

Closures of schools, childcare and other educational settings

What age groups does this cover?

- The changes cover children at registered childcare providers (including nurseries and childminders), primary and secondary schools and further education colleges. This is for both state-funded and independent schools.

Will it be mandatory for all schools, colleges and registered childcare providers to remain open in some form?

- We are asking schools, colleges, nurseries, childminders and other registered childcare settings to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children where they can.
- We understand that some may be unable to do so especially if they are experiencing severe staff shortages. We will work with local areas to use neighbouring schools, colleges and childcare providers to continue to support vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

How long will schools and colleges be closed for?

- Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, schools, colleges and childcare providers will be closed to the majority of pupils until further notice.

Will registered childcare providers, schools and colleges be open over Easter holidays for holiday clubs and childcare?

- Where possible, we would encourage childcare providers, schools and colleges to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays.

I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child - can you guarantee that my child will attend their usual school or childcare provider?

- We are expecting the majority of settings to stay open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children so they can continue to attend their usual provider.

What if I have to leave my children unattended?

- Read the government advice on [the law on leaving children unattended](#).
- There is no law about when you can leave your child on their own but it is an offence to leave them alone if it places them at risk. As parents, you should use your judgement on how mature your child is before you decide to leave them at home.
- It is important to be aware that you can be prosecuted if you leave a child alone 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'. If you are at all unsure, the NSPCC recommends that children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time, children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight and babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.

What will happen to exams?

- Primary assessments, including SATs will not go ahead this summer.

Will children on free school meals still receive a meal or food voucher when schools close?

- Yes. Headteachers can decide which of the available options will be best for families in their area. Schools can provide food on site, arrange deliveries or order a voucher to be given to the family. Contact your school to find out which option they are providing.

Is my child counted as vulnerable?

- Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Children who have a social worker include children in need, children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. We will work with schools, early years, FE providers and local authorities to help identify the children who most need support at this time.
- We know that schools will also want to look to support other children who are vulnerable where they are able to do so.

Is it compulsory for parents of vulnerable children to accept their place offer?

- There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk than others. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and education provider should explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.
- Social workers will remain in contact with vulnerable children and families, including remotely if needed.
- Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their education setting in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school/college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Will I be counted as a critical worker?

- Critical workers include NHS staff, police, farmers and food retail workers, who need to be able to go out to work. Children with a parent or carer who is listed on the government's [critical worker list](#) should be considered for a school place.
- If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

If only one parent or carer is a critical worker, can I send my children into school?

- Children with at least one parent or carer who is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response can attend school if required. However, many families with a parent or carer working in critical sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

I am a critical worker but I don't want to send my child to school or to childcare, do I have to?

- Many parents working in these sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.
- This is an offer to parents and carers and there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so.

What support will be available to parents to help them educate their children at home?

- More information will follow about what DfE is doing to support parents. We are working with the BBC and others to provide resources for children to access while at home. For parents with children under 5 years old see [hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk](https://www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk).

Where can I go to get support to help keep my child safe online?

There is a lot of support available to keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers:

- [Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Net-aware](#) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)