

Decorative graphic elements in the top right corner, including a stylized virus particle and a larger, more complex virus-like structure with internal components.

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Prime Minister's statement on the national lockdown position

Today, the Prime Minister has announced that it will not be possible to resume face-to-face learning immediately after the February half-term and instead hopes it will be safe to commence the re-opening of schools and colleges from Monday 8 March. This is in response to the national public health data and pressure on NHS capacity.

If the Government achieves its target of vaccinating everyone in the four most vulnerable groups with their first dose by 15 February then those groups will have developed immunity from the virus around three weeks later, that is by 8 March. It is for this reason that we hope it will therefore be safe to commence the reopening of schools from Monday 8 March.

Education settings, as well as students, parents and carers will be given at least two weeks notice to prepare for a return to face-to-face education.

Schools and colleges will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers after February half-term, as they are now. All other pupils will continue to receive high quality remote education at home. This is in line with the wider national lockdown measures to help minimise the spread of the virus and respond quickly to the new variant.

Early years provision should continue to remain open throughout and should continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetabled hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites.

The Prime Minister has also committed to providing a programme of catch-up into the next financial year. This involves a further £300m of new money to early years, schools and colleges for tutoring, as well as working in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a coronavirus (COVID-19) premium to support catch-up.

In recognition that extended school and college attendance restrictions will have a huge impact on children's learning, the Government will work with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long-term plan to make sure pupils have the chance to make up their learning over the course of this parliament.

The government will also continue to provide support for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals through the national voucher scheme or lunch parcels to those learning at home during term time next half-term. Support will also be available during the half-term holiday for vulnerable families through the [Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#).

Education attendance restrictions are to be reviewed again in mid-February when the Government will look at when more pupils and students can be brought back into schools and further education.

Read the [full statement made by the Prime Minister](#).

Update on the secondary school and college testing programme – change to confirmatory PCR tests

The secondary school and college testing programme is continuing to use lateral flow tests to identify cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst staff and pupils who are asymptomatic.

Following new advice, NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England are temporarily pausing the need for a confirmatory PCR test following a positive result with a lateral flow test in secondary schools and colleges. In line with clinical advice, confirmatory PCR testing will remain in place for primary school staff as testing is done at home. Following a positive lateral flow test result, an individual will need to self-isolate in line with [government guidance](#), and contact tracing will

need to be undertaken. It will also be the trigger for self-isolation payments.

Confirmatory PCR testing was introduced to minimise the chance of false positive results with lateral flow tests. When coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence rates are high, however, Public Health England has advised that the performance of lateral flow devices and PCR tests are broadly comparable for infectivity and expected to be indistinguishable when used at test sites, significantly reducing the need for routine confirmatory testing.

Guidance for secondary schools and colleges on logging coronavirus (COVID-19) test results

It is important for secondary schools and colleges to log test results, both positive and negative, on your individual school or college account on the [NHS Test and Trace Log Results](#) website. We need to know about all results (not just positive) for public health and virus containment reasons. We will also use the test results recorded to calculate funding allocations.

Further guidance on how to log test results can be found in the NHS Test and Trace how to guide which can be found on the [secondary schools and college document sharing platform](#).

Guidance for staff testing in primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools

Primary schools (including school-based nurseries) should expect to receive an initial delivery of home testing kits. If you have not received your delivery by close of business today, please complete this [contact form](#). You will need the URN for your school to complete this form. We are planning to begin deliveries to maintained nursery schools from week commencing 1 February.

Home testing of staff in primary schools (including school-based nurseries) can begin from week commencing Monday 25 January, once schools have received and distributed kits to staff.

Traineeship employer incentive

Today, the Apprenticeships and Skills Minister, Gillian Keegan, has announced that employers can now [apply for a £1000 employer incentive](#) to help them take on new trainees.

The new scheme will support young people to gain the skills and experience they need from the very start, helping them to get a job, an apprenticeship, or pursue further study. The cash incentive will be available until 31 July 2021 and will help businesses with the cost of providing a high-quality work placement for a trainee. This includes providing facilities, uniforms or helping with travel costs. Businesses offering new traineeship opportunities will receive the £1,000 bonus for every trainee they take on up to a maximum of 10 trainees. Employers can claim the cash incentive for all work placements that have been completed since 1 September 2020.

Further information on traineeships for trainees, employers and training providers can be found on our [traineeships](#) collection page.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) school snapshot research panel

If you are a school leader or classroom teacher, we may have invited you to join our new coronavirus (COVID-19) school snapshot research panel. The panel will help us understand how we can enhance support for schools and pupils during the pandemic, in a rapidly changing situation.

Postal invitation letters and emails to named staff members have been sent to schools. These invites are jointly-branded from the Department for Education and IFF Research. If invited, we strongly encourage leaders and teachers to take part. The invitation letter provides further information.

Survey for wraparound childcare providers

Yesterday, Ofsted issued a survey to wraparound childcare providers on behalf of the Department for Education. This survey aims to collect information about wraparound care and sufficiency within the sector and will help inform the department's ongoing response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you have received this email, please complete the survey by Friday 5 February.

The information below has not changed since our last update

Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline

The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline and the PHE Advice Service (option 1) is available to answer any questions you have about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to education settings and children's social care.

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm

Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm

Please listen carefully to all of the available options before selecting the most appropriate option for your nursery, school, college or university.

Look up your unique organisation number (UON)

If you have not received your unique organisation number (UON) for ordering new coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits you can [look it up using your unique reference number \(URN\) or your UK provider reference number \(UKPRN\)](#) or by calling the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119.

Department for Education guidance

Our guidance to support education providers, local authorities and parents during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak can be accessed using the links below:

- [Guidance for early years and childcare providers](#)
- [Guidance for schools](#)
- [Guidance for further and higher education providers](#)
- [Guidance for local authority children's services](#)