GUIDANCE

Keep Education Safe: guidance for independent boarding and residential special schools in Wales (COVID-19)

Guidance for independent schools in Wales with boarding or residential provision.

First published: 10 September 2020
Last updated: 14 September 2020
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Introduction

The Welsh Government’s decision framework for the next phase of education and childcare was published on 15 May as a working document to advise on approaches to changing the operation of schools and other providers over time in response to COVID-19. This reiterated the Minister for Education’s five key principles, which are:

- the safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff
- continuing our contribution to the national effort and strategy to fight the spread of COVID-19
- increasing the confidence of parents and carers, staff and learners – based on evidence and information – so that they can plan ahead
- the ability to prioritise learners at key points, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
• consistency with the Welsh Government’s framework for decision-making, to have guidance in place to support measures such as physical distancing, managing attendance and wider protective actions.

These principles are critical not only in increasing the operations of schools at this time, but also indicate the priorities for the system in the months ahead.

The Minister for Education announced on 9 July 2020 that all learners would return to school in the autumn term. The Welsh Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which provides scientific and technical advice to government during emergencies, recommends that schools ‘plan to open in September with 100% of pupils physically present on school sites, subject to a continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community’.

We know that the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. Current evidence points to 'Infection with SARS-CoV-2 appears to take a milder course in children than in adults: most infected children present with mild symptoms or are asymptomatic, and very few develop severe or life threatening disease’.

Purpose of this guidance

This Welsh Government guidance is intended for independent schools in Wales with boarding or residential provision. Detailed guidance for all schools and settings in relation to the operational arrangements that should be considered generally and apply to all learners from September 2020 is provided in the Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term’.

The guidance should also be read in conjunction with the Guidance on learning in schools and settings from the autumn term.

The Welsh Government has also published specific advice for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, which provides supplementary information relating to the support for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Schools should also adhere to the ‘Keeping learners safe' guidance which
continues to apply to all schools in Wales; an updated version will be published this autumn.

The guidance provided in this document is supplementary to the general guidance, and each of the documents should be read alongside each other. This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities. Latest information and guidance on COVID-19 is available on the Welsh Government website and regular reference should be made to this website for updates.

This guidance is for boarding and residential schools who meet the criteria of an independent school. It does not cover further and higher education. Guidance for this sector is available in Coronavirus guidance to support providers of higher education and further education in Wales.

It is important that, as an employer, all independent schools continue to comply with their existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with relevant protected characteristics. The guidance contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, schools should take into account agency workers, contractors (including bus companies) and other people, as well as their employees.

All activity aimed at the reopening of boarding and residential accommodation must be in keeping with public health guidance as determined by the Chief Medical Officer. The Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term sets out the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of COVID-19 transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops COVID-19 symptoms while at school. The guidance provides a set of principles to help schools and settings do this, and in turn minimise risks. All workplaces and premises open to the public must take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and this guidance should also be considered and adhered to.

Public Health Wales has resource materials that contain public health advice about how you can help stop the spread of viruses, like those that cause COVID-19, by practicing good respiratory and hand hygiene.
This supplementary Welsh Government guidance has been shared with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn, the Welsh Independent School Council (WISC) and the Boarding School Association (BSA).

### Getting the boarding/residential school ready for re-opening

There are particular considerations for independent boarding and residential schools looking to welcome back boarders and residential learners for the autumn term. This is particularly important for learners arriving from overseas in line with Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office guidance. Reference should be made to the [UK Government](https://gov.uk) and [Welsh Government](https://gov.wales) websites in relation to the current return and self-isolation requirements for people coming to Wales from abroad. This advice changes regularly and therefore providers should ensure they always have the latest information relevant to their boarders.

In common with all schools, the primary focus planning the return of learners will be the health and well-being of learners, staff and visitors. With this in mind, each school will have already undertaken specific risk assessments based on their own individual circumstances. The risk assessments need to have considered:

- the overall number of learners
- the individual needs of all learners, including those with specific needs
- staffing levels
- the capacity of each residential house
- the mix of shared dormitories and individual bedroom facilities, and shared communal facilities.

Schools will have already been preparing for the substantial alterations and other considerations they envisage to enable the re-opening of their boarding and residential facilities. Advice for all settings is available in the [Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term](https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-independent-boarding-and-residential-special-schools-wales-covid-19).
Risk assessments

Detailed guidance on undertaking risk assessments for all settings can be found in the operational guidance.

The guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners provides advice for schools that support learners with special educational needs.

As the employer, independent school proprietors have a duty to protect both their staff and learners from harm. This includes the requirement to take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk from COVID-19 within the school boarding and residential accommodation, particularly in respect of learners arriving from overseas.

As part of planning it is a statutory requirement for schools to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments, revisiting and updating as they would for other health and safety related hazards, and to put measures in place to ensure compliance with the current Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

This is a risk-led approach to identify and implement sensible measures to control the risks. The assessment should consider what measures need to be implemented to protect the health and safety of all staff, learners, visitors and contractors. These will be influenced by site-specific factors and should build on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed. This will enable them to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place for a return to full capacity in the autumn term. Schools, working with their health and safety adviser and trade unions, should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls considering the implications of COVID-19.

Protective measures

Having assessed their risk, schools as far as reasonably possible must work through the measures set out in the operational guidance, adopting it in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment and that works for their
Schools should work with staff, parents/carers and learners so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice, and have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.

Following the guidance set out in the operational guidance will effectively reduce risks within the school and create an inherently safer environment.

**Symptoms of COVID-19**

It is essential for staff in boarding and residential schools to keep the symptoms of COVID-19 in mind, however mild.

Anyone within the school community who has any of the symptoms above should self-isolate for the appropriate period of time set out in the self-isolation guidance and apply for a test as soon as possible. Members of their household should also self-isolate for the time period set out in the self-isolation guidance from when they first developed symptoms. The contact tracing interview will establish who is assessed as a contact.

If a learner or member of staff develops symptoms, whether they remain at school or not, schools will need to identify other individuals in the ‘household’ or extended household who will need to self-isolate for the period of time set out in the self-isolation guidance. This may include, for example, fellow boarders and residential learners who share a dormitory, bathroom or kitchen, and members of staff.

Boarding and residential staff should be vigilant for any signs of a rise in a learner’s temperature, and of a fever.
On 4 August 2020 the Health Minister announced new advice advising that anyone self-isolating with COVID-19 should contact 111 or their GP if:

- their symptoms don’t improve after seven days
- they experience breathlessness or vomiting
- fatigue stops them doing their normal daily activities.

**Effective infection protection and control**

In every education setting, preventing the spread of COVID-19 involves dealing with direct transmission (for instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing) and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces). A range of approaches and actions should be employed to do this. These can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, create an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. These include the following.

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school and self-isolate if a boarder.
- Ensuring that facilities are in place for all staff and learners to regularly wash their hands. Hands should be washed with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Staff should also ensure learners are reminded of effective handwashing techniques. Regular handwashing should be undertaken including:
  - on arrival at and when leaving the school or setting
  - before and after handling food
  - before and after handling objects and equipment that may have been used by others
  - where there has been any physical contact, including touching your own eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
  - after people blow their nose, sneeze or cough.

Handwashing should be prioritised over the use of hand sanitisers, and hand sanitisers should not replace handwashing. Hand sanitisers with at least 60 per cent alcohol may need to be installed if handwashing is not practicable. This
could be, for example, in common areas such as at entrances to the school. Learner safety should be considered when positioning hand sanitisers.

- Learners and staff should cover their mouths and noses with a tissue or their sleeve or into their elbow if tissues are not available (not their hands) when they cough or sneeze. Used tissues should be put in the bin immediately and hands washed afterwards.
- Insofar as it is possible, they should be encouraged not to touch their face, especially when using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze.
- Schools should ensure help is available for learners who have trouble cleaning their hands independently. Practitioners should consider how to encourage young learners to learn and practice these habits.
- The handling of objects between individuals, including staff, parents/carers and learners, should be minimised.
- Resources shared between, rather than within, households (such as board games, magazines and books, snacks, etc.) should be restricted.
- **Cleaning** frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- Minimising contact and maintaining distance as far as possible – schools will decide how best to do this, as it will be different for each setting, but in broad terms, it will involve asking learners to stay within specified separate groups and through maintaining distance between individuals.
- Staff should also be mindful of the physical environment and how this can be managed to support the health and well-being of learners and staff, for example keeping windows open to let in fresh air and ensuring there is natural sunlight. The airflow and ventilation should be increased where possible.

The use of relevant facilities by external groups, or visitors attending school events, should remain subject to public health advice.

**Increased cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces**

Schools should follow the **latest advice** on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.
Points to consider and implement include putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:

- more frequent deep cleaning of all bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens and other shared areas after they have been used by different groups
- frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- where possible, providing separate toilets for different contact groups. Where this is not possible, using hand sanitiser before entering the toilet
- ensuring toilets are cleaned regularly. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet
- providing appropriate training for all staff in the safe management of boarding and residential accommodation to reflect changes brought about by COVID-19
- liaising with parents and carers to advise them of the school’s policies which will have been updated to reflect COVID-19
- provision to isolate symptomatic learners or staff, and setting aside suitable isolation areas to care for learners who show symptoms and/or test positive.

While avoiding the transmission of COVID-19 remains the priority, the appropriate personnel in schools should consider the emotional well-being of learners who need to self-isolate, especially those who are already vulnerable to mental health issues. This includes those who may have had to complete repeated periods of isolation in their home country and then in the UK.

**Engaging with, and supporting learners and their families**

Key to the effective increase in operations from September will be the trust parents, carers and learners have that boarding and residential accommodation at the school is safe. This applies to all learners and families but is likely to be of more significance to learners from overseas, as well as parents and carers of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, who may have specific health concerns or other concerns associated with returning to their school accommodation. For example, some special educational needs (SEN) or black,
Asian and minority ethnic learners may be anxious about a perceived risk of contracting, or the consequences of contracting, COVID-19.

Understanding the specific needs and barriers faced by individual learners and seeking to address and provide reassurance by explaining the protective measures being implemented is paramount.

Schools offering boarding or residential accommodation should reassure parents/carers of the measures they are taking to reduce risk. This may include providing them with information on the:

- health and safety arrangements, including practices in relation to handwashing and good respiratory hygiene within the accommodation
- arrangements for access to, for example, rebound therapy or sessions in the hydro pool
- cleaning arrangements in place throughout the school after using specific equipment and/or resources
- use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by staff and learners and arrangements for those learners for whom the use of PPE will prove problematic
- arrangements for personal care, including for example, changing and feeding
- arrangements in place for visiting professionals.

**Safeguarding**

Learners will have encountered different experiences and home environments during lockdown and all staff should be reminded of their safeguarding duties within the statutory safeguarding guidance for education settings ‘Keeping learners safe’ and with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

The role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) will be vital, and all staff and learners should be informed of who the DSP is and how to contact them. Accessing a trusted adult, or the DSP, may be more difficult with social/physical distancing so schools and settings should consider how learners can talk privately.
The Welsh Government has produced a non-statutory guide to remind practitioners working across agencies of their responsibilities to safeguard learners and to support them in responding to concerns about learners at risk. The guide links to and should be used with the national Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Social distancing

In the case of adults, maintaining a distance and reducing the amount of time they are in face-to-face contact lowers the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that adults should maintain a two metre distance from each other, and from learners. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger learners, but if adults can do this as far as possible that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within one metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close-contact care. These learners’ educational and care support should be provided with appropriate mitigation measures in place such as PPE as set out in the vulnerable and disadvantaged learners guidance.

For learners old enough, they should also be supported to maintain two metre distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This may not be possible for some learners with complex needs and in some schools where space does not allow. However, reducing the amount of time spent in face-to-face contact, and making small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible, will benefit both learners and staff. Considerations should include seating learners side-by-side and facing forwards, rather than face-to-face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space. Schools applying these measures where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

The First Minister announced that from 3 August 2020 children of primary school age or younger do not generally have to maintain a two metres distance from each other or from adults.

In circumstances where young children mix with others, it may not be practical to
attempt to maintain continual two metre distancing (between children, or even between children and adults). This is in part because it is harder for younger children to understand the concept of physical distancing, and in part because appropriate support from carers will often require closer contact.

For young children (those of primary school age or younger), it is in any case less essential to attempt to rigidly maintain continual two metre distance between them, or between the children and any adults outside their household or extended household. Studies have found that young children are less likely to transmit the virus, whether to other children or to adults, and the virus appears to take a milder course in children than in adults for most cases.

However, as young children can still transmit the virus, parents and carers of young children should still exercise their good judgement and take care especially to encourage their children to follow hand hygiene measures and keep close contact to a minimum wherever possible.

However, it is very important older children and young adults continue to follow social distancing and the other measures to keep them safe.

Notwithstanding this, we recognise that there will still be instances in boarding and residential schools where it will be difficult to expect some learners with special educational needs to maintain consistent social distancing of two metres. In these cases staff should seek to ensure some distancing between learners and from staff, and consider the use of consistent, small contact groups (please see the guidance on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners for more information).

In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stages 4 and 5, the contact groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and for learners to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended.

At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (Key Stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people
who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with COVID-19.

As set out in the operational guidance, schools should assess their circumstances and if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around school, they can look to implement a year group (or half year group) sized contact groups. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and older learners should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible. When using larger groups the other measures from the system of controls become even more important, to minimise transmission risks and to minimise the numbers of learners and staff who may need to self-isolate. We recognise that younger learners will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them generally not to distance within their group.

Where mixing between groups cannot be avoided, schools and practitioners should run the approach to risk estimation and management process to reduce the risk of transmission between contact groups.

It is important that schools and settings have the flexibility to manage and respond to risks in an appropriate way.

Some learners with special educational needs (SEN) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs.

Where a learner routinely attends more than one setting on a part-time basis, for example because they are dual registered, schools should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified.

**Evacuation procedures**

If the layout of the boarding or residential accommodation has been changed with entry and exit points altered, consideration should be given to emergency
evacuation procedures in the event of a fire or other occurrence.

Both staff and learners will need to orientate themselves to any revised layouts. Clear signage will need to indicate the changes. These will need to be clear and child friendly to enable them to be understood by as many learners as possible.

Although in an emergency the priority will be to evacuate the building quickly and safely, appropriate social distancing should be maintained between individuals and groups as far as practically possible. This should be included as part of the risk assessment for the boarding or residential accommodation.

Evacuation arrangements for learners with complex needs or disabilities should be reviewed in light of any changes put in place. Appropriate visual signs will be particularly important for learners with additional learning needs.

Households in the boarding and residential school

It has become common practice across the UK to consider the boarding or residential accommodation in a school to be a ‘household’. Guidance is available to explain what is meant by a household and isolating in an extended household.

If you share a kitchen or a bathroom with others, you may be at a higher risk of spreading or getting coronavirus. People living in shared accommodation during the coronavirus pandemic are treated as a single household. This is for health protection purposes. This means that if anyone living in your shared accommodation who you share facilities with has coronavirus symptoms or needs to self-isolate, you all need to self-isolate, following households with possible coronavirus guidance. The school’s proprietor needs to decide whether the whole residential school setting should be treated as a single household or as multiple households. For example, where residential provision is spread across several, separate buildings, the school may wish to treat these as different households.

Such households may include relevant members of residential staff. Once
established each household should observe appropriate social distancing for older learners and staff, particularly with any learner or member of staff outside their household. These households may share common outdoor areas for certain activities. This would also reduce the need for wider isolation should symptoms be identified in any individual.

How to group learners

Establishing, and maintaining distinct groups, reduces the risk of transmission by limiting the number of learners and staff in contact with each other to only those within that group. Maintaining small groups that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible.

Boarding and residential learners should be organised into small groups who stay separate from other groups in the school. Such groups may include relevant members of residential staff and each group should observe appropriate social distancing, particularly with any learner or member of staff outside their household. Such groups may share common areas for certain activities subject to appropriate social distancing. This would also reduce the need for wider isolation should symptoms be identified in any individual.

During the day, boarding and residential schools should adopt the same practices for keeping groups of learners who are boarding apart as for day learners. Each setting’s circumstances will be slightly different.

Flexi-boarders

Schools should consider whether boarders should be permitted to leave school premises during free time, having regard to the need to minimise unnecessary interactions with others off the school premises. It will be particularly important to consider carefully the health procedures in place for flexi-boarders, and residential learners due to return home at weekends or during holidays. These factors should be considered as part of your risk assessments.
In the dining room and during learners’ free time

Boarding and residential schools may wish to consider the following potential approaches to minimising interaction at meal times and during learners’ free time. Specific arrangements will depend on the layout of the individual school.

• Ensuring hand hygiene guidance is followed diligently, particularly where food is being prepared, handled or eaten.
• Where possible, increasing the space for dining, or implementing staggered meal times, with learners eating in small household groups. The appropriate approach may depend on the number of learners in the boarding or residential accommodation.
• Requiring learners over the age of 11 to maintain social distancing where possible or, for younger learners to stay in their small groups during free times, generally social distancing as far as possible, with appropriate supervision to facilitate this.
• Where the weather allows, maximising the use of the outdoor environment for meals and learners’ free times.

Learners from overseas

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is the primary source of up-to-date information on travel. There is also specific guidance to follow for people returning to Wales as set out below. These pieces of guidance are subject to change at short notice, so providers must be sure they have the most up-to-date information relevant to their boarders.

Schools should be clear about country of origin policies concerning travel, quarantine and other guidance, as well as cultural expectations. It may be the expectation of some nationals that face coverings be worn for instance.

Wherever possible, international learners should be collected from the airport by the school, thus avoiding the need to use public transport. This activity will require thorough risk assessments to have been undertaken beforehand.
Dependent on public health and travel advice at the appropriate time, schools may seek to ask international boarders to return early for the autumn term in order to carry out any required quarantine period (see below). This may include learners in boarding schools from service families whose parents/carers are serving overseas.

**Can boarding houses be used as quarantine zones?**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020 set out the requirements for *travellers from certain countries* to isolate for a quarantine period. These requirements are in line with those of the UK Government.

The list of *travellers exempt from self-isolation* is being kept under review. If learners are coming into the UK from a country where they are required to go into quarantine on arrival, it is likely that as the boarding house will be their primary place of residence it can be used as their quarantine zone. Learners would go straight to the boarding house and self-isolate for the required period. It may be necessary for the school to adopt a phased return for learners to allow for isolation in dormitories.

In this event, learners from overseas who are in quarantine will need a support network around them – that is school staff to provide food, medication and any other provisions.

Schools who are able to provide the assurance to parents/carers that a suitably equipped boarding house can count as accommodation for the purposes of quarantine in line with public health guidance, will be in a good position to accept learners from overseas, in the knowledge that they will be safely looked after at school.

**The use of personal protective equipment (PPE)**

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by staff within the boarding and
residential accommodation should be based on a clear assessment of risk, taking into account each individual setting and the needs of the individual learner.

Advice is available on the Healthy Working Wales website. The operational guidance provides clear guidance on the use of PPE for different scenarios in education, and the Health and Safety Executive website provides information on the use of PPE in health and social care and non-healthcare settings.

The use of PPE with some learners, especially those with special educational needs (SEN), should be carefully considered and risk assessed by the school. Reference should be made to the guidance on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

Due to the individual needs of some learners, it may be the case that specific types of PPE will need to be used at different times of the day and for different activities. Settings must make clear the agreed arrangements for the use of PPE for each individual learner, which should be noted in their individual learning plan to ensure all staff are aware and use of PPE is consistent for individual learners by all staff.

The well-being of learners is critical to any considerations around whether staff or older learners wear face coverings. Individuals who may find it difficult to use face coverings as directed, for example some learners with SEN, should not wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

The list below covers when PPE may be required.

**Suspected COVID-19**

- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn if a child or young person becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care.
- Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting or vomiting.
• Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

Intimate care

• Gloves and aprons should continue to be used when providing intimate care to a child or young person. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
• Fluid-resistant surgical masks and eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting or vomiting.
• Gloves, fluid repellent gowns, FFP3 masks and eye protection are indicated when undertaking aerosol-generating procedures such as suction.
• Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions.

Use of face coverings for health purposes

The Chief Medical Officer has been clear that there is minimal evidence to support the widespread wearing of non-medical face coverings in the community except on public transport or in situations where social distancing and hygiene measures are difficult to maintain. They are not a replacement for far more effective measures such as social distancing, as appropriate to age and understanding and hand hygiene.

Non-medical face coverings are recommended for staff where social distancing cannot be maintained, for example with learners with special educational needs or disabilities.

Considering the well-being of learners is critical to any considerations around whether staff or older learners wear face coverings. No one who may not be able to handle face coverings as directed (e.g. young learners, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) should wear them as it may
inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

Advice on face coverings is kept under constant review and will always follow the latest scientific advice.

**Face coverings and implications for deaf learners or learners with any level of hearing loss**

The impact of wearing a face covering for a deaf learner or learners with any level of hearing loss should be carefully considered, as communication for many deaf people relies in part on being able to see someone’s face clearly. The National Deaf Children’s Society has provided some communication tips that staff may find useful in this regard.

The guidance for vulnerable learners sets out a number of specific considerations for learners with special educational needs.

**Test, Trace, Protect**

Test, Trace, Protect is the Welsh Government's approach to testing and contact tracing, to help us live with COVID-19 while work continues to find more effective treatments and a vaccine. The strategy will enable Wales to resume normal activity gradually and safely.

The operational guidance contains further details of the strategy, but in brief it is in the interests of protecting people’s health and works by:

- testing people with COVID-19 symptoms, asking them to self-isolate from wider family, friends and their community while waiting for a result
- tracing people who have been in close contact with anyone who tests positive, requiring them to take precautions through self-isolation for a period of time prescribed in the self-isolation guidance
- protecting the extremely vulnerable or those at increased risk from the virus, providing advice, guidance and support, particularly if they develop symptoms or have been identified as a contact through the contact tracing
The guidance specifically for education settings on the antigen (swab) and antibody (blood) tests and contact tracing is published on the Welsh Government’s website. A further range of information on testing and contact tracing in Wales is also available.

**Transport**

Guidance on transport for schools is provided in the operational guidance. For the majority of learners, the transport arrangements put in place for all learners will be appropriate. However, for some learners, in particular those with SEN, there will be additional considerations. The latest version of the operational guidance acknowledges this and provides further advice.

**All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool**

The All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool has been designed for use for all health and social care staff thought to be extremely vulnerable or at increased risk, regardless of ethnicity. The tool addresses individual risk factors.

Work is underway to adapt this tool to support the education workplace. Ahead of that work the tool can also be used to support members of staff to consider their own health and well-being status, and helps employees and employers identify, assess and discuss the risks and the actions they can take to mitigate them.

**Keeping up-to-date**

The latest information and frequently asked questions about education and COVID-19 is available on the Welsh Government website.
Some generic coronavirus regulations: frequently asked questions are available, and you can also follow us on Twitter:

@WG_Education

@WelshGovernment

Advice on COVID-19 is available on the Care Inspectorate Wales website.

In addition, Estyn has published a report highlighting how independent schools responded during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report presents a number of cameos that profile the work undertaken in relation to adapting learning, supporting transition, developing learners’ skills and establishing routines to assist in reducing anxiety.
About this document

This document is a copy of the web page Keep Education Safe: guidance for independent boarding and residential special schools in Wales (COVID-19) downloaded.


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