

Date: 15 July 2021

## Covid Educational and Public Health Step 4 Guidance Framework V2

Dear colleagues

On the 06 July 2021 the government set out operational guidance for schools and educational settings which will come into place with Step 4 of the government Road Map which we anticipate will take place from 19 July 2021.

The purpose of this document is to provide some **local information** for schools in addition to the operational guidance that has been put in place by the DfE. **It must be read in conjunction with the DfE guidance publication for schools released on 06 July 2021: [Schools COVID-19 operational guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/95222/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance)** Additional operational guidance is available to Special schools and other specialist settings: [Special schools and other specialist settings: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings-coronavirus-covid-19) Schools should also be sighted on the Contingency Framework: [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings)

As with the previous guidance provided by Education, Learning and Skills and Public Health South Gloucestershire, this has been written for maintained schools but **also contains information that will be relevant to academies.**

**Our Local Authority priority is for a Step 4 approach that places at its heart the relationships between our children and young people (CYP), their families and school staff.**

The document has been developed through consultation with key personnel from Education, Learning and Skills, Public Health - South Gloucestershire and Human Resources.

### Who is this for?

This document is intended for Headteachers, school leaders, governors of maintained schools, Local Authority officers and any other professional who will be supporting the sector. Multi-Academy Trusts will have their own systems, processes and guidance and this document is not intended to replace this but should be a useful reference point, as and when appropriate.

### When does this guidance apply and when will it be reviewed?

The guidance is written in line with Step 4 of the government Road Map that we **know now** will come into place from 19 July 2021. It will be reviewed on an on-going basis, it may be subject to version control (**this is version 2**), but with all changes these will be highlighted in **yellow**, so that it can be clearly established as to where the changes have been made.

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### How can I interpret the guidance?

There are some key points that sit at the heart of this document:

1. This guidance document is to support schools in the decision making and planning process for a 19 July 2021 move to Step 4, therefore it is important that leaders understand the language used in this document:
  - 'must' – there is a responsibility
  - 'should' – we strongly advise
  - 'could' – for individual schools to consider and use their professional judgement

It should also be noted that in line with other guidance that we have issued over the past twelve months, there will always be aspects that have been developed: 'with our best endeavours' as we await further detail from the DfE.

### What is included in this document?

1. High level key points
2. Advice for week 19 July 2021-26 July 2021
3. Risk Assessments
4. Testing
5. Case logging and outbreak management
6. Attendance
7. Vulnerable Children and Young People
8. Vaccination
9. Visitor guidance
10. School workforce
11. Communication and messaging
12. 'Reimagining and Recovery'
13. Further support

### High level key points

All schools, maintained schools and academies have worked closely with Public Health South Gloucestershire and the Education, Learning and Skills department of the Council in responding to and risk assessing for Covid-19 infection, prevention and control; managing case numbers, contract tracing and discussing bubble closures based on the evidence and each iteration of the

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national guidance throughout the pandemic. As a Council we strongly believe that this successful and careful management is a tribute to the partnership working that is in place.

Under Step 4 the role of Public Health South Gloucestershire and the Education, Learning and Skills will change, with the responsibility for contact tracing for individual cases resting with NHS Test and Trace as opposed to schools being supported locally to do this. **We still maintain as a Council Public Health responsibilities and functions though.** As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts. Contacts from a school setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. You may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

Also, under the guidance issued by the government, from 16 August 2021, children and young people under 18 will no longer be required to self-isolate if they have been a close contact of a positive case but will be advised to take a PCR test. These changes in particular will have an impact on schools and will need to be considered on the ground at an individual school level. There then becomes an important piece around communications and messaging; particularly for your parents/carers. Over the next two weeks we will be working through this locally so that you feel supported.

The role of Education, Learning and Skills with Public Health South Gloucestershire will move to one of signposting to appropriate guidance, and supporting schools where there are outbreaks through the implementation of the government's Contingency Framework and in line with the Local Outbreak Management Plan: [Local Outbreak Management Plan | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#) and a school's own Outbreak Management Plan.

There is still a very strong emphasis on the school's individual risk assessment document with a focus on hand and respiratory hygiene, keeping spaces well ventilated, ensuring appropriate cleaning regimes are in place and having an Outbreak Management Plan (see below). The other changes such as the removal of bubbles and the fact that face coverings are no longer advised are relatively self-explanatory so our guidance will only cover the areas where we feel additional information will be helpful.

### Advice for week 19 July 2021 - 26 July 2021

Our advice to all our maintained schools is that you should continue the systems and processes that you have had in place until the end of the school's summer term. We would include in this the school approach to staggered starts and finishes, the bubbles that are in place and keeping the level of social interaction between personnel within the school to a minimum. In essence as a Council we can see a logic of operating as you have been under Step 3 until the end of your Summer Term.

The most significant difference for schools and school leaders will be that settings will only need to carry out contact tracing up and including 18<sup>th</sup> July. From 19<sup>th</sup> July onwards in Step 4, close contacts will be identified via NHS Test, and Trace and education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. **LA PH team will continue to provide support though as necessary over the 3 days. This includes contact tracing where this is seen as central to the school's health and safety obligations and the Council's Health Protection duties aligned with any infectious disease.**

The EY-Schools Covid Incident mailbox is still being monitored if you have queries about positive cases and contacts. If we are instructed by DfE of any change to this we will get this to you as soon as possible and update this guidance.

From the end of the summer term parents/carers will be engaging with NHS Test and Trace, we will no longer be using the EY-Schools mailbox for parents/carers to report single confirmed cases during the holiday period. This is a change, and we ask that you advise parents/carers of the process through your communications strategy and we will share processes with them in one of our communications to you.

Therefore, schools will need to work with parents/carers in terms of communicating these changes around reporting absenteeism that is linked to Covid, and the onus on the family to engage with NHS Test and Trace for contact tracing purposes.

It has now been recommended by the government that face coverings are worn on dedicated transport to school or college when prevalence is high.

**Currently case rates in South Gloucestershire are high and therefore until at least the end of term we recommend the continuation of face coverings on dedicated school transport.**

**For the time being we will be keeping the Ey-schools Covid Incident mailbox open for support and signposting in line with the government guidance; we are conscious of the feedback from school leaders of the value they have placed around the quality of this local support mechanism and would not want to cease this without due consideration.**

### Risk Assessments

It is unlikely given our guidance above that schools will need to make significant changes to their risk assessments before the end of term. However, schools **must** review their risk assessments in light of the Step 4 guidance in the context of the new academic year. We would advise that school leaders consult with their competent health and safety advisor, school staff and local Trades Union representatives in their decision making.

In terms of School Governors and the announcement around the move to Step 4, it is crucial that governing boards understand how they can support leaders and the whole school community in the lead up to the **September start** and beyond.

The implementation of the Step 4 changes for the Autumn Term is operational; however, governors do have a role to play in supporting leaders with the challenges that school communities will experience in doing this safely.

Governors must:

- (i) Stay up to date with the latest guidance
- (ii) Get ready to review updated risk assessments
- (iii) Streamline communications to prevent overloading leaders and school staff.  
Ensure that your governor communication protocol is sufficient to prevent overloading leaders and school staff. Support staff and school community wellbeing
- (iv) Be supportive of the school's policies and procedures for Step 4 Autumn Term changes and be advocates and a voice on the ground as appropriate

Central to any risk assessment is:

- A section on how the school would work with local Health Protection teams to implement the contingency framework as part of the Local Authorities outbreak management responsibility
- Processes and procedures to support testing in the Autumn Term; including Asymptomatic Site testing
- The precautions and practical steps for how schools will work with staff that are clinically vulnerable (CV) or clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) to minimise their risk to the virus
- An appendix with the school outbreak management plan. Further guidance on the content of this is being sought by the South Gloucestershire Public Health team
- Details on how the school will operate safely on a day-to-day basis from September including references to:
  - appropriate cleaning regimes
  - systems and processes for hand and respiratory hygiene
  - systems in place to keep spaces/classrooms well ventilated

**For all schools maintained by the Local Authority we ask that by the 27.08.2021 we have assurances via email to: [CAHBusinessSupportBMR@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:CAHBusinessSupportBMR@southglos.gov.uk) to confirm the following:**

- (i) That you have completed a risk assessment in line with the DfE guidance dated 06 July 2021, our own published framework guidance, that staff, local (school) Trades Union representatives (where appropriate) have been duly consulted on this and that health and safety advice has been sought where appropriate from a competent person. In line with the guidance also, that the risk assessment has also been shared with the school governing body.
- (ii) Where applicable, that you have included any school provided wraparound care within the risk assessment or have been sighted on the risk assessment of any external provider operating from the school site.

### Asymptomatic Testing

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The guidance states that regular testing for people without symptoms remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools and that this could be stepped up and down depending on local circumstances.

**We will continue to monitor case rates locally and will work with both the DfE and Public Health England South-West on an on-going basis.**

Over the summer, staff and secondary pupils are being asked to continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open, such as summer schools and out of school activities based in school settings. Schools will only provide tests for twice weekly asymptomatic testing for pupils and staff over the summer period if they are attending school settings.

However, testing kits for all other school staff and secondary aged pupils will still be widely available over the summer and kits can be collected either from your local pharmacy or ordered online. You can collect free home rapid testing kits from:

- our [community \(rapid\) testing site](#)
- 12 [local libraries](#)
- the [mobile facility](#) (a specially equipped van)
- some local pharmacies – visit the [NHS website](#) to find your nearest pharmacy

**From the start of the new academic year**, as pupils will potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school pupils should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.

Secondary and Special schools with secondary aged pupils may commence testing from 3 working days before the start of term and can stagger return of pupils across the first week to manage this. CYP should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed. **School leaders will need to ensure that they have communicated clearly any staggered return of CYP in the first week of the Autumn Term, so that parents/carers can plan accordingly.**

All school staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed.

Secondary schools should also retain a small asymptomatic testing site (ATS) on-site until further notice so they can offer testing to pupils who are unable to test themselves at home.

There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to test over the summer period. They will be offered the 2 tests at an ATS at the beginning of the autumn term when they start at their secondary school as a new year 7.

For supply of test kits for the summer, orders must be placed by **5pm on Tuesday 13 July** to ensure delivery by Friday 23 July. This will enable testing over the summer holidays.

We would encourage school leaders, where you know staff are going to be potentially in and out of the school during the summer holiday period to order sufficient test kits to cover this.

### Case logging and outbreak management

Our advice is that schools should log positive Covid cases reported by parents/carers from September 2021. Although schools are not being asked to contact trace, a log will be important to monitor case numbers at an individual school level. This may also help if schools themselves are contacted at any point by NHS Test and Trace. **Parents must notify the school of any absence irrespective of Covid and the reasons for absence logged, so what is being recorded will be in line with systems that are already in place within schools.**

Date	Case no	Initials	Year	Date of onset of symptoms	Symptoms	LFD swab date*	PCR swab date	PCR Result

\*If applicable

As with any outbreak of any infectious disease we ask that the Council **are notified** by the EY-Schools mailbox: ey-schoolscovidincidents [ey-schoolscovidincidents@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:ey-schoolscovidincidents@southglos.gov.uk) so we can provide support. **In line with the PHW SW HPT flowchart we would typically be looking at 5 cases triggering a notification for a mainstream primary or secondary school. We will provide a detailed update of when to report to this mailbox in time for Term 1 2021-2022.**

### Attendance

It will be important to remind parents that they must contact the school's absence line if their child is absent, even where this is for a Covid-related absence and parents have already contacted NHS Track and Trace.

#### Absence due to COVID-19:

Code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus) should be used where a pupil is unable to attend because they are required to self-isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19, in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC.

Code I (illness) should be used where a pupil is unable to attend because they have tested positive for COVID-19. Code X should be used up until the point when the positive test result is received.

#### Children who have travelled abroad:

Where a family has travelled abroad but are unable to return due to circumstances relating to COVID-19, for example because they are in a red list country and the family cannot afford the cost of the quarantine hotel or because their flights have been rearranged, the usual attendance

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coding will apply. The Headteacher will need to decide whether the absence should be authorised (code C) or unauthorised (code O or G). The school should continue to engage with the family to establish their whereabouts (if unknown), their circumstances and their intended date of return.

In a very small number of specific circumstances where a pupil is stranded or stuck abroad, for example because there are no return flights due to the pandemic, code Y (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) will apply as 'a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel' which has prevented the pupil from attending school. The school will need to be clear that the family are remaining abroad because they are physically unable to return, and not because they are choosing not to return.

The Step 4 update for parents and carers states that: "Where able, schools should provide remote education for pupils unable to return from abroad due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, for the period they are abroad". It is our view that this would apply only for those families who are physically unable to return, and not to those who are choosing to delay their return.

On the family's return to the UK, if the pupil is required to quarantine (in accordance with the relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC), code X should be used. Where a family have travelled abroad during the pandemic and are intending to return, the DfE advice is that the pupil must be kept on roll until their return. Pupils in this situation do not need to be reported as a Child Missing Education (CME) **but school staff should try to maintain contact with the family as above, to understand their circumstances and their anticipated date of return.**

Where a school has not been able to establish the location of a child, **they must follow the CME process.** A CME referral is appropriate if the family have left South Gloucestershire and cannot be contacted or have not indicated that they intend to return.

Penalty notices:

Penalty notices can be requested where there have been more than 10 sessions of G codes (unauthorised holiday) within 7 school weeks (70 sessions). X codes, where a pupil has been required to quarantine following their return do not 'count' as part of the 10 sessions. A Penalty Notice can be requested once the child has returned to school.

It is likely during the Autumn Term that there could be a potential impact on schools where CYP who are contacts of a confirmed positive case then undertake a PCR test which will result in time out of school to do this. School leaders will need to support parents/carers in terms of authorising attendance where a PCR test is undertaken, but this may have an impact on schools in terms of managing this on the ground where numbers could be high in some circumstances.

### Vulnerable Children and Young People

As a Council we want to ensure that robust processes remain in place to protect our most vulnerable children and young people. We are conscious that there will likely be times that CYP that are Looked After, Children in Care, CYP with a Child Protection plan, CYP with an EHCP or

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other vulnerable CYP are self-isolating due to being a positive case or potentially prior to the 16 August a contact of a positive case. It is important in these circumstances that the following takes place:

- If LAC, that the Virtual School are notified and remote learning and provision discussed.
- If CiC or a CYP on a CP Plan, that the social worker is informed with appropriate remote learning and provision put in place.
- If a CYP with an EHCP that the tutor/class teacher/SENCo liaise with the family on the remote offer.

It will be important that daily contact between the school and the CYP is established and that there is regular and on-going communication between the home and the school. If you have any safeguarding questions then please contact the Local Authority Education Safeguarding Advisor, Lynda Cordukes: [lynda.cordukes@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:lynda.cordukes@southglos.gov.uk)

We are also aware that the pandemic has had an even greater impact on some of our most vulnerable children and young people. In this context the role of all staff in safeguarding becomes paramount and the partnership between school and social care for those that are CiC or on a CP plan vital in securing the best approach to supporting CYP. We would ask that for any vulnerable CYP that the school maintains high levels of communication with the home and checks regularly on both attendance and how the CYP are managing in school. We would ask that any plans in relation to 'recovery' incorporate clear actions on the approach that the school will be taking to those that are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged.

In the context of the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' we ask that school leaders ensure that their COVID-19 'reimagining and recovery' based strategies actively reduce inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health to create long term sustainable change.

### Vaccination

The Local Authority continue to encourage all those eligible for the vaccine to take up a first and second vaccination when offered and this includes the school workforce. People in England who have received two vaccination doses will no longer have to self-isolate if they come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 from 16 August. We are currently liaising with the RSC to look at the impact on the sector for those that have not received the vaccination and whether there will be a stance on self-isolation in the context of school-teacher's pay and conditions.

Children and young people have a very low risk of severe disease or death from Covid-19. Covid-19 vaccines are currently not routinely recommended for children and young people under 18 years of age in the UK. The government has asked independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to advise whether routine vaccination should be offered to younger people aged 12 to 17 years. A decision is still pending. If policy changes then we would work with schools in the implementation of any vaccine programme on the ground.

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### Visitor guidance

Schools will need to review the guidance that they have in place for visitors to the school and will need to consider what measures they can take to reduce any transmission. Schools could still ask visitors on entry to hand sanitise. All schools will be recording visitor entry as a matter of course. It could be useful to keep in a place a modified system where:

- Visitors sign to state that they have not tested positive for Covid in the last 10 days
- That in addition they are not displaying the main symptoms of COVID-19:
  - a high temperature
  - a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
  - a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

### School workforce

As a Council we appreciate the commitment, dedication and resolve of the entire education workforce over the last eighteen months. As with our previous guidance, we ask that school leaders consult with staff, their local Trades Union representatives and their H&S competent advisers to put in place all relevant risk assessments required for September. Schools must continue to review the individual risk assessments for/with Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) staff. With any pregnant member of staff, a risk assessment must be in place as a matter of course and we ask that school leaders discuss with their staff how best to ensure health and safety in the workplace during their pregnancy.

**All organisations must consider in their decision making the impact on people sharing different protected characteristics, and good relations in the community through the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The broad purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day operations of the establishment.**

In the Summer Term we have experienced instances where schools, because of positive Covid case numbers and/or notifications by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate had problems maintaining staffing levels. Next academic year it is unlikely that there will be the level of self-isolation due to vaccination uptake in staff, but there may still be occasions where a school may struggle to operate safely due to staffing shortages. If this is the case the school must contact the Strategic Lead for Education, Improvement and Commissioning:

[andrew.best@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.best@southglos.gov.uk)

### Communication and Messaging

One of the greatest challenges that we can foresee is around messaging and communications to parents/carers and communities. We would see school-based communications coming under two headings: one will be around processes for the end of term and for the summer vacation

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period particularly around contact tracing; the second one will be around the arrangements you have in place for September. As a Council we will be working with our communications and media departments to support you in the messaging for your communities.

We do advise that all schools share the government guidance that has been produced for parents/carers and which is available here: [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19)

### **'Reimagining and Recovery'**

Central to our Council post-pandemic approach is the notion of 'Reimagining and Recovery' of which there has been Council investment. We have shared through Heads briefing an overview of the governance of this workstream whereby a new #SouthGlos. Connect Partnership Board has been developed from what was a strategy-based cell to develop and support the areas being developed.

We are very conscious that the strategy that has been developed involves a number of initiatives at a smaller scale rather than 2 or 3 much larger scale opportunities. This is a deliberate decision thus allowing schools and school leaders to participate in areas of work that best serve their CYP, school and community. With a number of initiatives and announcements comes an increase in email traffic, so we do ask that you keep up to date with the opportunities that have been developed to see whether they are relevant and of interest to your school and the approach you are taking. We have been clear from the outset that all of our 'Reimagining and Recovery' opportunities are open to all schools, Primary, Special, Secondary, maintained and academy. The opportunities will be either funded or subsidised.

At the first Heads Briefing of the year on the **17 September 21 9.30am-11.30am** there will be a 'Reimagining and Recovery' focus where we will share the menu of opportunities that exist for schools to participate in.

Live opportunities that currently exist and may be of interest to you include:

- Creating Active Schools – contact: [Rebecca.chatterton@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.chatterton@southglos.gov.uk)
- Cluster leaders for music – contact: [simon.lock@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:simon.lock@southglos.gov.uk)
- Children's University at Primary (Presentation in Sept.)
- Schools in the Mastering Number Programme – contact: [liz.thomas@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:liz.thomas@southglos.gov.uk) and [lisa.pollard@clf.co.uk](mailto:lisa.pollard@clf.co.uk)

### **Further Support**

We are conscious that within the guidance there are references to processes that we hope to be able to support you with in due course. We aim to have documents such as a Template Outbreak Management Plan and further details on the next phase of offers through our 'Reimagining Approach' in due course. We also anticipate further guidance from the DfE around testing and the delivery of test kits. Our Director of Children, Adults and Health and our

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Director of Public Health **have also written out to all parents and carers** to ensure we reinforce the key messages that need to be shared with your communities.

We are conscious that we are working in what is an ever-evolving situation and therefore have put in place a meeting at the end of August, which is **entirely optional** to work through any further DfE and/or PHE updates so you feel as supported as possible as you embark on the new term.

### **Heads PH/ELS Update Session with Q and A**

Thursday 26 August 1pm-2pm

Microsoft Teams meeting

**Join on your computer or mobile app**

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Please check your emails over the course of the **next week** for any further updates to this document through version control as we respond to more information that is being added by the DfE. **Once again thank you for all the work that you continue to do to support our South Gloucestershire CYP.**

Kind regards

**Andrew Best (Strategic Lead: Education) and Sarah Godsell (Public Health South Glos.)**