

Date: 4 March 2021

Returning to schools and colleges safely from 8 March

We are writing to thank you for everything you have been doing to support your child's learning, to update you on the arrangements for all children returning to schools and colleges from Monday 8 March and to ask for your continued support of your school communities to keep everyone safe.

Our priority is a permanent return to face-to-face education for our children and young people. We know school is the best place for them for their educational and social development and wellbeing.

We want to reassure you that we have been working with school leaders to ensure a safe return to school. We have produced our own local guidance to support the government guidance, so that schools can enhance safety measures inside and outside the classroom.

Your school will have already been in contact to explain the arrangements in place for your child's safe return. Each school is working in a set of very individual and different circumstances, so the plans they have in place will be based on their individual risk assessments, in line with the guidance.

What's changing

On 22 February the government set out its plan for the return of all pupils to schools and colleges from 8 March as part of the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-response-spring-2021) (www.gov.uk). All children will once again be expected to attend school, as they did in the autumn term.

The return to school for all pupils is being prioritised due to the significant and proven impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, caused by being out of school. A range of measures will be in place to keep everyone safe:

- In addition to the already established rapid testing (lateral flow testing) regime and regular testing of staff, there will be twice-weekly testing of secondary school and college students, initially with on-site testing and then home testing. Primary school children will not be required to test regularly, unless they have symptoms, in which case they need to stay home and you should book a test for them at www.gov.uk or by calling 119.
- Students in secondary schools and colleges will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings* in all communal areas and in the classroom, unless 2m social distancing can be maintained.

Family and household testing

Families and households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, are encouraged to test themselves twice every week

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from home. Regular testing for those without symptoms will help keep you, your family, and your school community safe.

There will be a number of ways of accessing these rapid home tests. We are working hard to provide kits for collection from sites in the community. Information on local collection points will be shared once available.

- For now, 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 – a new, continuous cough, high temperature or a loss or change to their sense of taste or smell - should isolate and book a test online at www.gov.uk or by calling 119.

Videos, support materials and further information

We have produced videos and support materials to help you and your family understand what you need to do and guide you through some of these changes:

- Watch a local primary head teacher guide you around their school to explain the extra measures in place and help prepare you and your child. Visit: [Covid-19: Blackhorse Primary School tour - YouTube](#)
- Hear from teachers and a parent about how they are feeling about the return to school, to reassure you if you or your child feels anxious. Visit: [Covid-19: Raysfield Primary tour - YouTube](#)
- See what taking a Covid-19 test at your secondary school or college is like. Visit: [Covid-19: Brimsham Green School tour - YouTube](#)
- Read further information about the return to school including testing: www.southglos.gov.uk/return-to-school

Supporting your child to settle back in

We all know that every child and family has had different experiences over the past year and been affected by the pandemic in very different ways. Children who are anxious will need more support to help them settle back in and learn effectively.

Our schools will be continuing to use a range of resources to explore children's social and emotional needs, helping them to reconnect with learning and each other. This includes resources for children with complex and special educational needs and disabilities. Visit Mind You [Parents and carers | Mind you \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#) or [SENsational learning ideas newsletter for parents and carers | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#).

Things you can do to help keep everyone safe and support our schools

- Continue to follow the national restrictions and always remember Hands Face Space.
- Wear face coverings* when dropping off and picking up your child
- Encourage your child* to wear a face covering safely, to cover their mouth and nose, if they go to secondary school or college. This includes in all communal areas and in the classroom, unless 2m social distancing can be maintained.
 - Send your child in with a spare face covering – one to wear and one to swap later in the school day - and a clean bag, for example a sandwich bag, to keep the spare one in.
- Make sure your child has a school jumper, cardigan or fleece as windows and doors are more likely to be open to allow for extra ventilation.
- Remember to leave the school premises promptly, follow all social distancing measures the school has in place such as staggered start and finish times, and not to gather outside.
- Do everything you can to make the journey to school part of your daily exercise. Walking or cycling even part of the way to school helps to improve concentration and health and reduces the number of cars around schools.

*unless exempt

Thank you

A huge thank you for all the hard work and sacrifices you have made to support your child's learning over the past year. We would like to pay tribute to the exceptional hard work, dedication and commitment of everyone – our school leaders, all teaching and support staff and above all you and your child.


At the heart of our approach is what is best for children and young people in South Gloucestershire and how they can re-engage with their friends and receive the face-to-face teaching that is so important to their learning and wellbeing. We are committed to making sure that all students are able to bounce back from the impact on their learning caused by the disruption of the past year.

Please visit www.southglos.gov.uk/return-to-school and look out for further information and guidance from your child's school or college.

Thank you for your ongoing support,



Sara Blackmore,
Director of Public Health



Chris Sivers,
Director for Children, Adults and Health