
Covid-19 questions and answers for school students and parents – Returning to school March 2021

Is it safe to go back to school now?

The government has decided schools can reopen and other restrictions can gradually start to be eased. This is because the number of cases of Covid-19 have gone down, the overall rate of infection is now much lower and the vaccination programme is being rolled out effectively.

Your school will have measures in place to help keep everyone safer including social distancing, keeping rooms well ventilated and staggered arrival and departure times for students. Secondary school students will be encouraged to wear face coverings in communal areas and in class when they cannot keep two metres apart from their classmates. Secondary school students will also be encouraged to take regular tests for Covid-19, along with all parents and teachers, so cases of people without symptoms can be detected.

Watch our video of how staff and parents at Raysfield Primary are feeling about returning to school [Covid-19: Raysfield Primary tour - YouTube](#)

Will anything be different when schools reopen?

The main difference is that secondary school students will now be encouraged to take regular lateral flow tests (for those without symptoms) to detect cases we would otherwise not know about and to break that chain of infection. Initially they will take three tests at school then twice a week at home. Teachers are already taking regular tests and households with children at primary or secondary school or college, including parents, carers and those in childcare or support bubbles, will also be invited to take regular tests. Further information is below.

Primary school children will not be asked to take regular tests. If they have symptoms they should isolate and parents or carers should book them a test at GOV.UK or call 119.

Will we still be in bubbles?

Yes. Schools will operate in a similar way to when they returned in September last year. By remaining in smaller bubbles there is less risk of transmitting the virus and keeping more students in school.

Watch our video of the measures in place at Blackhorse Primary School to keep their pupils and staff safe [Covid-19: Blackhorse Primary School tour - YouTube](#)

Do I have to wear a face covering in class and around school?

From March secondary school students will be strongly encouraged to wear a face covering, unless exempt, in communal areas in school and in classrooms if students cannot keep two metres apart. Each secondary school may have slightly different arrangements for this, so check with your teachers to see what your school is doing.

Students will not be asked to wear a face covering in PE lessons.

What is the most effective way to wear a face covering and where should I keep it when I don't need to wear it?

Your face covering should cover your mouth and nose. Take a spare to school so you can change it for a clean one during the day. It's a good idea to keep face coverings in a clear bag - like a sandwich bag, when you are not wearing it.

Face coverings need to cover your mouth and nose



- ✓ you are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in all communal areas*
- ✓ if you cannot keep two metres apart, you should wear a face covering in class
- ✓ wear it properly - cover your mouth and nose - to help keep everyone safe
- ✓ keep your face covering in a clean (sandwich) bag when not required to wear it
- ✓ take a spare to school so you can change it throughout the day



Stop the spread. Do the right thing.

www.southglos.gov.uk/coronavirus

Do I have to go back to school?

Yes. The government has made it mandatory for all pupils in England to return to face-to-face learning on 8 March. This means if you do not attend school your parents or guardians could be fined.

Does going back to school mean I can see my friends outside of school?

From 8 March you can meet one friend outside socially distanced. For example, you could sit on a bench, or on the grass in a park.

From 29 March the rule of six will come back into effect, meaning groups of no more than six people, or two households, can meet outside, including in private gardens.

You cannot meet in groups larger than this, even if you are in a bubble with them at school. This is because in school there are lots of measures in place, such as social distancing and the use of face coverings to protect you, but in groups outside of school where those measures are not in place, you are at a greater risk of infection. We know it is difficult to follow, but these rules are in place to protect you, your families and your community.

Testing

Will I be tested for Covid-19 when I go back to school?

All secondary school students will be encouraged to take part in the testing programme offered by their school, with your parents or carer's permission:

- **Testing at school** - All secondary school pupils will take three tests, with three to five days between each one. You will receive help on how to take the test from your school. After that you will be given test kits and take two tests each week at home. Each secondary school will provide details on how to return your test result.
- **Testing at home** – Once the three in school tests have been taken, all secondary aged students will take two tests a week at home and report the results with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary. When testing at home children aged 11 who attend a secondary school should be tested by an adult.

Please note: primary school students will **not** be required to test regularly. They should only be tested if they are taken by their parents or carers to a testing centre, if they have Covid-19 symptoms.

There will be individual risk assessments for children who may not be able to take a rapid test (lateral flow). Your school may also continue to provide arrangements for testing in school for anyone unable or worried about testing at home.

What happens during a Covid-19 test?

To take a Covid-19 test, you, your parent or carer will use a long cotton bud to reach into the back of your throat and rub each tonsil five times. This can tickle and make you cough a bit. The same cotton bud is inserted into one of your nostrils and is rotated on the surface about three or four times, which can make you sneeze. Every home test kit will come with instructions and how to report the result.

Watch our video showing pupils from Brimsham Green School in Yate taking a test and explaining what it is like: [Covid-19: Brimsham Green School tour - YouTube](#)

Why are secondary school students being tested now?

The overall testing process for Covid-19 has developed a lot since last year and now includes testing people with no symptoms. As part of the testing process, regular home test kits are now available for teachers and are being made available to secondary school students and the families of children at school and college. By testing as many people as possible regularly, we can find cases of people without symptoms which would otherwise go undetected, prompt them to self-isolate and stop the spread of the virus.

Can someone help me if I can't do the test myself?

Yes, help is available. Each school will offer in-school testing for students who experience difficulties taking the test at home.

When and how do I get my test result?

Testing in school – you will be given your test result about 30 minutes after you take it.
Testing at home – you will receive this as a text message or email about 30 minutes after you have taken it. You will need to register via the app for testing first.

Will parents and families be tested regularly?

Families and households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, will be encouraged to take a test twice a week. Regular testing for those without symptoms will help keep you, your family, and your school community safe.

- Rapid home testing kits can be booked for home delivery here: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests.
- People can also access rapid testing at our assisted rapid testing sites in Bradley Stoke Leisure Centre, Kingswood Leisure Centre and Yate Parish Hall. Slots can be booked on our website www.southglos.gov.uk/book-rapid-test

Remember that anyone who has symptoms of Covid-19 should isolate and book a test [online at gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or by calling 119. Covid-19 symptoms include a new, continuous cough, high temperature, or a loss or change to their sense of taste or smell.

What do I need to do if I test positive?

You will need to stay at home and isolate for 10 days, along with all members of your household and support bubble. If your home test is positive you will also need to book what is known as a PCR test to confirm the home test result and so the results can be sent to a laboratory and help us understand more about the virus. You can book a PCR test online at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or by calling 119.

What if my parents or guardian do not consent to me being tested?

Testing for secondary schools is currently voluntary and you are not legally required to take part in testing. However, testing is strongly encouraged to help stop the spread of Covid-19 and help us all return to normal as soon as possible.

Will primary school pupils be tested regularly?

No. Primary school pupils will only be tested if they are taken by their parents or carers to a testing centre if they have Covid-19 symptoms.

Will teachers be tested regularly?

Yes, teachers are being tested regularly too. Secondary school staff are currently being tested in school but will be moving to home testing twice each week. Primary school and nursery/early years staff are also taking regular home tests.

Prevention

How can I help and stay safer?

The main things we can all do to protect ourselves and each other are:

Hands: Washing our hands really well and often is one way to prevent Covid-19 from being transmitted. In between handwashing use a hand sanitiser and try not to touch your face with your hands, especially your mouth, nose and eyes. Use a tissue to blow your nose and throw it in the bin, making sure you wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

Face: Wear a face covering when you are in public and can't be two metres apart from others. Make sure you regularly change your face covering and keep it in large bag, like a sandwich bag, when not in use.

Space: Always keep a two-metre distance from anyone not in your household, or support bubble. You should also limit how many people you socialise with, and where possible meet outdoors. A well-ventilated room will also help to lessen the transmission.

Stop the spread. Do the right thing.

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