

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

Operational Guidance from 19th July (England)

The Prime Minister has announced that from 19th July, the vast majority of coronavirus restrictions will be lifted. The Government has also announced that a number of restrictions currently in force in schools will be relaxed from this date.

It is important to note that although restrictions may be lifted from 19th July, there is nothing in the revised Government guidance that prevents schools continuing aspects of the restrictions until the end of term.

The general regulations pertaining to risk assessment remain in place, and schools and employers remain obliged to risk assess and take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils. This can include retaining coronavirus restrictions. As now, risk assessments should be shared with members, and any concerns should be raised with school management in the first instance.

Clinically vulnerable and pregnant members

In respect of clinically vulnerable (CV) and clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people, the guidance states that staff in schools who are CEV should currently attend their place of work if they cannot work from home, and the Department of Health and Social Care will publish updated guidance before 19 July. The NASUWT would advise CV and CEV people to ensure that their individual risk assessment is updated, taking into account any advice from their medical professional or occupational health advisor, and, where necessary, working from home should be permitted.

It is not currently clear whether advice for pregnant woman in the third trimester will change, but, in any case, women in this situation should have an individual risk assessment. The advice remains that women in the third trimester should continue to take extra precautions, and the NASUWT has produced [specific guidance for pregnant members](#).

Testing

Secondary schools will be expected to undertake two in-school lateral flow tests when pupils return in September. Although schools can start testing up to three days prior to the start of term, members should not be expected to return to school early, in the holiday period, to administer the tests. If they volunteer to do so, this should be paid. Schools also have the flexibility to stagger the return of pupils in the first week of term, to enable testing to be managed.

In the autumn term, staff and secondary school pupils will still be expected to take twice-weekly lateral flow tests at home, at least until the end of September. As of now, if anyone tests positive on a lateral flow test, this will require a confirmatory PCR test, although self-isolation must start immediately.

Mixing and Bubbles

From 19th July, the requirement to keep pupils in bubbles ceases, meaning that the guidance permits pupils to mix freely in schools, and that large gatherings such as assemblies can resume. The guidance explicitly states that schools can continue bubbling arrangements until the end of the summer term, and that bubbling may be reintroduced in the case of local outbreaks.

Preventing mixing of pupils is a very effective way of stopping large-scale transmission of the virus, and the NASUWT would urge schools to continue to consider limiting the mixing of pupils as part of their risk assessment.

Contact Tracing

The guidance remains that staff and pupils who are symptomatic must not attend school unless they have a negative PCR test, and anyone with a positive test must also self-isolate. This remains a legal duty after 19th July. Schools must retain procedures for dealing with suspected cases as they did prior to 19th July, including immediate isolation. From 16th August, schools will no longer be required to undertake contact tracing, with this duty passing to NHS Test and Trace. All children under 18 will no longer be required to self-isolate if contacted by NHS Test and Trace, instead being advised to take a PCR test. This also applies to 18-year-olds until four months after their 18th birthday. It is unclear how this will work in practice and the NASUWT is currently seeking further clarification.

Government guidance is explicit that headteachers/principals can take the decision to refuse a symptomatic pupil attending school, stating:

'If a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19.'

In addition, schools must take such appropriate steps to ensure safety onsite, including revised risk assessments which may involve additional measures such as providing education separately for pupils who have been advised to take a COVID test but who refuse to do so.

Fully vaccinated adults will also be exempt from isolation requirements. Adults that are not fully vaccinated must still self-isolate. Where members choose not to be vaccinated, they should not experience a detriment if they are required to self-isolate.

Face Coverings

All requirements to wear face coverings are removed from 19th July. However, the NASUWT would still urge all schools to strongly recommend their continued use by staff and pupils in classrooms and communal areas. There is nothing in the regulations to prevent schools making this request, although it appears that schools would not be able to mandate this. Likewise, there is nothing to stop individuals wearing face coverings if they choose to do so, and pupils and staff should be permitted to do so.

Ventilation and Cleaning

Given the removal of most other mitigations, it is vitally important that schools stringently apply the recommendations around enhanced ventilation and cleaning.

Advice around cleaning and ventilation remains in place, and schools should continue to ensure that enhanced cleaning takes place, with touch surfaces being cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day, people regularly washing or sanitising their hands, and good ventilation of all rooms being achieved.

The Government advice stresses the need to ensure that rooms are well ventilated, and for schools to identify poorly ventilated areas and take steps to improve ventilation. The NASUWT has [specific guidance on ventilation](#).

Remote Education

Where pupils are self-isolating, there is still a requirement to provide remote education. However, this should not extend to other situations, such as when pupils are off sick or where parents are reluctant to let their children attend school. The NASUWT has [full guidance on remote learning](#).