

Arrangements for the Reopening of Schools in England – January 2021

On 30 December 2020, the Government updated its [Guidance for Schools and Childcare Settings](#) for the return of pupils from January 2021.

The Government has confirmed an extension to the period of phased return to face-to-face education for secondary-age pupils and some changes affecting a small number of primary schools.

The spring term 2021 return dates for primary and secondary schools and colleges in England are as follows:

- 4 January – majority of primary schools start returning
- 4 January – secondary schools and colleges to provide remote education for exam years and face to face for education for [vulnerable and critical worker children](#)
- 11 January – face to face education for exam years and vulnerable and critical worker children and remote learning for other secondary school and college years
- 18 January – secondary school and college students return for face-to-face education

Secondary schools and colleges

Schools with secondary-age pupils are asked to prepare for a phased start back to planned on-site provision to allow for these pupils to be tested. The Government has confirmed that:

- full-time on-site provision should be available from the first day of term for all vulnerable children and young people, and the children of critical workers
- preparation should be undertaken in the week commencing 4 January so that as many secondary-age pupils and staff as possible being can be offered 2 lateral flow device tests, prioritising staff, vulnerable children, the children of critical workers and pupils in exam year groups
- remote education should be prioritised for pupils in exam year groups (primarily years 11 and 13) during the week commencing 4 January,
- remote education should be provided for all other pupils from 11 January, with remote education resources week commencing 4 January prioritised for exam years
- all secondary age pupils should be back in school for face-to-face education on by 18 January

Vocational exams scheduled for the first weeks of January will go ahead as planned.

All schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the [system of controls](#) set out in the Government's guidance for schools.

Mass testing in secondary schools and colleges

To support public health efforts during the return to school in January 2021, secondary schools in England will have access to coronavirus (COVID-19) testing from the first week of January.

Secondary-age pupils are being prioritised for testing in response to the recent high rates of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

All schools with secondary-age pupils (including special schools and alternative provision) are expected to offer tests for their pupils, with time to prepare from week commencing 4 January and reaching as many pupils as possible from the week of the 11 January.

During the week commencing 4 January, schools with secondary age pupils are expected to:

- ensure on-site provision is available for vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers
- work to set up their testing programme
- prioritise resource for remote education for exam year groups - remote education should be provided to other years as resources permit

The Government has asked that testing should be rolled out during week commencing 11 January 2021 with exam groups prioritised for testing and return to on-site provision. All other pupils should be tested over the course of the week commencing 11 January.

The Government encourages all pupils to have a test but advises that schools may not require pupils to have a test as a condition of being allowed to return to school on 18 January.

Teachers and school leaders cannot be required to administer tests or to participate in any of the processes involved in delivering testing and the NASUWT would strongly advise that they do not volunteer to do so.

Further NASUWT advice and guidance on this issue is available in our [Mass Testing advice](#).

Primary schools

The majority of primary schools are expected to return as normal.

Primary schools are expected to resume on-site provision as planned from their advertised first day of term and allow all pupils to attend as they have since the start of the school year.

Schools should continue to follow the Government's guidance. All schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the [system of controls](#) set out in the Government's guidance for schools.

The Government has also advised that Coronavirus testing for primary staff under the weekly and daily testing programmes is expected to begin in the second half of January.

The Government requires a small number of primary schools to restrict access only to children of critical workers and vulnerable children from 4 January 2021 and to provide remote education for all other pupils. Further information on the Government's [Contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#) is available on the gov.uk website.

On 30 December 2020 the Government announced that in order to help contain the community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), some restrictions to primary education settings would be required in the following areas of the country from 4 January 2021.

The Government has published a list of local authority areas where the [Contingency Framework additional restrictions](#) will apply to primary schools. Initially, these areas include:

Barking and Dagenham;
Barnet;
Bexley;
Brent;
Bromley;
Croydon;
Ealing;
Enfield;
Hammersmith and Fulham;
Havering;
Hillingdon;
Hounslow;
Kensington and Chelsea;
Merton;
Newham;
Richmond-Upon-Thames;
Southwark;
Sutton;
Tower Hamlets;
Waltham Forest;
Wandsworth;
Westminster;
Brentwood;
Epping Forest;
Castle Point;
Basildon;
Rochford;
Harlow;
Chelmsford;
Braintree;
Maldon;

Southend on Sea;
Thurrock;
Dartford;
Gravesham;
Sevenoaks;
Medway;
Ashford;
Maidstone;
Tonbridge and Malling;
Tunbridge Wells;
Swale;
Hastings;
Rother;
Milton Keynes;
Watford;
Broxbourne;
Hertsmere;
Three Rivers;
Redbridge.

Teachers who are clinically extremely vulnerable (England)

Following the introduction of a new tiered system on 20 December 2020, the Government updated its [Guidance for full opening of schools](#) on 30 December, including updating its guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable staff.

Updated advice on protecting the clinically extremely vulnerable is based on the four [tiers of local restrictions](#) – i.e. [Tier 1: Medium](#), [Tier 2: High](#), [Tier 3: Very High](#) and [Tier 4: Stay at Home](#).

Currently, clinically extremely vulnerable people in Tier 4 areas are advised to follow shielding advice. No other areas are currently advised to shield.

In the future, the Government has said that it intends only to reintroduce formal shielding advice in the very worst affected local areas and for a limited period of time. Currently, this only applies to those areas in Tier 4.

Further information is available in the Government's [Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable](#)

In the Tier 4 areas, individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home and should not go into the workplace.

Individuals in this group will have been identified through a letter from the NHS or from their GP and may have been advised to shield in the past, most recently in November 2020.

The Government expects schools to continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.

The Government's advice is that all other staff in local restriction Tier 4 areas can continue to attend work, including those living in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable.

All staff are currently expected to continue to attend the school or college workplace in local restriction Tier areas 1, 2 and 3.

However, the Government does encourage school/college employers in local restriction Tier 3 areas to discuss with staff additional flexibilities to support clinically extremely vulnerable staff, such as staggered start times to reduce travel during rush hour.

Further [guidance to the clinically extremely vulnerable](#) is available.

Teachers who are pregnant (England)

Following the introduction of a new tiered system on 20 December 2020, the Government updated its [Guidance for full opening of schools](#) on 30 December, including updating its guidance for teachers who are pregnant.

Pregnant women are considered 'clinically vulnerable' or in some cases 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to coronavirus (COVID-19) and therefore require special consideration as set out in the [guidance for pregnant employees](#).

School/college employers are required to carry out a risk assessment and to follow the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW).

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessment.

The Government's [Guidance for full school opening](#) advises that women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, or are pregnant and have an underlying health condition that puts them at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 at any gestation, should take a more precautionary approach. The Government also advises that school/college employers should ensure pregnant women are able to adhere to any active national guidance on social distancing and/or advice for pregnant women considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (this group may previously have been advised to shield).

The NASUWT has also published detailed information and advice for members on [Pregnancy and Maternity Leave During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#).