

Today's email includes:

- a letter to parents from the Secretaries of State for Education and Health
- information on COVID-19 testing and test kit deliveries during October half-term
- information on the mental health support offers and training available for schools and colleges
- a reminder for schools that they can resume wraparound care
- information for schools and colleges on how to apply for funded support for a digital education platform

Letter from the Secretaries of State for Education and Health

The Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have written a [joint letter](#) to parents about the vaccination of children aged 12 to 15 and the importance of continuing with twice-weekly COVID-19 testing and reporting.

The letter provides information on COVID-19 testing and advises that, in response to potential outbreaks, local health teams may advise additional testing and isolation protocols at your school or college. For example, if a student or pupil is identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace, they may be asked to take daily lateral flow device (LFD) tests, while they wait for their PCR test result. In this scenario, they should continue to attend school or college as long as their LFD test results remain negative.

Alongside the letter are some [frequently answered questions for parents](#), from Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation.

A copy of the letter is [available to download](#). Please share this letter and the frequently asked questions with your parent networks.

Information on COVID-19 testing and test kit deliveries during October half-term

Staff, students and pupils should continue to test twice-weekly over half-term and preferably take an LFD test the night before they return to their setting after the break. It is important to communicate to parents, children and young people on the importance of COVID-19 testing over half-term.

If you do not have sufficient LFD stock for this, please place an order through the [online reordering portal](#). Deliveries to Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) nurseries will continue as usual throughout October.

If you place an order by 5pm on the Tuesday before your half-term break, this will be delivered when you return after the holiday, unless you state in the delivery instructions that your setting will be open, or you will have someone on-site to receive the delivery during the half-term holiday. If your half-term is the week commencing Monday 25 October orders must be placed by 5pm on Tuesday 12 October for delivery before the break (during the week commencing Monday 18 October).

World Mental Health Day – information on the mental health support offers and training available for schools and colleges

To mark World Mental Health Day on Sunday 10 October, the Department for Health and Social Care have published a range

of mental wellbeing resources on the [Public Health England School Zone](#) website as part of their 'Better Health – Every Mind Matters' campaign aimed at helping everyone to look after their own mental health. This includes:

- support for student wellbeing through Better Health's range of free resources for year 6, key stage 3 and key stage 4
- Better Health's new self-care lesson plans for 10 to 16 year olds, filled with engaging, bite-sized wellbeing activities
- tailored wellbeing support for teachers using the 'Every Mind Matters mind plan', which provides personalised tips about what works for you
- an opportunity to win an exclusive student wellness workshop with Mind, by signing up to the School Zone

The Department for Education has also recently published information on [mental health](#) which brings together information about different mental health support offers and training available to schools and colleges. These can help to develop your whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. They include:

- information about our [relationships, sex and health education \(RSHE\): mental wellbeing training module](#)
- updated [guidance](#) on the 8 principles of a whole school approach, which will help to protect and promote children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- updated [senior mental health lead training guidance](#) with information about how to access Department for Education quality assured training
- a list of [mental health and wellbeing resources](#) for school staff

Reminder for schools that they can resume wraparound care

Schools should now be working to resume all wraparound childcare, both before and after school provision, for their pupils. Good quality wraparound childcare has a positive impact on children's outcomes. Research shows that participating in organised sports and joining after school clubs can help to improve children's academic performance, as well as their social, emotional, and behavioural skills. This is particularly the case for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Wraparound childcare is also important for removing barriers for, and supporting, parents to work. We would therefore strongly encourage all schools to offer before and after school provision for their pupils.

Further information on the provision of wraparound care can be found in the [guidance for out-of-school settings](#).

Information for schools and colleges on how to apply for funded support for a digital education platform

The government is still funding expert technical support to help schools and colleges set up secure user accounts for Google and Microsoft's education platforms.

Schools now have until Tuesday 30 November to apply for government funded support to get set up on one of two digital education platforms: Google Workspace for Education or Microsoft Office 365 Education. Our [guidance](#) provides more details on how to apply, advice on how schools can make the most of these platforms and how to choose the most appropriate platform.

Since April 2020, almost 7,000 schools have applied to get set up on a platform and over 2.34 million accounts have been created. When a school has access to a platform, not only will it save time, but they will also give staff and children the chance to continue with their work and education whilst in the classroom and at home. If your school has not applied to the programme,

and is still interested in the offer, please [apply](#) before Tuesday 30 November.

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

Department for Education guidance

Our guidance to support education 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](#)

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