

Updated guidance on face coverings in schools will come into effect from Monday

Government guidance on school safety has been updated to take account of public health advice and Scotland's new approach to suppressing coronavirus (COVID-19).

The guidance, which outlines additional protection measures at all five levels in the Strategic Framework, comes into force on Monday 2 November 2020. The guidance on face coverings does not apply to those with exemptions.

Across all levels, face coverings should be worn by adults at all times where they cannot keep two metres from other adults and/or children and young people in primary and secondary schools (with some exceptions in P1-2).

Parents and other visitors to any school site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up must also wear face coverings.

In local authority areas in Levels 3 and 4, which includes Edinburgh for the time being, pupils in the senior phase – S4 to 6 – and their teachers, should wear face coverings in classrooms, as well as when they are moving around the school and in communal areas.

Guidance for school staff and pupils at the highest clinical risk (shielding) has also been updated.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney said: “Keeping schools open remains our priority but that can only be the case if schools are safe. There have been tremendous efforts applied by staff and pupils to ensure this is the case and I thank them all for their efforts.

“We constantly review the guidance on school opening along with our local authority partners, trades unions, parental representatives and other stakeholders to ensure we are taking all the necessary measures to ensure our schools are safe. This strengthened guidance, produced in light of updated scientific and health advice, adds to the health mitigations that have been in place since schools opened in August.

“From Monday, there will be increased use of face coverings and new advice to help protect those in the shielding category.

“It is vital that all the measures are followed rigorously in schools. Doing that – together with the collective efforts of all of us across wider society – will help to ensure that schools can safely remain open.

“None of the levels in the framework require any automatic move to school closures or blended learning. However, no one can predict what the coming weeks and months will bring. Remote learning remains an important contingency for schools at all levels of the strategic framework and there has been considerable progress made in the provision of remote learning, should that be required.”

The updated guidance includes:

At Level 3

- parents or guardians should discuss with their GP or clinician whether children with the highest clinical risk should attend school

- employers should ensure that individual risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place. If protections cannot be put in place, they can discuss with their GP or clinician to see if a fit note may be appropriate

At Level 4 (currently there are no local authority areas in level 4)

- the current advice is that children on the shielding list should not attend school in person. However, the government will look further at how they can use individualised risk assessments to maximise attendance for such children during Level 4 restrictions
- the majority of workplaces can be made safe for staff. To ensure this remains the case, employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.
- To provide reassurance on this, the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter similar to a fit note which can be used in the few cases where, following updating of risk assessments and discussions with employers, it is not possible to make a workplace safe for staff
- greater levels of testing in response to COVID-19 outbreaks in schools may be recommended by the Incident Management Team
- PE in school settings should only take place out of doors
- Non-essential activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable should be paused. This does not include regulated childcare operating from school premises

Other changes in the guidance reflect updated advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub Group on Education and Children's Issues. Members concluded that indoor PE may now be brought into line with advice outwith school settings, with appropriate safety measures in place. This does not apply to indoor PE in schools in Level 4 areas.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on reducing the risks in schools](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): children and transmission](#)

The guidance was developed to support a safe return to school for all children, young people and staff in August 2020. It has since been updated on a regular basis to support the continuing safe implementation of a full-time return to school, and most recently to reflect the levels approach within [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Scotland's Strategic Framework](#). It takes full account of the evolving Covid-19 situation in Scotland, the experience of reopening schools to date, the advice received from scientific and public health experts and the advice of the Education Recovery Group and other key stakeholders, including children and young people.