



# Guidance on supporting children with SEND

A toolkit to support leaders as they reopen schools

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## 1. OVERVIEW

There are particular challenges in mitigating the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 with children and young people who have SEND. It may not be possible to maintain all aspects of pupils' education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and/or individual educational plans (IEPs) or personal support plans (PSPs) when they return to school. This guidance signposts government guidance and resources to support learning. It also provides some suggestions as to how these challenges may be considered in schools. It should be read in conjunction with the main risk assessment.

## 2. STATUTORY GUIDANCE

The Department for Education (DfE) has recognised these challenges and has amended some aspects of the regulations on education, health and care needs assessments and plans for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The amendments give local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education settings and other bodies who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by COVID-19. The amendments mostly relate to the timings of processes of EHC needs assessments and plans (ref (1), (2) and (3) below).

In relation to existing EHCPs, the modification to section 42 of the Children and Families Act (see 1 below) states that, 'The duty on local authorities or health commissioning bodies to secure or arrange the provision is temporarily modified to a duty to use "reasonable endeavours" to do so.' This recognises that pupils' normal education programmes will be disrupted. The modification enables local authorities and health commissioning bodies to arrange reasonable alternatives to the usual service during the outbreak, such as by delivering therapies remotely, or using video.

Other aspects of the [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) remain unchanged.

Further guidance is provided for SEND risk assessment ((3 below). This provides guidance on how to determine whether children and young people with SEND will be able to have their needs met at home, and be safer there than attending an educational setting, during partial school opening.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19#fnref:5>

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/annex-a-details-of-the-amendments-to-the-existing-regulations>
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>

### **3. WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO MINIMISE THE RISK TO PUPILS AND ADULTS AND PREPARE THEM FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL?**

#### **Prepare parents and pupils and pre-empt and allay anxieties and worries**

Pupils will have been through a range of experiences and emotions while at home with their parents and carers. For children and young people with SEND, the differences to routine and uncertainty about the resumption of 'normal' routine may have led to greatly increased anxiety and fear. Some pupils may experience anxiety at separation from their parents after a prolonged period at home.

Before pupils return to school:

- Prepare pupils for what to expect by providing videos on the school website with teachers, support assistants and the SENDCO explaining any changes. Pupils will need to know the clear routines and who will be there to support them.
- Keep parents well-informed about government guidance and any plans for reopening.
- Confer with parents on plans for induction on return to school. Pupils with SEND may need specific individualised induction plans.
- Provide guidance for parents as to how pupils' specific needs will be met on their return to school. Make reference to the strategies that are known to work for individuals.
- Consult with parents and pupils over any adaptation to EHCPs and IEPs. The changes may include references to social distancing and hygiene measures.

#### **Amendments to and implementation of EHCPs and IEPs**

It may not be possible to deliver all aspects of EHCPs and IEPs during a phased reopening of schools. In line with amendments to regulations, schools have a duty to make 'reasonable endeavours' to deliver plans but may implement 'reasonable alternatives to usual services'.

- For pupils who have attended school during the lockdown, reasonable adjustments may already have been made to EHCPs and IEPs. There will be records of pupils' learning and progress.
- For pupils who have been educated at home, invite parents to an online conference or telephone discussion to discuss their child's learning and experiences at home. Be clear that this is to inform school provision. Reassure parents and pupils that they are not in trouble if they have not been able to do the work that was set for them while at home and that pupils will be supported to catch up in school.
- Make sure that pupils' starting points on return to school are fully assessed. Track their progress in interventions and class work carefully. Make sure any gaps in learning and social, emotional needs that may emerge are addressed and pupils build on their home learning effectively.
- Make sure pupils are provided with structure and clear routines when they return to school. It may be possible to agree a timetable in advance with parents and pupils. If pupils attend part-time, this may include a timetable for home learning.
- Targets may need to be amended or reviewed to add more structure.
- Include understanding coronavirus on pupils' learning plans. Help pupils to understand the need for some changes, while striving to minimise their anxiety about the virus.
- Access to some external services may be limited. In liaison with local authorities and external providers, leaders will need to consider how adjustments can be made. For example, some therapeutic services may be delivered by specialists online and facilitated/guided by teachers and support staff in school.

Resources to support curriculum planning and to help pupils understand the need for changes are referenced below.

## **Leadership and staffing of SEND provision**

- Check that the timetables of teachers and support staff align with those of pupils with SEND. Consider how adjustments will be made if some staff are not in school during phased reopening.
- Consider additional training needs for staff.
- Consider how staffing can be arranged to minimise adults' interactions with a number of pupils. For example, consider alternative arrangements where mentors and support assistants work across age ranges throughout a day.
- Consider how leaders will check on the quality and impact of SEND provision. There will need to be clear procedures to quality assure provision. For

example, how will leaders ensure continuity and progression in learning and support across intervention support, class based work and home learning? How will leaders ensure EHCP and IEP/PSP targets are addressed effectively?

- Consider how SENDCO time will be organised to minimise the risk of spreading infection if the SENDCO works across more than one school.
- The safeguarding of staff who support pupils with SEND is important, especially as social distancing may be challenging with some pupils. They may require PPE equipment for some activities.

## Social distancing options

Supporting the development of pupils' social skills while maintaining some form of social distancing is a challenge. You could consider the following:

- Provide small group and/or individual support in a set location each day. Avoid having pupils and staff move in and out of spaces and intervention groups through the day by allocating a space and staff member to a specific group of pupils.
- Allocate spaces and seats in the classroom to specific pupils and staff.
- Use signage and symbols in classes and around the school to support pupils in understanding social distancing.

## Hygiene

In addition to the procedures identified in the Toolkit, leaders may:

- Encourage pupils to follow a timetable for handwashing. This may include handwashing on arrival at school, and at hourly intervals or between activities.
- Make sure pupils have their own resources.
- Consider whether staff supporting pupils with SEND need PPE for some activities, especially where pupils need support for personal care.

## 4. USEFUL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE VIRUS

- <https://firstaidforlife.org.uk/how-to-support-children-with-send-through-the-covid-19-lockdown/> - advice on educating children and parents about the virus and health and safety measures
- <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf> - a story to explain coronavirus to children with autism

- <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/supporting-children-learning-disability-asd-coping-covid-19-isolation> - resources to support learning for children and young people with SEND
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education#special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send> – government recommended online education resources
- <https://www.place2be.org.uk/coronavirus> - advice from a children's mental health charity that provides counselling and mental health support and training in UK schools .

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