Coronavirus briefing: safeguarding guidance for schools

This briefing summarises the latest guidance for UK schools on safeguarding and child protection during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

25 January 2021

Introduction

As the coronavirus pandemic has progressed and restrictions have changed, schools have regularly had to adapt the way they teach and support children and young people. We have pulled together key guidance from all four UK nations to help professionals understand their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities at this time.

This briefing will be updated regularly.

We have also published a briefing for early years providers, pulling together key guidance on the coronavirus pandemic.

> **Read our coronavirus briefing for early years providers**

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England

In England, the Department for Education (DfE) has stated that only vulnerable children and the children of critical workers should be attending school for face-to-face learning during the national lockdown that began on 05 January 2021. This applies to all schools and further education settings. All other children from Reception upwards should learn remotely until February half term 2021 (DfE, 2021a; 2021b).

Alternative provision, special schools and special post-16 settings may continue to offer face-to-face provision to all children, where appropriate (DfE, 2021a; 2021b; 2021c).

The DfE has published a range of guidance to help schools during the pandemic.

Safeguarding and child protection

Schools should continue to follow the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance, **Keeping children safe in education** (DfE, 2021d).

The key guidance for schools and colleges provides more detail on safeguarding and child protection during the pandemic.

Key guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic

Guidance for schools during the national lockdown

This guidance includes:

- adapting safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures
- multi-agency working
- the role of designated safeguarding leads
- responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns remotely
- monitoring and recording attendance
- boarding and residential schools
- coronavirus protective measures
- safe recruitment
- supply staff
- support staff and visiting specialists
- children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- free school meals
- extra-curricular activities
- supporting children and young people's wellbeing
- assessment and exams
- inspections

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- educational visits

(DfE, 2021a).

Guidance for further education settings during the national lockdown

This guidance includes:

- acting on safeguarding concerns
- multi-agency working
- coronavirus protective measures
- safe recruitment
- supply staff and visitors
- young people with SEND
- assessment and exams
- inspections
- educational visits

(DfE, 2021b).

Guidance for special schools and other specialist settings during the national lockdown

This guidance includes:

- the role of designated safeguarding leads
- multi-agency working
- responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns remotely
- monitoring and recording attendance
- remote education
- alternative provision, including hospital education
- residential settings
- children with education, health and care (EHC) plans
- coronavirus protective measures
- coronavirus testing
- risk assessments
- safe recruitment
- supply staff
- support staff and visiting specialists
- managing behaviour
- assessment and exams
- inspections

(DfE, 2021c).

Remote education

The DfE has put together a **portal of resources on remote learning**. It includes guidance on:

- the legal duty to provide remote education
- safeguarding and remote education
- good practice for remote education
- supporting children and young people with SEND
- providing devices to ensure children and young people can access remote education

(DfE, 2020a).

> **Read more about undertaking remote teaching safely**

Wellbeing and support

The key guidance for schools and further education settings includes information on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and signposts useful resources (DfE, 2021a; 2021b).

The DfE has also published further guidance on **supporting wellbeing** (DfE, 2020b).

The DfE has published **guidance on providing school meals during the coronavirus outbreak**, including free school meals (DfE, 2021f).

> **Find out more about supporting children and young people's mental health during the pandemic**

Coronavirus protective measures

The key guidance for schools and colleges gives information on how to implement social distancing and protective measures.

The DfE has published **guidance on working safely in education settings during the pandemic** (DfE, 2020c).

The DfE and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have published **guidance on using the NHS COVID-19 app in education settings**, including adapting mobile phone policies in schools (DfE and DHSC, 2020).

The DfE has also published **guidance on wearing face coverings in education** (DfE, 2021d) and **guidance on coronavirus testing in schools and colleges** (DfE, 2021g).

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There is also **guidance for residential educational settings with international students under the age of 18** (DfE, 2020d).

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, only vulnerable children and children of key workers should currently have access to supervised learning in school. Mainstream education settings should provide remote learning for all other children and young people until the half term break in February (Department of Education, 2021a).

Special schools should remain open to all children and young people. Education other than at school (EOTAS) provision should continue operating as normal with remote learning for those who do not attend (Department of Education, 2021a).

The Department of Education has published a range of guidance to support schools through the pandemic.

Safeguarding and child protection

Schools should continue to follow the statutory guidance for safeguarding, **Safeguarding and child protection in schools** (Department of Education, 2020a).

The Department of Education has published a **contingency planning framework for vulnerable children and young people** (Department of Education, 2021b).

Key guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic

The Department of Education has published two letters to schools and education settings outlining the current arrangements.

Guidance update letter: 06 January 2021

This letter includes:

- provision for vulnerable and key worker children
- face coverings
- free school meals
- COVID-19 measures and risk assessments

(Department of Education, 2021a).

Guidance update letter: 11 January 2021

This letter includes:

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- exams and qualifications
- social distancing
- the legal requirement to provide remote learning
- supporting younger children and children with statements of special educational needs (SEN)
- definition of vulnerable children and key workers
- face coverings
- recording attendance

(Department of Education, 2021c).

The Department of Education has also published guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic.

Guidance for schools and educational settings during the coronavirus pandemic

This guidance includes:

- the role of designated teachers for child protection
- recording attendance
- boarding schools
- remote learning
- coronavirus protective measures
- the test, trace and protect system
- school transport
- free school meals
- curriculum
- substitute teachers
- communicating with parents, carers, children and young people

(Department of Education, 2020b).

Guidance for special schools during the coronavirus pandemic

This guidance includes:

- attendance
- transport
- coronavirus protective measures

(Department of Education, 2020c).

Remote education

The key guidance for schools gives information on remote and blended learning.

The Department of Education has also published more detailed guidance on providing remote learning.

Guidance for schools on remote learning

This guidance includes:

- responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns
- good practice for remote learning

(Department of Education, 2020d).

Guidance on curriculum planning

This guidance includes:

- blended learning
- engaging children and young people with learning
- supporting children and young people with their experience of the coronavirus pandemic

(Department of Education, 2020e).

> **Read more about undertaking remote teaching safely**

Wellbeing and support

The key guidance for schools and guidance on curriculum planning provides information on supporting children and young people's wellbeing.

The Department of Health has also published a **mental health action plan**, which includes actions to help ensure child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) operate efficiently and effectively (Department of Health, 2020).

> **Find out more about supporting children and young people's mental health during the pandemic**

Coronavirus protective measures

The key guidance for schools provides information on social distancing, hygiene, personal protective equipment (PPE) and the test, trace and protect system.

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Scotland

In Scotland, only children of key workers and vulnerable children should attend school in person. All other children and young people should receive remote learning until the middle of February (Scottish Government, 2021a).

The Scottish Government has published guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic.

Safeguarding and child protection

Schools should continue to follow the **National guidance for child protection in Scotland** (Scottish Government, 2014).

The Scottish Government has published **supplementary guidance on child protection during the coronavirus pandemic**.

This guidance includes:

- how the child protection system should work during the pandemic
- domestic abuse
- support for staff
- engaging with children, young people and their families

(Scottish Government, 2020a).

There is also key guidance for schools which gives information on safeguarding and child protection.

Key guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic

School arrangements for January 2021

This guidance includes:

- vulnerable children and young people
- the named persons and key points of contact service
- definition of key workers
- remote learning
- free school meals
- communicating with parents, carers and families
- residential settings
- clinically vulnerable staff, children and young people
- assessment and exams

(Scottish Government, 2021a).

Guidance on reducing the risks in schools

This guidance includes:

- dealing with child protection concerns
- promoting and monitoring attendance
- supporting children and young people's wellbeing
- free school meals
- residential settings
- communicating with parents, carers, children and young people
- coronavirus protective measures
- curriculum and assessment
- supply staff
- contingency planning

(Scottish Government, 2020b).

Guidance for residential settings, including residential schools

This guidance includes:

- adult-to-child ratios
- supporting children and young people's mental health
- children and young people going missing from care
- family visits
- coronavirus protective measures
- testing and self-isolating

(Scottish Government, 2021b).

The Scottish Government has also published **guidance on school visits and trips** (Scottish Government, 2020c).

Remote learning

The key guidance for schools provides information on remote learning.

The Scottish Government has also published **guidance on supporting children and young people's learning throughout the pandemic**. This guidance includes:

- keeping children and young people safe online
- blended learning
- home learning
- children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- children and young people who require additional support for learning

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- free school meals
- communicating with parents and carers

(Scottish Government, 2020d).

❯ **Read more about undertaking remote teaching safely**

Wellbeing and support

The key guidance for schools and guidance on remote learning give information on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic.

❯ **Find out more about supporting children and young people's mental health during the pandemic**

Coronavirus protective measures

The key guidance for schools provides information on implementing coronavirus protective measures.

Wales

In Wales, only children of critical workers and vulnerable children should currently attend school or college in person. All other children and young people should receive remote learning. These measures will be reviewed on 29 January 2021 and if rates of community transmission have not reduced significantly by then, schools and colleges should continue online provision until February half term (Welsh Government, 2021a; 2021b).

Special schools and pupil referral units should remain open to support vulnerable children and young people where possible (Welsh Government, 2021a).

The Welsh Government has published guidance to support schools during the coronavirus pandemic.

Safeguarding and child protection

Schools should continue to follow statutory guidance for safeguarding and child protection in schools, **Keeping learners safe** (Welsh Government, 2020a).

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The Welsh Government has also published **guidance and resources for schools on safeguarding and child protection during the coronavirus pandemic** (Welsh Government, 2020b).

The key guidance for schools also provides information on safeguarding and child protection during the pandemic.

Key guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic

Frequently asked questions for schools

This guidance includes:

- definitions of vulnerable children and critical workers
- blended learning
- supporting digitally excluded children and young people
- coronavirus protective measures
- the test, trace and protect system
- free school meals
- assessment and exams

(Welsh Government, 2021a).

Frequently asked questions for further education settings

This guidance includes:

- definitions of vulnerable children
- blended learning
- providing laptops to young people
- coronavirus protective measures
- assessment and exams

(Welsh Government, 2021b).

Operational guidance for schools during the coronavirus pandemic

This guidance includes:

- the role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP)
- multi-agency working
- responding to child protection concerns
- children and young people's wellbeing
- children and young people who require intensive or specialist support
- monitoring and recording attendance
- coronavirus protective measures
- contingency planning for local outbreaks

- safe recruitment
- supply teachers
- free school meals
- educational visits
- assessment and exams

(Welsh Government, 2021c).

Guidance for independent boarding and residential special schools

This guidance includes:

- the role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP)
- responding to child protection concerns
- engaging with children, young people and their families
- international learners
- coronavirus protective measures
- the test, trace and protect system

(Welsh Government, 2020c).

Remote education

The key guidance for schools and education settings provides information on remote education.

The Welsh Government has also published **guidance on learning during the coronavirus pandemic**. This guidance includes:

- supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- remote and on-site learning
- engaging with children, young people, parents and carers
- assessment and exams

(Welsh Government, 2021d).

> **Read more about undertaking remote teaching safely**

Wellbeing and support

The key guidance and guidance on learning for schools and education settings provides information on support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

The Welsh Government has published **guidance for schools on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people**

This guidance includes:

- definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people
- children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or additional learning needs (ALN)
- education other than at school (EOTAS)
- the role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP)
- multi-agency working
- responding to child protection concerns
- safeguarding and child protection while teaching remotely
- blended learning
- engaging with children, young people and their families
- supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- peripatetic staff
- exclusion
- behaviour management
- coronavirus protective measures
- contingency planning for local outbreaks
- assessment and exams

(Welsh Government, 2020d).

The Welsh Government has also published information on **how children and young people can access counselling during the coronavirus pandemic** (Welsh Government, 2020e).

The Welsh Government has published detailed **guidance for schools on free school meals** (Welsh Government, 2020f).

> **Find out more about supporting children and young people's mental health during the pandemic**

Coronavirus protective measures

The key guidance for schools and education settings provides information on implementing coronavirus protective measures.

The Welsh Government has published a **COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool** (Welsh Government, 2020g) and **guidance for schools on using the tool** (Welsh Government, 2020h).

The Welsh Government has also published **guidance for education settings on testing, tracing and using the NHS COVID-19 app** (Welsh Government, 2020i).

There is also guidance for education settings on coronavirus testing:

Guidance for schools and further education settings on home testing kits (Welsh Government, 2020j).

Guidance on asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges (Welsh Government, 2020k).

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