



Department
for Education

July 2021

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has written to education leaders to thank them for their effort and work over the course of the pandemic and to break down some of the ways in which the move to Step 4 of the Government's roadmap out of the pandemic will reduce restrictions on the sector.

Thank you for the huge effort that you have put into providing face to face and remote education for children, pupils and students during the pandemic, and the incredible work of your inspirational teachers, lecturers and wider educational staff. I recognise that this has been a very challenging year and am continually impressed with, and immensely grateful for, the tremendous work in ensuring that early years settings, schools, colleges, universities and out of school settings have been able to ensure children and young people continue to receive the best education and childcare possible.

I am pleased to tell you that many of the key restrictions on education and childcare will come to an end as we move to Step 4. The Department for Education has set out more detail and published new guidance for these arrangements covering both the summer period and the autumn term (links provided below).

I recognise how much planning and organisation you have put into keeping children and students in bubbles over the last year. From Step 4, you will no longer be asked to keep these groups, which will once more enable flexibility in curriculum delivery and the provision of extra-curricular activities.

I appreciate the protective measures you have put in place over the last year. Over the summer and for the autumn term, in order to balance the risks to health and education, some of these, including enhanced hygiene and ventilation, will remain in place. However, face coverings will no longer be advised for pupils, students, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas, and social distancing will no longer be necessary.

I am also pleased to be able to say there will be no restrictions on the approach to in-person teaching and learning in higher education (HE) providers (unless students are advised to isolate or impacted by local outbreaks). We expect HE providers to offer students a full, enriching and enjoyable experience while staying as safe as possible.

I know that contact tracing has been a difficult, additional task for you this year and am grateful for all your efforts, especially at weekends and during holidays, in tracing close contacts. From the 19 July, NHS Test and Trace will take on the role of contact tracing from schools, colleges and early years settings. NHS Test and Trace will also continue the role of contact tracing for out-of-school settings. From August 16th, those under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, children, or their family members, will be contacted by Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test.

18 year olds will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday to allow them to have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

The way that secondary schools, colleges and universities were able to stand up effective on-site testing, and encourage students to test at home, is another testament to the professionalism and hard work of educational leaders and staff this year, and I am truly grateful for this. As we move out of restrictions, testing remains important.

I also want to encourage all teachers, educational staff and eligible students to get their vaccines. It is incredibly important for all adults to get the second dose of the vaccine as soon as they are eligible, so they secure the strongest possible protection against Covid-19.

In line with wider changes to isolation from August 16th, if in close contact with someone who has tested positive, fully vaccinated staff will be able to remain in their setting from the Autumn term.

We will of course continue to keep these measures under review, in partnership with health experts and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

The guidance relating to what has been set out above can be found below:

Guidance Updates: [COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021](#)

- [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [Guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](#)
- [Assessment processes for selective school admissions](#)
- [Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [Guidance for higher education providers](#)
- [Use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care](#)
- [Evidence summary: COVID-19 - children, young people and education settings](#)

You can also read our more detailed frequently asked questions about Step 4 in this [article](#) on the Education Hub.