

The Association for Physical Education's interpretation of the DfE (January 2022) Guidance

The Department for Education has updated the [Schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance \(January 2022\)](#) in preparation for the start of the new term.

In order to help members to navigate this update, afPE has drawn out some key wording and relevant implications, which are outlined below. Any direct quotations from the guidance are in italics.

The document outlines the difference between 'should' and 'must', which is something those who have read [Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Education \(2020\)](#) will already be aware of.

'We use the terms 'must' and 'should' throughout the guidance. We use the term 'must' when the person in question is legally required to do something and 'should' when the advice set out should be followed unless there is a good reason not to.'

1) Changes to the guidance since its 9th December 2021 publication include:

'Updated the face coverings section to include the use of face coverings in classrooms for Year 7 and above.'

'You must regularly review and update your risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents', as the circumstances in your school and the public health advice changes. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective and working as planned.'

2) Bubbles:

These are not required so this should help the PE curriculum to continue to be taught as planned for both core PE and in lessons where examination PE is taught.

'We no longer recommend that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that 'bubbles' will not need to be used in schools. As well as enabling flexibility in curriculum delivery, this means that assemblies can resume and you no longer need to make alternative arrangements to avoid mixing at lunch. You should make sure your contingency plans (sometimes called outbreak management plans) cover the possibility that it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups.'

3) Face coverings:

'Where pupils in year 7 (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31st August 2021) and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by pupils, staff and adult visitors when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas. This is a temporary measure.'

*From January 4th, we also recommend that in those schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn in classrooms. This **does not apply** in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in **exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons**. This will also be a temporary measure.'*

We would not ordinarily expect teachers to wear a face covering in the classroom if they are at the front of the class, to support education delivery, although settings should be sensitive to the needs of individual teachers.'

It should be noted that changing rooms have not been explicitly mentioned and, as most lessons start in this space, it is worth considering this in your risk assessments. It is vital that you follow the rules of your employer but, in changing rooms where spacing (due to numbers) and ventilation are not up to the standard you would ideally want, you may wish to consider asking students to wear masks in this area (which is similar in nature to a classroom setting) before they undertake the practical element of the lesson where face masks can then be removed.

4) PE kit:

You may wish to consider allowing pupils to wear their PE uniform on the days they have PE lessons. This may help maximise learning time and reduce time spent by pupils and staff in changing areas, where it may be more problematic to ventilate or enforce other COVID control measures.

This will be a school based decision. COVID is a workplace hazard and it must now be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes:

- completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID in the workplace and
- identifying control measures to manage the risk and where possible outline contingency plans for inclement weather conditions

5) Control measures:

'You should:

1. *Ensure good hygiene for everyone.*
2. *Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.*
3. *Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.*
4. *Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.'*

6) Remote education:

'Where appropriate, you should support those who need to self-isolate because they have tested positive to work or learn from home if they are well enough to do so. Schools subject to the remote education temporary continuity direction are required to provide remote education to pupils covered by the direction where their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID.

*The remote education provided should be **equivalent in length** to the core teaching pupils would receive in school.'*

It would be worth having a back-up plan for those who need to be educated remotely in PE so that they do not lose out in their time off-site. You can do this by planning your own bank of appropriate lessons which fit into your overall plan or using the lessons developed at [Oak Academy](#) to help maintain curriculum alignment and ease staff workload.

7) Pupil wellbeing and support:

'Some pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. You can access useful links and sources of support on promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools.'

The [afPE Level 4 qualification in supporting pupils' well-being through physical education](#) may be of use in helping you to lead and drive this very important area of school support.

8) Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity:

Extra-curricular activity can continue if your school decides this is appropriate.

'All sports provision, including competition between settings, should be planned and delivered in line with this guidance...'

For further information please see government guidance on [Actions for out-of-school settings](#).