

Frequently Asked Questions

Situation	Answer
<i>Is the employee needed to be on school premises to do their job or can they work from home?</i>	If the employee can continue to work from home then it can be continued. The guidance states, “most school-based roles are not ideally suited to home working and schools may expect most staff to return to work in settings. Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and school leaders should consider what is feasible and appropriate.”
<i>The employee is required to self-isolate, can they be asked to work from home.</i>	Yes. Schools should identify work that can be carried out from home. If they are required to self-isolate the employee must not go into school at all.
<i>Do we need to provide employees with face masks?</i>	<p>No. It’s reasonable to expect that employees provide their own masks, however, should their mask become soiled during the school day, lost or damaged, every school should have a small contingency supply to provide. You should remind staff not to touch the front part of their mask, and to wash their hands before and after putting their mask on. There may be limited circumstances, such as where a ‘visor’ has been provided as a reasonable adjustment on account of a disability, that it is reasonable for the employer to provide this.</p> <p>The government is not recommending universal use of face coverings in all schools. Schools that teach children in years 7 and above and which are not under specific local restriction measures will have the discretion to require face coverings for pupils, staff and visitors in areas outside the classroom where social distancing cannot easily be maintained, such as corridors and communal areas and it has been deemed appropriate in those circumstances. Primary school children will not need to wear a face covering.</p> <p>School leaders in Primary school’s should consider at their discretion whether their employees, contractors on site and visitors should wear a face mask, where social distancing is not possible in indoor areas outside of classrooms.</p>
<i>When should employees wear a face mask?</i>	<p>It’s important to remember that the use of face masks should be avoided in classrooms.</p> <p>In secondary and primary schools, it is at the discretion of the school, that employees wear a mask when in the corridors or other communal areas.</p>
<i>Where should employees store their face masks whilst they are teaching?</i>	You should ensure that staff are provided with clean sealable plastic bag to store their reusable mask in when not in use. If staff use single use masks, after each use these should be discarded into black bin bags and not recycled. It is good practice to have waste bags around school reminding both staff and pupils to throw away used single use masks.

<i>What if an employee refuses to wear a mask?</i>	School leaders should revise rules and policies that set out the standards and expectations for all its employees to include the use of face coverings and masks in school if applicable. The requirement to wear a mask should be included in the Health and Safety Policy and Code of Conduct Policy for example and any unreasonable breach of these rules should be investigated under the disciplinary policy.
<i>The employee is required to self-isolate but can't carry out their role from home.</i>	The employee should still be sent home to self-isolate whether work can be done at home or not. If they are required to self-isolate the employee must not go into school at all. They should be continued to be paid their normal pay.
<i>The employee is pregnant - can we insist that they return to work onsite?</i>	Yes providing you follow the guidance. Pregnant employees are classified as clinically vulnerable. They are able to return to work provided they can social distance using 2 metres. Ensure there is a risk assessment in place and as part of this consider the safest possible roles available in school or if none are available consider alternative work that could be delivered from home. Additional action may be required for women who are from 28 weeks gestation or with underlying health conditions who may be at greater risk.
<i>The employee is clinically extremely vulnerable - can we insist that they return to work onsite?</i>	<p>Yes providing you follow the guidance. The government guidance states: "Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable can return to school in September 2020 provided their school has implemented the system of controls outlined in the government guidance, in line with the school's own workplace risk assessment. In all respects, the clinically extremely vulnerable should now follow the same guidance as the clinically vulnerable population, taking particular care to practise frequent, thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home and/or workspace. This group of people are required to stay 2 metres away from those outside of their household or bubble so this must also be in place." This may be different for areas where local lockdown means that shielding will continue.</p> <p>Like other groups of staff, it is important for school leaders to build trust with individuals who have concerns. Listen to their concerns and do your best to reassure them. If they remain concerned, then advice should be taken before you take any formal action.</p>
<i>The employee is clinically vulnerable - can we insist that they return to work onsite?</i>	<p>Yes providing you follow the guidance. The government guidance states: "Clinically vulnerable staff can return to school in September. While in school they should follow the sector-specific measures in the government guidance to minimise the risks of transmission.</p> <p>This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing in line with the provisions set out in section 5 of the 'Prevention' section of the government guidance. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from others, and where this is not possible avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of others. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to socially distance from other adults including older children/adolescents.</p>

	People who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable can attend the workplace.”
<i>The employee has been exposed to someone who has tested positive with the coronavirus and the local health protection team has advised them to go home to self-isolate and take a test.</i>	<p>The guidance states: Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow ‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection’. They should get a test, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days. • if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following ‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection’
<i>Someone has attended school and has since tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Why do we contact the local health protection team?</i>	The guidance states: Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school - as identified by NHS Test and Trace.
<i>The employee helped someone who was displaying symptoms of the coronavirus. Should they be sent home to self-isolate and take a test?</i>	The guidance states: Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any pupils who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.
<i>The employee has been displaying symptoms of coronavirus and is therefore self isolating and has taken a test. The test has come back negative for the coronavirus - what should we do?</i>	The guidance says: if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu - in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.
<i>The employee has been displaying symptoms of coronavirus at school so has therefore been sent home to self-isolate and take a test. The test has come back positive for the coronavirus - what should we do??</i>	<p>You should contact the local health protection team as explained above and in the guidance, who will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.</p> <p>The health protection team will work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-</p>

	<p>isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin) • proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual • travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person <p>The health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, the guidance recommends that schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes place between children and staff in different groups (see the guidance for further information). This should be a proportionate recording process. Schools do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.</p>
<p><i>The employee is concerned that their characteristics place them at a comparatively increased risk from COVID-19 - can we insist that they return to work onsite?</i></p>	<p>The government guidance states: “Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report, which looked at different factors including age and sex, where people live, deprivation, ethnicity, people’s occupation and care home residence. These staff can return to school in September as long as the system of controls set out in this guidance are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future.</p> <p>People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.”</p>
<p><i>The employee is saying that they cannot attend work due to a lack of childcare as a result of COVID-19 - can we insist that they return to work onsite?</i></p>	<p>As all children are expected to return to school in September there is a reduced likelihood of this being a problem for school aged children especially. However, some wrap around care providers may have ceased or grandparent and other care arrangements could have stopped for reasons relating to the pandemic. Nurseries and other settings have re-opened now and guidance is in place for the continued provision of childcare for younger children. If this is a problem for a staff member, you could look at alternative work to be done at home and if that is not possible, consider unpaid, dependents leave, annual leave or parental leave. You could also consider changes to working hours/days. Be clear on how long you can agree this for and do not leave open ended.</p>

<p><i>The employee is concerned about using public transport to get to work - what can we do?</i></p>	<p>The government is encouraging staff, parents and pupils to walk or cycle as opposed to using public transport especially at peak travel times. In these circumstances, speak with your staff and find out if there are other methods of transport other than public transport. You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make further car parking available for staff who choose to drive overusing public transport • Consider adjusting start and finish times to allow staff to travel outside of the peak commute times • Consider adjusting start and finish times to allow staff to be dropped off by members of their family using a car.
<p><i>The employee is too scared and anxious to return to work for fear of having an increased exposure to the coronavirus. What can we do?</i></p>	<p>It is so important that you are building trust with these individuals. Listen to their concerns and do your best to reassure them without them feeling pressured to return. Depending on the circumstances, these staff may not have a right to full pay and in time, if there is no agreement to return to school despite measures taken and evidence of you acting reasonably then as a very last resort you could consider taking disciplinary action. Our advice is that you consider each case on its own and any health and safety concerns are taken very seriously and advice is sought. Options include agreeing a period of annual leave or unpaid leave.</p>