

17 MAY 2021

STEP THREE OF THE COVID-19 ROADMAP

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to confirm the education arrangements which will stay the same, and those that will change, following the Prime Minister's announcement regarding step three of the roadmap of easing of restrictions.

Following an ongoing decline in critical COVID19 case data; the national alert level has been reduced, the four tests for easing of the restrictions have been met, and we are moving to step three of the Government's roadmap from next Monday 17th May.

Protective Measures

Schools, colleges and early years settings are still required to follow guidance from the Department of Education, the Local Authority and Public Health England to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID19 in their school or setting and through the community.

This guidance has been updated to reflect step three of the roadmap, but the requirement to undertake a risk assessment and implement a range of protective measures remains. Each school or setting risk assessment must be specific to the context of that school or setting and so may differ from others.

What is staying the same?

The protective measures which remain in place, and important, include regular hand washing, consistent groupings (known as bubbles), keeping pupils and staff apart as much as possible, and enhanced cleaning routines.

Regular asymptomatic and symptomatic testing remains a vital part of the approach to suppress the virus. It is imperative that if anyone displays symptoms of COVID19 they self-isolate, along with other members of their household, and organise a PCR test. **It is not appropriate to use lateral flow tests when individuals have symptoms of COVID19.**

Schools and settings remain responsible for contact tracing following a positive case within the school/setting. Any individual identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID19 has a legal obligation to self-isolate as advised. Financial support is available should this happen and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support>.

School staff and students of secondary age and above have access to twice weekly asymptomatic COVID19 testing through their school or setting. Households of staff, children and young people attending schools or settings also have access to twice weekly testing. We strongly encourage staff, students and households to take part in the regular testing programme to reduce the risk of the virus entering the school/ setting community.

What is changing from 17th May?

Face coverings will no longer be required for students in classrooms or communal areas in schools and further education settings. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms. Face coverings should still be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). This includes parents and carers entering the school grounds to collect/ drop-off pupils.

Schools will be permitted to take domestic residential education visits. Some schools have already taken the difficult decision to cancel or reschedule trips due to uncertainty over the restrictions and the time needed to organise such trips. However, if these go ahead there will be a risk assessment prepared, which identifies the additional protective measures in place, and your school will share this with you. This will include protocols for responding to a case of COVID19. International travel is still not possible.

Limits to the sizes of groups for wraparound care and clubs/activities are being lifted. Pupils and students must still remain in consistent groups and adhere to the risk assessment for that provision.

Your child's nursery, childminder, school or college can give you more information about their risk assessment and protective measures. We ask that you continue to adhere to these to support schools and settings to remain a safe place to learn and work and support the continued decline of the virus.

Attendance

School attendance became mandatory again from 8th March; this means it is your legal duty to send your child (if they are of compulsory school age) to school regularly, if they are registered at one.

A small number of pupils may still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and so are a household contact
- are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19
- are one of the very small number of pupils under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

Shielding advice has been paused nationally from 31 March - all critically extremely vulnerable (CEV) pupils should attend their school unless they are in one of the above categories. Pupils who live with someone who is CEV should also continue to attend school as normal.

Attending school or college is vital for pupils' and students' educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. It is important that pupils attend school every day, in order to get the greatest benefit from their education.

From 17th May, travel restrictions are changing. There will be new green, amber and red lists of countries and territories. When visiting places on the green list all travellers must take a COVID19 test on their return and then will not need to quarantine unless the test result is positive. However if you travel to, or through, an amber or red list country, any travellers are required to quarantine on their return. This includes school pupils and students. If a holiday or quarantine period coincides with term time – this absence may be unauthorised and could lead to a penalty notice. Schools or colleges are not required to provide remote learning for students who are quarantining following travel abroad. Please consider this information when arranging holidays over the half term and summer break.

Permission for leave during term time can only be given by the Headteacher and parents can be fined for taking their children on holiday during term-time without the school's permission. A request for leave during term time may be made in writing to the school and will be considered by the Headteacher. To be able to grant leave, the Headteacher must receive the request for leave in advance and, be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

What if I am concerned about my child's attendance?

For the vast majority of young people, returning to school has been a positive experience. However, we understand that for some children, young people and families, this has brought about some challenges and anxieties.

If you have concerns regarding your child's attendance at school, it is important that you discuss this with staff from their school. The school will discuss any concerns and barriers to attendance, and then agree a plan with you, to support improved attendance. Please visit the [Essex County Council website](#) for further information regarding school attendance.

I appreciate that now restrictions are being lifted or reduced and many of us are enjoying more freedom in our social lives. This increased mixing makes it even more crucial that we all continue to follow the Government guidance and the school or setting risk assessment. The protective measures continue to remain in place so that we are able to keep schools open for the benefit of all children and young people.

I thank you for all your support to keep schools and settings a safe place to learn and work.

With best wishes



Clare Kershaw
Director of Education
Essex County Council