

Today's email includes:

- information on school attendance
- information for all eligible settings on the delivery of CO2 monitors
- information on rapid testing quality assurance in secondary schools and colleges

## School attendance

As the new Secretary of State for Education has made clear, young people regularly attending school is a national priority and is important for their education, wellbeing, and long-term development. This is particularly true for children who were persistently absent before the pandemic or who are at risk of becoming persistently absent. Attendance continues to be mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and schools should communicate clear and consistent expectations about attendance.

Schools will be aware that the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England recently wrote a [letter](#) to parents of children identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), to inform them that they were no longer considered to be clinically vulnerable and would not be advised to shield in future. This decision was based on the results of recent clinical studies which found that in general, children and young people are at very low risk of becoming seriously unwell from the virus. The recommendation was agreed by the Chief Medical Officers of the UK.

A very small number of children and young people will have been advised to isolate or reduce their social contact for short periods of time by their specialist, due to the nature of their medical condition or treatment, rather than because of the pandemic. If this is the case, they should continue to follow the advice of their specialist.

Schools continue to be able to grant leaves of absence for pupils subject to the normal rules. Applications for leave of absence may be made for reasons arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic that do not fall within the category above. Schools should consider all applications for leave of absence on an individual basis taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request. Schools should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a leave of absence is agreed, it should only be for a specific period of time.

We encourage schools to work together with local authority staff, attendance support workers, and local health services (including GPs and school nurses) to reassure families and ensure as many pupils are attending school as possible.

## **CO2 monitors to help improve ventilation in education and childcare settings**

Since the start of October, a regular supply of CO2 monitors has been established. These will be dispatched to eligible settings over the remainder of the autumn term. Consignments will be shipped on a 24 to 48 hour delivery window and settings will now receive an email directly from our supplier, once your monitor allocation is dispatched. You should only contact the supplier if the delivery has not been made after the date indicated on the email.

Further information on the CO2 monitors is available in the [‘How to use CO2 monitors in education and childcare settings guide’](#).

## **Rapid COVID-19 testing quality assurance in secondary schools and colleges**

As part of the NHS Test and Trace rapid COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme, ongoing quality assurance (QA) in secondary schools and colleges is being conducted. This is a standard requirement to assess the performance of lateral flow devices (LFDs) while asymptomatic testing in secondary school and college settings is carried out.

The Schools Quality Assurance Team from NHS Test and Trace will invite a selection of schools and colleges to participate in this programme in the coming weeks. They will provide all participating schools and colleges with a supply of PCR test kits to distribute to pupils, students, and staff over a two-week period, which should be used alongside their usual LFD tests. There will also be support and guidance to explain the process and requirements.

We encourage you to get involved in this national exercise.

If you would like to volunteer, please email [QAinSchools@test-and-trace.nhs.uk](mailto:QAinSchools@test-and-trace.nhs.uk). The quality assurance team will then contact you with further information.

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The information below has not changed since our last update

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## **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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