

19 January 2022 – DfE email – Covid-19 response

This is your email to keep you updated on the government's response to COVID-19. If you have colleagues who would like to receive this email directly, please ask them to use this [subscription form](#).

Today's email includes:

- an update for all education and childcare settings following the Prime Minister's announcement of the end of Plan B

An update for all education and childcare settings following the Prime Minister's announcement of the end of Plan B:

Today, the Prime Minister announced that all Plan B measures will be removed in England, with a full return to Plan A by Thursday 27 January.

In education and childcare settings, this means:

From tomorrow, Thursday 20 January, face coverings are no longer recommended in classrooms and teaching spaces for staff, and pupils and students in year 7 and above. They were introduced in classrooms at the start of the spring term as a temporary measure.

From Thursday 27 January, face coverings are no longer recommended in communal areas for staff, and pupils and students in year 7 and above.

This decision comes in response to national infection data showing the prevalence of COVID-19 to be on a downward trajectory. Whilst there are some groups where cases are likely to continue rising, it is likely that the Omicron wave has now peaked nationally. There remains significant pressure on the NHS but hospital admissions have stabilised, and the number of patients in Intensive Care Units (ICU) remain low and are falling.

This means it is right we remove the most stringent restrictions around wearing face coverings from education, but the virus is still with us, and

continuing with proportionate protective measures remains vital to protect education.

Local directors of public health are able to recommend the use of face coverings in communal areas, across their area only, where DfE and public health experts judge the measure to be proportionate due to specific health concerns. This is a temporary measure. Directors of public health will continue to advise individual settings experiencing outbreaks. Any local introduction of face coverings will be subject to routine review and removed at the earliest opportunity.

Ofsted's deferral policy has provided reassurance to schools, colleges and early years settings that have been significantly impacted by staff absence in recent weeks. That policy remains in place and Ofsted will continue to remind providers about it for the remainder of this half-term.

At the start of this term, Ofsted temporarily halted the use of part time inspectors who are also front-line leaders. They will now invite those who are able to inspect again to do so from Monday 31 January. As has always been the case, it will be for leaders to decide whether to offer their services to Ofsted.

From Thursday 27 January, venues and events will no longer be required by law to use the NHS COVID Pass. The pass can be used on a voluntary basis as was previously the case in Plan A.

The government is no longer asking people to work from home. Staff should speak to their employers about arrangements for returning to the office, and should follow the [working safely during COVID-19 guidance](#).

We have updated the guidance for [schools](#), [further education settings](#), [special schools](#) and [out-of-school settings](#) to reflect these changes.

The information below has not changed since our last update

Department for Education COVID-19 helpline

The [Department for Education COVID-19 helpline](#) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice service are available to answer any questions you have about COVID-19 relating to education and childcare settings and children's social care.

Department for Education guidance

Our guidance to support education and childcare providers, local authorities and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic 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](#)
- [Guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](#)
- [Guidance for parents and carers](#)