



Star

# GUIDANCE ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN EYFS

## CHECKS AND BALANCES: RESPONDING TO COVID-19

A toolkit to support leaders  
as they reopen schools



## Contents

Overview.....	3
Social distancing options.....	3
Personal care support.....	4
Staff.....	5
Handwashing.....	5
Preparing parents and children.....	6
Part-time timetables.....	7
Guidance about managing different areas of learning.....	7
The prime areas of learning.....	7
Specific areas of learning.....	8
Newly produced books on coronavirus.....	8
Proposed timetable of action.....	10
Phase 1: Return from lockdown to summer 2020.....	10
Phase 2: Summer break.....	11
Phase 3: September 2020 onwards.....	12

## Overview

It is now clear that when schools eventually return, they will not be returning to 'business as usual'. HM Government announced on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 that it expected Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to return to school from 1<sup>st</sup> June and issued guidance on how this return should be managed: [Actions for educational and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#)

Although accommodations will have to be made to enable all children to return to school eventually to mitigate and minimise as much as possible the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, there are particular challenges facing the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is undoubtedly going to be more difficult for EYFS staff to help young children to follow social distancing guidelines. Additionally, some young children may still need personal care support. So, how can schools proceed? This guidance is aimed at supporting staff working in EYFS to arrive at practical solutions which comply with government guidance and promote both the safety and development of young children. It is supplementary to the Toolkit and should be read in conjunction with it.

First and foremost, for this age group the priority must be the safety and welfare of the children. The Department for Education (DfE) has recognised the particular challenges faced by schools and nurseries. It has provided [temporary flexibility](#) in meeting some requirements of the [early years foundation stage statutory framework](#). The temporary changes focus on the:

- Ratios and qualifications of staff
- Paediatric first aid certificates
- Learning and development and the progress check at age two

This temporary legislation has been passed in Parliament. All other current requirements in the framework still apply.

### [Statutory Guidance - Early Years Foundation Stage: coronavirus disapplications](#)

These amendments will allow schools greater flexibility to respond to changes in workforce availability and potential fluctuations in demand, while still providing care that is high-quality and safe. The term 'reasonable endeavours' has been used for the learning and development requirements and welfare requirements relating to staff qualification levels. For the Paediatric First Aid requirement, 'best endeavours' has been used. 'Best endeavours' is a higher-level requirement than 'reasonable endeavours' and is used to ensure that meeting the Paediatric First Aid requirements takes priority over the other areas of the EYFS framework that have been changed.

The following guidance is in line with that issued by DfE on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)

## Social distancing options

Schools should:

- Reduce class sizes via part-time timetables, rotas, etc. in line with the overall net capacity exercise proposed in the Toolkit and in line with the DfE guidance which stipulates that class sizes should not exceed 15 children.
- Establish specific groups of children that work, play, stay and dine with each other and a key worker, and do not mix with another group: 'the bubble group' approach. Once past

the gates, children spend the day in the same small groups, preferably in a specified area. This is the approach being used in Denmark and is consistent with the guidance issued by DfE.

- Stagger start and finish times for each group, to minimise the number of parents gathering; stagger lunch times, break times for the groups. This should be organised as part of the wider plan for the school as set out in the Toolkit.
- Assign a small section of the room or play area to each group of children.
- Calculate the area of your spaces and ensure that each child has more personal space to play and work. For children aged three to five years old, the current space requirement is 2.3 square metres per child. You may wish to plan your provision based on increasing this space allowance, if possible. This should feature in the net capacity exercise and overall plan for the school as set out in the Toolkit.
- Paint smiley faces, at spaced intervals to enable social distancing, outside on the ground, for children to line up.
- Use long ropes or ribbons with loops attached at social distancing intervals, for the children to hold, as a fun way to help them stay apart as they walk about or sit around.
- Require parents to leave their children outside the setting; no parents should be allowed in EYFS and restricted entry arrangements should apply.

## Hygiene routines

Schools should:

- Draw up a strict timetable of cleaning and handwashing. Staff should be expected to supervise regular handwashing and disinfect surfaces such as taps, toilet flushes, tables, cupboards and door handles several times a day. Consider having one member of staff on duty at any one time, to undertake the cleaning and disinfecting on an hourly basis. This regime is in line with the recommendations in the Toolkit for all year groups in the school.
- Require children to wash their hands-on arrival at school and every hour or between activities.
- Consider the purchase of a dishwasher for EYFS to clean toys thoroughly twice a day or between each session.
- Prohibit children from bringing toys from home into school. Only toys provided in the setting should be used, and these should be cleaned regularly.
- Remove soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean (such as those with intricate parts).
- Require parents to leave any change of clothes that might be needed outside.
- Ensure a good stock of disinfectants, soap and paper towels.
- Plan to spend as much time as possible outdoors.
- Teach children what to do in terms of personal hygiene and physical distancing.
- Teach children about the virus. The following resources are helpful in this regard:
  - [What is Coronavirus? An explainer for children](#)
  - [Covid-19 germs experiment](#)
  - [Wash your hands song](#)

## Personal care support

The normal strict hygiene protocols which are already in place for children's personal care should be checked to ensure that they are as robust as possible. Cleaning of the changing area, including washing / disinfecting the mat and stand must be meticulous. The Toolkit

recommends enhanced cleaning schedules for schools and this should be applied in EYFS also. DfE guidance [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#) provides detail on managing infection protection and control.

## Staff

The safeguarding of staff is equally important. Staff health, mental health and wellbeing should be an ongoing focus in EYFS as well as the school as a whole. Further guidance is set out in the Toolkit on this. Talk to staff about the plans (for example, safety measures, timetable changes and staggered arrival and departure times), including discussing whether training would be helpful.

Communicate early with contractors and suppliers that will need to prepare to support plans for opening for example, cleaning, catering, food supplies, hygiene suppliers.

## Personal protective equipment (PPE) including face coverings and face masks

This guidance follows that issued by DfE which is as follows: 'Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings. Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus. Face coverings (or any form of medical mask where instructed to be used for specific clinical reasons) should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.'

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including:

- Children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way.
- If a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn.'

## Handwashing

Staff should be reminded about the importance of the correct handwashing procedure.

[Coronavirus – how to wash your hands in 20 seconds](#)

## Cleaning

Ensure that all staff are familiar with Public Health England (PHE) guidance on [cleaning for non-healthcare settings](#):

- Cleaning an area with normal household disinfectant after someone with suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.
- Wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning. These should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours before being thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished. Where possible, schools should establish separate bins for PPE in EYFS.
- Using a disposable cloth, first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water. Then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as bathrooms, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles.
- If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, from a person with coronavirus (COVID-19), use protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as wearing gloves and an apron.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, and after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning.
- Discuss with cleaning contractors or staff the additional cleaning requirements and agree additional hours to allow for this.

## Preparing parents and children

Schools should:

- Prepare the children for what to expect. Upload to the school website videos of the setting, with familiar staff showing the changes before the school reopens.
- Keep parents informed of the changes taking place.
- Consider specific guidance for at-risk families. Children living in multi-generational families and families with obesity, may present additional risk.
- Tell children, young people, parents, carers or any visitors, such as suppliers, not to enter the education or childcare setting if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (following the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)).
- Tell parents that if their child needs to be accompanied to the education or childcare setting, only one parent should attend.
- Tell parents and young people their allocated drop off and collection times and the process for doing so, including protocols for minimising adult to adult contact (for example, which entrance to use).
- Make clear to parents that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the site (unless they have a pre-arranged appointment, which should be conducted safely).
- Think about engaging parents and children in education resources such as [e-bug](#) and [PHE schools resources](#).
- Ensure parents and young people are aware of recommendations on transport to and from education or childcare setting (including avoiding peak times). Guidance will shortly be published on safe travel.

## Part-time timetables

If children are going to be reintroduced to school for half a day or part-time, then simplifying the provision on offer is paramount. This is in line with the DfE's temporary changes to allow schools' and settings' 'reasonable endeavours' to meet the learning and development requirements. Please see Overview section above.

A simplified school day may include: registration/circle time, phonics and reading, writing, maths/number work and physical activity outdoors. Over the week, some expressive arts and design and 'topic' work can be built in for the group. Not every aspect needs to be on offer all day, every day, currently. This option minimises the open-ended continuous provision which may lead to children mixing too freely.

Alternatively, a reduced continuous provision offering can be maintained, but limits should be set for the number of children who can work in any area at any one time. Careful thought should be given to the number and purpose of any continuous provision activities offered. This is an ideal opportunity to be ruthless about de-cluttering the equipment and material on offer. Clear away anything that you are not planning to use, to create space. Be very explicit about the learning objectives planned for the continuous provision if it is provided.

## Guidance about managing different areas of learning

If children spend the day in the same small group, managing their social distancing should be easier for some areas of learning than for others. All equipment used should be cleaned regularly and thoroughly.

### The prime areas of learning

#### **Communication and Language**

Settings can maintain a strong focus on literacy and language development through storytelling, singing and rhymes. These can be covered whilst children are sitting apart.

#### **Physical development**

Spend as much time as possible outdoors, especially as we move into the summer months. If possible, move some formal teaching outdoors. Typical outdoor activities need to be managed very carefully. DfE guidance is that outdoor equipment should not be used unless the setting is able to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children and young people using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously.

Be ruthless about de-cluttering outdoor apparatus and being focused on the number and type of activities planned for outdoors. Clear away any equipment that you are not planning to use. Do you always need the sand tray out? In summer, and for now, the water tray may be a better option. This is an opportunity to be very explicit about the learning objectives planned for the outdoor environment.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

At this very challenging time for everybody, young children especially may find the changes and limitations daunting. Daily opportunities to talk to children as a group and individually about the changes will be vital. Use the 'virus' as part of your curriculum planning. The traditional EYFS topics for the summer term – going on holiday etc may not really be suitable, although a topic on 'Summer' could still be useful. Consider returning to topics and role play about 'People who Help Us' and on 'Staying Healthy'.

## Specific areas of learning

**Numeracy/mathematics, literacy and phonics** can be taught in small, distanced groups. This may be made easier if children have their own tray or box which contains everything they need and means that they do not have to share. The box/tray/bag might contain their own crayons, pencil, ruler, eraser, reading books, whiteboard, exercise books etc. Adults will be the only person handling items from several children. If using the children's current trays, these should be decluttered and cleaned thoroughly.

In educational terms, the main priority is to help the children get back on track with phonics and early reading. The management of the groups may be made easier if the groups are set up according to phonics ability.

### Understanding the world

As noted above, this may be a good time to revisit some EYFS favourite topics such as 'People Who Help Us', 'Keeping Healthy' and work on 'Summer'.

### Expressive arts and design

Whilst singing and musical activities may be relatively straight forward to manage, from a social distancing perspective, art and crafts is more challenging. This aspect may be better managed as adult-led or supervised, with the group working together but apart, rather than offered in continuous provision.

## Newly produced books on coronavirus

A number of books, many free, have been produced to explain the coronavirus to children in a gentle and positive way.

[My Hero is You: How Kids can Fight Covid-19 \(ENGLISH – free to download\)](#)

[My Hero is You: How Kids can Fight Covid-19 \(TRANSLATIONS – free to download\)](#)

[Coronavirus: A Book for Children \(free to download\)](#)

[The Little Corona King](#)

## Planning ahead on the curriculum

Focusing on the current Nursery (FS1) and Reception (FS2) cohorts, the issues facing each group are as follows:

- **Current Reception (FS2) children** are likely to have missed more than three months of education, at the most critical stage of their development. Although lockdown began in March, many families started keeping their children away from school before then. The challenge for Reception staff, in the post lockdown period until the summer break, is to pick up where the children left off. However, all teachers know, and research has confirmed, that over the five/six-week summer break children regress; for younger children the regression is deeper. By 1<sup>st</sup> June, the lockdown will have lasted for about twelve weeks, so the challenge is greater. For the least-able/lower-attaining children, it is likely to feel like starting from scratch. Schools will then break up again for summer. This is another aspect to be considered. In the autumn term, the children will move into Year 1 less well-prepared than previous cohorts. This presents a challenge for Year 1 staff. Any planning needs to cover two, possibly three, distinct phases: the immediate phase



after lockdown between June/July; what to do about the summer break and then the third phase from September 2020.

- **The current Nursery (FS1)** cohort presents a different challenge. It is quite possible that some parents and carers will seek to defer their child's entry to Reception for a year, so that they can undertake their Nursery (FS1) year again; this should be resisted. The position for the Nursery (FS1) children is not as precarious as that for Reception (FS2). Reception teachers are used to managing children who have not attended nurseries prior to joining Reception, although in small numbers. Nursery education, in the main, focuses on Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED); there is a focus on the learning and development outcomes but not as much as in Reception. Even whilst at home, most Nursery children will be maturing physically and emotionally. Reception teachers should be able to manage the new cohort with amended planning. **However, they will only be able to manage if certain conditions are met.** Immediate priorities should be that all children entering Reception in September 2020 should be able to take personal care of themselves, exhibit some physical development skills and be familiar with English stories and rhymes. Staff should be working with parents over the coming weeks to ensure that all children moving into Reception in September 2020 are toilet-trained and can manage themselves (dress/undress, take themselves to the lavatory, wash hands, eat with utensils etc) and can perform certain physical skills such as hold crayons, stack bricks, kick a ball, ride a trike. Critically, as much as is possible, staff should work with parents of incoming Reception children to ensure that the children are read to frequently and learn rhymes.
- **Year 1 teachers will need support** to manage the current Reception cohort in September 2020 when the children move into Year 1. It will not be possible for Year 1 teachers to launch into the full National Curriculum Programmes of Study immediately. Some accommodation will need to be made about the priorities for Year 1 for the first half of the autumn term. Although the DfE has not lifted any aspect of the National Curriculum requirements, (as it has for the EYFS), officials have acknowledged that schools will not be able to provide a 'broad and balanced' curriculum for the time being. Critical priorities for Year 1 include: phonics and reading; how to manage the teaching of phonics when many Reception children will not have completed the year's programme; early writing, early number and shape, space and measures. It may be that the grouping of children for phonics needs to be extended / amended to include children across Reception/Year 1; Year 1/Year 2 and this will require careful timetabling.
- **Language.** The greatest challenge facing staff is the possible regression of the children's spoken English, especially in families where English is not the first language at home. In many schools, Reception staff are also skilled at assessing children's acquisition of English through the WELLCOMM assessment. Some of these skills may need to be shared with Year 1 staff and some work undertaken with parents.
- **Working with parents** will be crucial in securing the best possible outcomes.
- **Summer Break.** One option to limit regression is to continue with some of the good practice developed during this lockdown.

## Proposed timetable of action

### Phase 1: Return from lockdown to summer 2020

Priority	Actions	
1.	<b>Current Reception (FS2) Phonics and reading</b>	Assess all children. Re-group, if possible. Intensive teaching of phonics. Daily practice of reading books.
2.	<b>Number/maths</b>	Start with story of Number x (where left off before lockdown). Assess before moving on or backwards. Daily number lesson. Twice/three times weekly SSM.
3.	<b>Writing</b>	Start with a simple written exercise, assess for sentence construction, capital letters, full stops, spacing, letter formation, sizing and alignment, spelling using phonic knowledge and 'tricky' words.
4.	<b>Language</b>	Re-start '5-a-day' story with gusto.  Re-assess most vulnerable children with language issues on WELLCOMM; initiate remedial programme.  Inform parents of the WELLCOMM assessments, what they mean, how their child has performed and how they can help.
5.	<b>Foundation subjects/ K and U/ Expressive Arts</b>	Plan these over the rest of the term.  Consider revisiting popular topics such as 'People who help us'; 'Keeping Healthy', 'Summer' to explore impact of the lockdown and support children's emotional well-being.
6.	<b>Work with parents</b>	Provide plan for parents of what is going to happen in Reception on return to school, and why. Be explicit about priorities to reassure parents.  Provide plan in different formats – written, social media, video on school website.
7.	<b>Risk register</b>	Update school risk register to record the importance of this cohort and potential future risk(s).  Plan / record mitigations to minimise future risks.

8.	<b>Year 1 staff</b>	<p>In addition to managing their own classes on return from lockdown, Year 1 staff would benefit from spending time in Reception to see how early writing and number are taught.</p> <p>It may be useful for Year 1 to cover some of EYFS themes as Foundation Subjects in the first half-term to ease the children into the new year group. This would allow Year 1 and Reception staff to share ideas initially. This would only be a short-term measure as the goal is to move the children on to their appropriate programmes of work in the second half of the autumn term.</p>
9.	<b>Current Nursery (FS1) cohort</b>	<p>Work with parents to reassure them about moving children into Reception and not deferring.</p> <p>Work with parents to ensure all children are toilet-trained and can manage personal self-care (dressing/undressing, using utensils at meal times etc).</p> <p>Work with parents to support children's physical development before entry to Reception.</p> <p>Work with parents to support children's language development and acquisition of an agreed bank of stories and rhymes before entry to Reception.</p>

## Phase 2: Summer break

Priority	Actions	
1.	<p><b>Decisions to be made about what to do over the summer break.</b></p> <p>Should some of the good practice developed over this lockdown be continued?</p> <p>Should there be a rota of openings for Reception/Nursery children?</p> <p>Should key, priority groups be identified?</p> <p>Should work continue to be planned for over the summer break as now?</p> <p>Should work continue as planned above with parents, for example?</p>	

### Phase 3: September 2020 onwards

Priority		Actions
1.	<b>Year 1, Reception</b>	Agree clear educational priorities for each year group on handover, for first half term. (e.g. phonics, reading, number, writing, WELLCOMM, baseline, themes, etc).
2.	<b>Year 1, Reception</b>	Agree clear planning, timetables and management of classes on handover, for first half term (e.g. how much time to be spent on....phonics, reading, number, writing, WELLCOMM, etc and how managed).