

Face coverings and testing guidance in primary schools

Anyone experiencing the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should be advised to follow to the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

The [schools coronavirus \(COVID-19\) operational guidance](#) provides information on the use of face coverings and asymptomatic testing in primary schools from Monday 8 March. The guidance is clear that face coverings are only necessary for pupils in year 7 and above.

A Department for Education spokesperson has said:

“Children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings when they return to school from 8 March.”

The guidance on asymptomatic testing confirms that staff in primary schools will continue to test with LFDs twice a week at home. Primary age pupils will not be tested with LFDs.

Public Health England has advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils may find the LFD testing process unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. We will review this approach in the light of any emerging evidence.

All primary school pupils are expected to return to school on Monday 8 March.

Secondary and further education settings – delivery of face coverings to support contingency stock

In line with Public Health England (PHE) advice, on Monday 22 February, we temporarily extended our policy on the use of face coverings in education and childcare settings. This change will take effect from Monday 8 March and will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep our face coverings policy under review and update guidance accordingly. For more information on the face coverings guidance in your setting, please refer to the [relevant sector specific guidance](#).

We expect that most staff, pupils, and students will already have access to face coverings from their wider use in society. However, it is recommended that all settings have a small contingency stock of face coverings available if an individual has forgotten or damaged their own.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has a strong stock of PPE including the 'Type IIR' face masks. To support the return to full attendance and ensure maximum compliance with the system of controls, DHSC is distributing 'Type IIR' masks to secondary settings and FE institutions. This supply is for use only as the settings' contingency stock of face coverings.

Secondary settings and FE institutions should expect to receive a delivery of between 5,000 and 7,500 units by the end of the week commencing Monday 8 March. In the coming weeks, settings may receive further stock depending on the size of the establishment and requirement for contingency face covering stock. We estimate that this stock should be sufficient to cover the settings' contingency stock until at least the Easter holidays.

These face coverings are being provided by DHSC at no cost to your setting. DHSC cannot accept any returns for these items.

As outlined in DfE guidance, in primary and early years (EY) settings it is recommended that staff and visitors wear face coverings where social distancing cannot be maintained between adults. Children in these settings should not be asked to wear face coverings.

For any queries or complaints on delivery or missing items, please contact the DHSC PPE helpline (provided by UNIPART) on 0800 8766802, identifying yourself as an education setting. Alternatively, you can email dfeppequeries@unipart.com and your query will be handled by the helpline team.

For any questions on DfE face covering policy, please refer to the [DfE guidance](#) or call the DfE coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline on 0800 046 8687.