passengers should also wear a face covering when using a taxi or private hire vehicle as a consideration to the driver, except for very young children or those with particular conditions where it is not possible. Read [further guidance on face-covering](#).

Further information on the safe use of taxis and private hire vehicles will be set out in [national transport guidance for COVID-19](#).

Public transport

Pupils travelling to and from school normally form a significant proportion of the journeys on public transport during peak times, particularly in city schools and by secondary school pupils. While physical distancing remains in place, it will not be practicable for those to resume in the same numbers or mode as previously. Journeys by public transport may take longer and timetables may change. Pupils and staff who have no alternative to public transport should therefore be advised to plan their journey in advance and leave additional time where possible.

Consideration should also be given to options which could reduce or spread the number of staff and pupils travelling at peak times, for example by staggering days and moving away from traditional start and finish times, to avoid the morning and evening rush hours. This would, however, have knock-on impacts for staff and parents or carers.

Passengers should also wear a face covering when using public transport as a consideration to fellow passengers and transport staff, except for very young children or those with particular conditions. Read [further guidance on face-covering](#).

Where pupils have more complex public transport arrangements to and from their school, for example involving ferry or multiple transfers which may be operating on a reduced or

different timetable, authorities should explore options with local operators, to inform what pattern and location for in-school learning may be practicable in the immediate term.

Dedicated school transport

Education authorities have significant discretion about how they configure their school transport provision and this remains the case during the current period of the Covid-19 outbreak. Early engagement with existing contractors is also key and will help local authorities to assess what challenges their existing contractors may face in providing reconfigured services (such as staff resources, numbers of suitable vehicles) and whether additional capacity is required from other coach and bus providers.

There is significant expertise among local authorities in relation to school transport planning, and efforts should be made to draw on the knowledge and skills of, for example, local ATCO representatives and if needed, wider bus and coach industry bodies, such as CPT.

Local authorities will also need to consider support for children with ASN using school transport and take appropriate actions to reduce risk if hygiene rules and physical distancing is not possible, for example when transporting children and young people with complex needs who need support to access the vehicle or fasten seatbelts.

A comprehensive strategy for communicating and disseminating clear information about school transport provision to parents, carers and pupils, for example, new pick-up and drop-off times should be developed.

Private cars

Routes to and from some schools may also be different as areas make changes to enable physical distancing on pavements and on existing or pop-up cycle routes. While continuing to encourage walking or cycling where they can, parents or carers taking their children to school by car should be encouraged to plan their journey in advance and ensure that their chosen route is accessible. Education authorities may consider introducing park and stride for those pupils who have to travel by car. Read [Sustrans guidance on school streets](#).

Digital

Digital and at home learning will be a key component to the return to a blended model of education. The provision of materials and equipment to support this should be considered holistically alongside both the use of indoor and outdoor environments.

Education authorities and schools should take steps to ensure a good understanding of which children and young people in their school communities have access to digital devices and connectivity if they intend to deliver remote learning digitally. This is vital to ensuring equity of opportunity. The availability of a working device and access to a good connection could form part of the thinking about who should return to school first or who potentially has greater time at school.

Education authorities and schools should continue the work they have been undertaking in relation to tackling digital exclusion. This work includes the provision of devices and connectivity solutions to support educational continuity when children are learning outside of the school environment. This local activity will be supplemented with an initial Scottish Government investment of £9m which will deliver digital inclusion for 25,000 disadvantaged children and young people. A second phase of investment is being considered alongside education authorities.

Education authorities and schools may wish to consider lessons learned from initiatives such as e-Sgoil, to support learners who are located in disparate locations. The appropriate digital resource in terms of cameras, etc. would need to be implemented in learning spaces if this approach was adopted.

There are other examples across Scotland, whereby a lesson is taught across dual locations, with those not in the same location as the teacher still being able to participate in class discussions and interact with the teacher. The digital infrastructure in all environments (home and school) should be considered, including cameras, microphones and appropriate IT, as well as wider considerations around safeguarding and online safety.

Workforce planning

The blended model of education that we expect to see for a period of time under Scotland's Education Recovery Framework may lead to requirements for workforce flexibility and increased staffing.

These may stem from, for example, more teachers or support staff being needed for a greater number of smaller classes (whether in the usual education setting or alternative venues), alongside a requirement to provide support for home learning and wider support for children and young people. They may also stem from a requirement for facilities management staff to organise school estates to support physical distancing, or to deliver enhanced cleaning practices. A proportion of staff may also be shielding or absent due to COVID-19 symptoms, which may affect their ability to attend physical settings. Staff may require access to [childcare](#) to allow them to attend school under the blended model of education.

There will be a specific workload pressure arising from the need to adapt existing resources to align with a blended model, providing in-school learning for an increased number of groups and support for offsite learning. The deployment of additional staffing is expected to be critical to ensuring this can be managed.

Education authorities, working in close partnership with unions and staff, are best placed to make judgements about how to make best use of available workforce capacity safely and effectively. Many of these decisions will be based on agreements reached within Local Negotiation Committees for Teachers (LNCTs). This section sets out some high level expectations to ensure consistency, and some information on national initiatives to support education authorities in these efforts.

Determining workforce capacity

Education authorities/schools should undertake a review of the availability of teaching and support staff, including janitorial, cleaning and office staff, when a decision is taken to return to settings, to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to prepare settings and deliver education under a blended model of education.

In making that assessment/judgement with regard to the teaching workforce, education authorities should take into account the additional flexibilities that have already been put in place to support the delivery of education in this new context:

- The Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) has agreed a range of [flexibilities for temporary changes to teachers' terms and conditions to adapt to the pandemic](#). The SNCT will continue to meet regularly throughout the crisis to consider what further flexibilities may be required.
- The SNCT has agreed [job retention payments to keep temporary supply teachers in the system pending a return to a "new normal" in August](#).
- The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) has offered the flexibility of a reduced timeframe for anyone currently employed as a probationer. Probationers following the Teacher Induction Scheme will be required to have completed a minimum of 120 satisfactory days at school. Those following the Flexible Route will be required to have completed a minimum of 200 satisfactory days at school. Days missed from the usual requirement of 190 and 270 days respectively, will provide

probationers with an opportunity to engage in professional learning activities. A reduced timeframe is also being offered to those teachers seeking professional registration in an additional area.

- Schools are likely to face challenges in effectively supporting students on initial teacher education (ITE) programmes from the beginning of the new school year. Work is currently underway with all key partners to agree the school placement planning assumptions that ITE providers will use to inform the timetabling of their 2020/21 programme delivery, while addressing the potential implications for HEIs and GTC Scotland processes.

In making that assessment/judgement with regard to the wider workforce in the school environment, local authorities should take into account equivalent agreements reached via the Scottish Joint Council (SJC). The SJC has provided guidance in relation to the working arrangements for Casual Workers (SJC-62) and the treatment of annual leave during the COVID 19 period (SJC-60). The SJC continues to meet regularly to consider what additional flexibilities may be required.

Making full use of available workforce capacity

Before considering alternative approaches, education authorities should ensure that existing workforce capacity is fully utilised in responding to the local challenges likely to be faced.

Education authorities should take the following actions as part of any wider workforce planning activities for the opening of school premises:

- ensure that post-probation teachers who have not yet secured permanent employment are considered as an integral part of their planning
- consider the potential for probationer teachers with potentially strong digital skill sets, to support remote learning. This may be an important aspect of maintaining educational continuity
- ensure that supply lists are as up to date as possible and include the full pool of available staff. Supply staff are an important aspect of maintaining educational continuity and should be fully utilised in local planning around workforce capacity
- consider at a local level how all staff who are having to stay at home due to shielding or self-isolation can support educational continuity, for example by supporting remote learning
- consider the availability of health and social care partners as part of planning for support for children and young people
- consider any other opportunities to ensure existing teaching and wider workforce capacity can be deployed to support school reopenings

Throughout this process potential workload issues should be carefully considered, and education authorities should be conscious of the wellbeing of all and the need to implement flexible working practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance for all staff.

Identifying additional workforce capacity

If the existing capacity in the teaching workforce is insufficient to meet the challenges of a blended learning model, partners have agreed that the following actions will be expedited to quickly mobilise additional teachers, for what may be a temporary period. The detail of these

processes is under development and will be communicated to education authorities in due course:

- GTCS will contact teachers who are on the register of teachers where the information held suggests that they are not currently teaching to facilitate their contact with employers to establish their willingness and availability to return to teaching should this be required based on local need. A mechanism will be established with education authorities to manage this process at a local level.
- GTCS will contact individuals whose GTCS registration has recently lapsed, including recently retired teachers, to facilitate their contact with employers to establish their willingness and availability to return to teaching, should this be required based on local need.
- consideration will be given to the costs of registrations and PVG clearances required to bring any of these teachers into employment
- any such approaches to individuals would be accompanied by an offer of appropriate professional learning if necessary (for example, extension of existing return to teaching courses) and a guarantee that the quality of teaching would not be compromised. It may be that a focus on deploying this group of additional teachers to support remote learning would be appropriate.

The Scottish Catholic Education Service has highlighted existing flexibilities for school session 2020/21 to ensure that sufficient probationers can be allocated to denominational schools if this is necessary to support local challenges.

Education authorities should ensure that existing capacity in the wider workforce in the school environment is sufficient to meet the challenges of a phased return to school and keep this under constant review.

Workforce support

The wellbeing of staff is a key principle of the Education Recovery Framework guidance and support developed for the education and early learning and childcare workforce should be done so collegially with staff. Education authorities and settings should ensure that appropriate support for professional learning and wellbeing is provided to staff, many of whom will be working in unusual circumstances. Education authorities and employers already provide a wide range of support to staff, this includes a range of employee assistance programmes and online help that cover financial, mental and physical wellbeing, as well as resilience and working at home.

Education authorities and settings may wish to have regard to the summary of available resources, produced by key partners working under the ERG. Those working in education and ELC are encouraged to share their professional learning and wellbeing support needs through the survey included in the summary of resources in order to inform the work to develop any additional support for the workforce. Read the [summary and survey](#).

Communications

Education authorities and schools should ensure regular, timely and clear communication with their school communities about the approach they are adopting to a phased return to schooling in line with the Education Recovery Framework and supporting guidance.

Parents and carers

The main concerns for parents and carers are likely to be the safety and wellbeing of their children in schools as well as practical considerations on how the new arrangements will work. In line with requirements under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 education authorities and settings should make arrangements to communicate with parents and carers. As part of this it is important to consider appropriate dialogue and engagement with the Parent Council and the wider parent forum. Advice and support may be available internally from those in the education authority who are responsible for parental involvement. Two-way communication is vital. The gathering of questions, issues or concerns from parents and carers will be just as important as clear communication to parents and carers about how things will work.

National information, Q&As and other material on education recovery, parental communication and home learning can be used to complement any communications locally and at school level. This includes [Parent Club's dedicated COVID-19 web pages](#), the [National Parent Forum](#) (website and weekly newsletter), information from Connect, Education Scotland's "[Scotland Learns](#)" and [Parentzone Scotland](#) websites and other sources.

Children and young people

Schools and settings will wish to develop arrangements for good quality dialogue with and communication with pupils about the new arrangements. A variety of methods can help to gather pupil views, questions and issues, and can help to clarify and address difficulties prior to return. Pupil Councils, pupil panels and other pupil voice arrangements remain very important at this time. General advice on good principles and methods for [learner participation](#) is available from Education Scotland as well as a range of third sector organisations.

Authorities and settings may wish to consider the information and evidence available from available national level survey work with young people on COVID-19. This includes the work conducted jointly by [Young Scot](#), [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) and [YouthLink Scotland](#) as well as guidance and information from [Children's Parliament](#) and [Children in Scotland](#).

Supplementary guidance for residential boarding/hostel accommodation in educational facilities

Developed in consultation with regulatory bodies members of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, the Boarding Schools Association, and local authority school residence providers.

Application

This supplementary guidance is intended for school care accommodation services, provided for the purpose of pupils in attendance at a public, independent or grant-aided school, and consisting of the provision of residential accommodation.^[1]

These include independent boarding school facilities and residence halls provided by local authority secondary schools.

The guidance is produced in support of the work of the Education Recovery Group (ERG). All activity aimed at the reopening of accommodation services will be in keeping with public health guidance as determined by the Chief Medical Officer and Health Protection Scotland (HPS) - including any specific HPS guidance relating to residential schools. It will be in line with the Scottish Government "COVID-19 a Framework for Decision Making", and ERG guidance covering all school settings.

Schools are already preparing for the substantial alterations and other considerations they anticipate to enable re-opening. For the mainstream independent boarding schools, the Boarding School Association has, after consultation, also prepared a checklist covering issues including facilities, curriculum, kitchens, boarding houses, medical, activities, staffing, wellbeing, and new pupils and visitors. Each residential facility will undertake a discrete risk assessment based on their own school estate, buildings capacity and pupil roll, in conjunction with staff and the managing authorities of Governing Boards where they exist.

Preparing for reopening of facilities

The primary issues for all schools will be the health and wellbeing of pupils, staff and families. To allow for the highest level of preparation and testing of school facilities, schools will require clear, early and unequivocal national awareness as to the dates of possible reopening.

In a residential school environment, alternating pupil attendance would have to be considered in the context of the use of the wider school estate, while separate arrangements will have to be considered for day pupils as part of the wider issue of day/boarding mix. The staggered return of pupils could assist returning international pupils meet any isolation requirements first – dependent on travel advice. Likewise, residential facilities may be limited in the extent to which shared space can be re-purposed, although outdoor and other facilities are likely to be employed. The probable lack of nearby similar schools means that sharing of facilities between schools is unlikely to be possible.

Every setting will undertake its own specific risk assessment, considering local circumstances, the domestic arrangements of pupils and staff, travel requirements, school capacity and public health and hygiene requirements. The assessment will have to consider

the overall number of pupils, staffing levels, the capacity of each residential hall or house, the mix of shared dormitories and individual bedroom facilities, and shared communal facilities. In turn, these preparations will assist in determining whether boarding houses can be considered discrete family units.

These will also include contingency provision for symptomatic pupils or staff, those with underlying health conditions, and consideration of supply chains such as catering, external pastoral support, and the use of school and public transport.

Schools should inform the Care Inspectorate of their intention to re-open and proposed re-opening dates.

Capacity

As referenced in the principal guidance schools will have to consider if facilities are currently in use in another capacity relating to COVID-19, such as hub school provision for key worker or vulnerable children, or the provision of facilities and support for front-line workers.

Determining capacity for teaching and other non-residential spaces will be done in line with the principal guidance. Boarding facilities are not in the position to alter days in school or stagger attendance. Appropriate distancing will be observed where possible, or other measures put in place to meet public health requirements, subject to local discretion.

Grouping/households

Schools should organise boarding pupils into small groups who stay separate from other groups in the schools, in order to reduce risk of possible transmission while required measures are in place. Such groups may include relevant members of residential staff and each group should observe appropriate physical distancing, particularly with any pupil or member of staff outside their household. Such groups may share common areas for certain activities. This would also reduce the need for wider isolation should symptoms be identified in any individual.

Incoming pupils

Dependent on public health and travel advice, schools may seek to ask international boarders, or those from outside the remit of Scottish public health guidance, to return early for the Autumn term in order to carry out any required quarantine period. This may include those service children in boarding schools whose parents are serving overseas. This will require specific confirmation from residential care and health protection authorities.

Schools that can provide assurance that a suitably equipped boarding house can count as “accommodation” for the purposes of public health guidance, may be in the position that pupils can re-enter the country knowing that they will be safely looked after at school or, where appropriate, by guardians. As testing regimes develop (see below) quarantine requirements may diminish.

Likewise, schools with responsibility for guardians will also be required to assess specific guidance for those guardians they work with.

Testing

Procedures are in place for the local testing of key staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

However, schools will need to consider wider testing of pupils and staff – with the guidance and support of national public health authorities. Regular monitoring may be appropriate. Staff will monitor pupils, checking for symptoms and asking those presenting as unwell to go into an isolated area while medical advice is sought. Individual institutions can consider isolation facilities suitable to their property and public health guidelines.

Depending on public health guidance, contact tracing registers may be set up and identify which boarders and adults are on site. This would include recording visitors to the site, including parents.

Additional public health considerations

Establishments should follow all of the requirements in the principal guidance for schools. In addition, they should consider the following requirements:

- residential pupils showing symptoms will require to be isolated and tested
- pupils should not travel to the school if showing symptoms – schools will need to be clear of country of origin policies concerning travel, quarantine and other guidance, as well as cultural expectations. It may be the expectation of some nationals that face coverings be worn, for instance
- risk assessments will be required for pupils and staff at relevant establishments who are at risk of serious illness through underlying conditions. Consideration should be given to whether alternative care arrangements may be more appropriate for clinically vulnerable children. While avoiding the transmission of COVID19 remains the priority, schools should consider the emotional well-being of students, especially those who are already vulnerable to mental health issues. This includes those who may have had to complete repeated periods of isolation (during one holiday period) in their 'home' country and then in the UK.
- thorough risk assessments should be undertaken for any new groupings or households formed within the facility (see Groupings/Households) above. There is an increased risk that staff and children may not be able to adhere to physical distancing in such households. Appropriate efforts should be made to maintain physical distancing where possible, particularly with any pupil or member of staff outside their household.
- where distancing is not possible, appropriate alternative mitigation measures should be implemented, aligned with the principal guidance
- where possible, individual rooms with en suite washing and toilet facilities may be provided to reduce interactions
- boarding facilities should provide appropriate hand hygiene facilities (eg. hand sanitiser) in common spaces. Bathrooms should be fully supplied for handwashing and drying.
- schools should consider whether boarders should be permitted to leave school premises in free time, having regard to the need to minimise unnecessary interactions with others off the school premises. This will also apply to health procedures in place for flexi-boarders, and school residence pupils due to return

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home at weekends or during holidays. These factors should be considered as part of risk assessments.

- the use of relevant facilities by external groups, or visitors attending school events, should remain subject to public health advice
- resources shared between, rather than within, households (such as board games, magazines and books, snacks etc.) should be restricted until public health advice changes
- local health protection teams should be contacted in the event of any cases to ensure a potential outbreak is dealt with promptly

Establishments may also find the existing Scottish Government [guidance for residential children's houses, residential schools and secure care facilities on staffing, social distancing and self-isolation](#) useful.

[1] <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1210/health-and-social-care-standards.pdf>

Related guidance

- [Coronavirus Act 2020](#)
- Scottish Government [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [COVID-19 workforce education information and resources](#).
- Scottish Government [guidance for residential children's houses, residential schools and secure care facilities on staffing, social distancing and self-isolation](#)
- Health Protection Scotland [information and guidance for social or community care and residential facilities](#), including a control measure tool for the control of incidents and outbreaks
- incident or outbreak control tool for social or community care or residential settings - Health Protection Scotland [advice for social or community care and residential settings staff](#)
- [Care Inspectorate coronavirus information](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive coronavirus information](#)
- [UK Boarding Schools Association COVID-19 guidance](#)
- [Scottish Council of Independent Schools](#)
- [Independent Schools Council](#)
- [National Transport Guidance portal](#)
- [Outdoor Learning Directory](#)
- [Scottish Advisory Panel on Outdoor Education](#)