

Covid-19 update from the Education and Skills Team

Professional Advocates for Children in Education, Governor Support, NQTs, Early Years, the Virtual School for Looked after Children and In Year Fair Access

Holding steady through December

The full range of guidance documents have not been updated and there are links to all of them in this bulletin although only a couple of them have had the changes summarised – it is the same in all of them.

Thank you very much to Dr Dewis for attending the Secondary Heads meeting this week. It was really helpful for heads to be able to ask questions about what is happening or planned in secondary schools over the coming weeks leading up to Christmas. Face masks are now back in communal areas and are generally agreed as a really important measure to reduce spread. We learned a little more about Omicron and what is known at the moment.

Talking about Christmas, there is information in this bulletin about free school meals over the winter break. There will also be another run of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme – information can be found on our website under the Winter Promise heading. We have worked again with Community Action Derby and are really pleased that every ward in Derby will have at least one provider offering activities and food for children 5-16 who are eligible for free school meals. Please keep your eyes and ears open for information about this as we approach the end of term.

We have provided information in the Circular about our next session for Mental Health leaders on Monday 6th December. It's all free and we have an interesting line-up for you.

Stay safe, mask on, and chin up!

Pauline, Jo and the E&S team

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schoolsportal.derby.gov.uk

Updated guidance documents to reflect new measures announced on Sunday 28 November

The sector guidance documents were issued on Monday 29 November. We have already summarised the one which applies to mainstream schools as it contains most of the changes which are also relevant to other settings. The DfE have now published updates to the remaining guidance documents:

- [dedicated transport to schools and colleges COVID-19 operational guidance](#)
- [COVID-19: actions for out-of-school settings](#)
- [out-of-school settings: COVID-19 guidance for parents and carers](#)
- [SEND and specialist settings: additional COVID-19 operational guidance](#)

COVID-19 vaccine update on second doses for 12 to 15 year olds and booster doses for adults

Following the emergence of the Omicron variant, including confirmed cases in the UK, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has urgently reviewed vaccine response measures.

For students:

- young people aged 12 to 15 years should receive a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, no sooner than twelve weeks after the first dose

Some useful links, all updated this week but with similar changes

- [Guidance for early years and childcare providers](#)
- [Guidance for schools](#)
- [Guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](#)
- [Guidance for parents and carers](#)

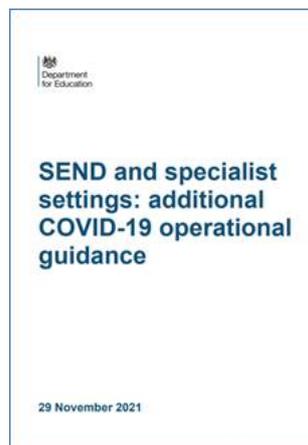
Some financial support



This document has been updated this week. The COVID-19 workforce fund has been re-introduced to provide financial support to settings with the greatest staffing and funding challenges. The fund helps eligible schools cover the cost of workforce absences experienced from 22 November 2021 until the end of the term. The guidance sets out details of the fund, including the eligibility criteria and claims system. There is a lot of small print so one for business managers to read carefully.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schools>

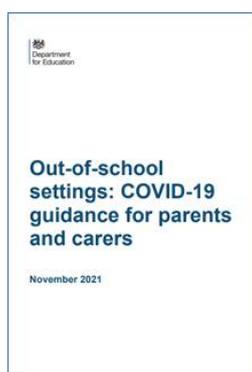
Same changes in the guidance for special schools



The details are the same as for the main schools guidance, summarised in Tuesday's bulletin. But here is a reminder of the guidance for special schools. This has been updated in relation to travel and isolation, face coverings and vaccination of under-18-year-olds.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings

Same changes but a reminder that this version for parent exists



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Support for exams costs

Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19) DfE 2021 qualifications funding: form guidance

Updated 29 November 2021

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-exam-support-service-claiming-costs

This guidance refers to costs associated with the autumn 2021 exam series as well as a couple of other situations. Claims should be submitted after all costs have been incurred. Cancellation charges are ineligible unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. For example, where local restrictions prevent candidates from taking exams at a venue where payment has already been made and cannot be refunded, but not in circumstances such as the centre deciding to hold exams on its own premises. The deadlines for submitting claims are outlined below:

Claim type	Deadline
Private candidates	10 January 2022
Priority appeals	10 January 2022
Autumn 2021 exam costs undertaken between 1 October 2021 and 25 February 2022	4 March 2022
Autumn 2021 exam costs undertaken between 28 February 2022 and 31 March 2022	6 April 2022

Derby City Council Funding Free School Meals over the Christmas Holiday

Derby City Council is delighted to continue to offer entitled children and families financial support for Free School Meals during the Christmas School Break 2021.

Each code will be for a £15 voucher that can be used at any of the following seven supermarkets, Aldi, Asda, Morrisons, M&S, Sainsbury, Tesco and Waitrose.

We will email you the codes, and pre-printed letters with instructions on how to redeem codes for these to be distributed to children entitled to FSM

We are anticipating that vouchers will start to be sent around 9 December 2021. For any queries please contact Ben Lysaczenko Ben.Lysaczenko@derby.gov.uk

Clarification from Dr Dewis

A couple of schools have emailed in following the letters on Tuesday around staff isolating.

Children are unvaccinated (or some partially vaccinated) and hence the advice in the letters. If staff are not vaccinated, they are required to take a PCR test and continue to isolate as previously, if they are vaccinated, they should still take a PCR test, but we are not specifically advising that they should isolate until they receive the result.

This advice may change with Omicron- but that is our current position.

Of course - if schools wish to ask staff (and are able to from a capacity perspective) to stay at home until they have the PCR that would be ok and would mirror the current guidance for NHS and Social care staff.

In summary:

- Unvaccinated staff need to isolate as previously
- Vaccinated staff are lower risk and should follow guidance regarding PCR testing (and daily lateral flow for the 10 day period if they can)
- If schools have the capacity to and wish to go further then that would be a reasonable response - but would be down to the schools assessment of staffing levels.