

UPDATE 21 APRIL 2020

**FAQs FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS OPENING FOR CHILDREN
OF KEY/CRITICAL WORKERS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

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1. Supervised Learning Environments

Q: Why are schools in NI expected to provide supervised learning for children of key/critical workers and vulnerable children when schools across Europe have completely closed?

A: The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit spread of the Covid-19 virus is that children who can stay safely at home, should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. This is different from other counties and jurisdictions but is based on sound scientific advice, so that we can both maintain key/critical services and reduce the spread of the virus.

The issue of vulnerable children has changed since we started dealing with Covid-19. The numbers of vulnerable children attending is low and this could mean that some may be potentially more at risk from non-attendance.

If attendance is deemed in the child's best interest then they should have access to school settings, either in their normal setting or a suitable alternative.

Q: Which schools and educational settings are closed?

A: All schools and educational settings are closed to pupils for normal lessons. This includes all pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme, Primary and Secondary schools and further education settings.

Q: Are special schools to open?

A: Yes –

Separate guidance has been issued in relation to special schools and can be found at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-10-april-2020>

Q: What is 'supervised learning'?

A: Supervised learning is about providing a facility in schools and pre-schools for vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers to allow parents to continue with their vital jobs. By providing the facility for supervised learning, school and pre-school education staff will play a vital role in ensuring key/critical services, including the health service, can continue to operate. Children attending school or pre-school

settings will not experience a continuation of their usual classroom based teacher led education routine, although they will be able to access appropriate learning opportunities they would otherwise have accessed at home.

Q: How will schools and pre-school settings resource the supervised learning of children during this time?

A: Teaching and non-teaching staff who are not ill, self-isolating or at risk (as defined by PHA guidance) should be available to support the supervised learning of vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the number of staff available, consideration may be given to developing a rota for staff in each educational setting, based on staff working a reduced number of hours per day/days per week or alternate weeks without any loss in pay.

Q: Is it mandatory for all schools to remain open?

A: We are asking schools to remain open for the children of key workers and vulnerable children where they can. However, some may be unable to open, for example, if they are experiencing staff shortages.

Q: What hours am I expected to open?

A: Schools and pre-schools should open for their normal hours at present and ideally from 8.00am to 6.00pm to best facilitate key/critical workers. Further guidance will issue on part-time and full-time pre-school provision.

Q: What if too many parents wish to send their children into school?

A: Parents of vulnerable children and parents who are key/critical workers should only avail of this service if they have no other option. This group may choose to avail of the facility, but they do not have to and the Department's strong advice is that they do not send their children to school if they have alternative childcare options.

Q: Can schools and pre-schools group together to provide 'clusters where one setting caters for pupils from a number of settings?

A: This may be a suitable solution for some settings when staffing and child numbers become known. While informal clusters exist, those wishing to register should do so

with the Department – more information can be found at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/guidance-schools-cluster-arrangements>

Q: Are additional resources provided by the EA to facilitate learning opportunities for a differing age group?

A: The Education Authority will work collaboratively with Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, CCEA and the Education and Training Inspectorate to provide support to schools in providing on-going learning opportunities for all pupils with an initial focus on Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 3.

2. Key / Critical Workers

Q: What age groups will schools and educational settings provide emergency care for?

A: The changes cover children from pre-school through to pupils in Year 10 and vulnerable children regardless of age. Emergency care in schools should only be accessed when there is no other alternative care available for a vulnerable child or a child of a key/critical worker. Children should only attend when necessary – they are not required to attend or to attend every day. The parent / carer will make this decision.

The Department of Health has confirmed that it is intending to keep registered day-care and childminding going, primarily to meet the childcare needs of key workers with younger children and vulnerable children.

Q: Who are ‘key/critical workers’?

A: The list is not prescriptive. However, to give some guidance the following outlines the broad categories of what would be defined as a key/critical worker:

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;

- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency;
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Q: Will the 'key/critical workers' list be changed in future?

A: The definition of 'key/critical worker' will be flexible and dependent on the circumstance and requirements over the course of this critical period. There will be flexibility shown on the definition of key/critical workers to ensure all those who need support receive it. You will be updated of any change to the definition.

Q: Do both parents of a child need to be key/critical workers to be able to attend school?

A: No. The purpose of opening schools is to ensure that key/critical workers can still attend their place of work and provide vital services.

Q: Can I require parents to provide proof of their keyworker status?

A: At this stage there is no requirement for documentary proof of occupation as we expect only genuine key/critical workers to avail of this service. This will be kept under review in the event that numbers become large and social distancing is deemed to be at risk. Decisions should be based on trust.

Q: Can I accept children who are not children of key/critical workers?

A: The aim of closing schools and pre-school education settings to pupils is to reduce the number of children in those settings to enhance the effectiveness of our response to the Covid-19 outbreak, therefore the children attending settings for supervised learning should be limited to those of key/critical workers and vulnerable children.

Parents should be encouraged to source alternative safe and appropriate provision if they are not prioritised for this service and such children should not attend school.

Q: What if parents indicate that they will have to leave their children unattended if we cannot take them?

A: Advice on the law on leaving children unattended at home is available at <https://www.gov.uk/law-on-leaving-your-child-home-alone>

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. You should advise parents to use their judgement on how mature their child is before deciding to leave them at home. It is important to be aware that parents can be prosecuted if they leave a child alone 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'. 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.

The Department of Health has confirmed that while registered day-care settings remain open, the number of children attending each setting may need to be restricted in line with public health guidance on limiting the spread of Covid-19. The Department of Health has prepared specific guidance for day care settings which can be accessed on the NI Family Support Website.

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Support/91//covid19-childcare-options-and-associated-guidance>

3. Vulnerable Children and Young People

Specific Advice is available at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-10-april-2020>

4. Arrangements for special Schools

Advice on Special Schools is available at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-10-april-2020>

5. Staffing Issues

Q: Can I bring in staff from another school to support my staff?

A: All schools and pre-school education settings are being asked to work together to deliver this service. This may include the attendance of staff at a setting other than their own or the attendance of children at a setting other than their normal setting.

Q: How will I be expected to balance delivery of remote learning to children who are at home with staffing a school or pre-school to accommodate children of key/critical workers?

A: In many cases schools and pre-schools will already have arrangements in place to continue to teach young people remotely. Schools and pre-schools should be able to explore how they can use the same approaches adopted to deliver remote learning to young people whether or not they are in school or pre-school.

Q: What if I cannot guarantee sufficient staff to pupil coverage, or am concerned at the number of children seeking to attend?

A: If a school leader concludes that the school cannot operate safely, either because there will not be sufficient staff, or too many children are seeking to attend, the school should consider the following options (Education Authority local School Development Service officers are available to assist):

- Contacting neighbouring settings to identify whether staff can be shared;
- Contact Education Authority to identify other public sector workers, with the requisite security clearances, who may be able to assist;
- Identifying whether neighbouring settings can accommodate additional children;
- Limiting the number of children who can attend and prioritising children of health and social care staff in the first instance.

Q: What does the school do if the classroom assistant attached to a statemented pupil is self-isolating?

A: It is for the school to undertake a risk assessment and to determine and agree in conjunction with the parent / carer whether they can manage supervised learning if the classroom assistant attached to the statemented pupil is self-isolating.

Q: Can I accept volunteers to work in my school to support teaching staff? Will volunteers from across the public sector be provided?

A: Yes, the school can accept volunteers. The Department established a volunteering scheme whereby people from the wider education sector may apply to support school settings where there may not be sufficient staff to sustain a safe level of provision. If required AccessNI cleared volunteers can and will be deployed to support teaching staff. The school must ensure the suitability of all persons looking after children and that appropriate supervision is in place as part of its safeguarding responsibilities for children attending school.

Q: Previous guidance indicated that if there is a need to require teachers to be class committed over the contractual 23.5 hours post primary, 25 hours primary, a payback arrangement would be provided by the school to reduce class contact following the return to normal arrangements. Does this still stand?

A: COVID-19 school closures will mean fewer children attending school to be looked after. Schools will want to plan their staffing levels accordingly and use a rota system to limit class contact to minimise the risk of individual exposure to the coronavirus. If a teacher has been required to work longer than the contractual 23.5 hours post primary, 25 hours primary, schools should put in place arrangements

to allow their class contact time to be reduced following the return to normal arrangements.

Q: Will staff who work longer than their contracted hours get paid for additional time they work during this period?

A: Schools should look to rota arrangements to minimise the number of staff working beyond their contracted hours. If time off in lieu is not operationally possible, additional pay can be considered. This may be the case where staff volunteer to work in schools at evenings or weekends or over the Easter period. Schools should keep records of additional hours worked and ensure that form TR269 is completed for teachers. If this creates an additional financial pressure for the school, then the school should contact the Education Authority, as Funding Authority, in the first instance at the appropriate time.

Q: What attendance code should I be using for recording of pupils who are present or absent from school w.e.f. 23 March 2020?

A: For pupils not attending school – “Code ! - No attendance required” should be used. Since schools have been asked to stay open for some children of key/critical workers, schools should record their attendance as appropriate in the am and pm. “Code ! - no attendance required” should be used for the vast majority of children until the end of term, “Code # - Holiday for All” would be used to cover the summer period as normal. An exceptional closure request is not necessary for the foreseeable future since schools are in the main, closed to pupils from 23 March 2020. In instances where schools cannot easily update SIMS to record attendance for the children of keyworkers / vulnerable children during the COVID-19 crisis, schools should use the “[Manual Attendance Recording for Cluster Schools](#)” template available on C2K. Instructions are provided on the cover page of this document. C2K helpdesk can also provide assistance on 08706 011 666. Schools should update the document and retain a hard copy of their attendance until such times as it can be reflected appropriately within SIMS by the pupils’ home school. **This form is not required by the Department or Education Authority but should be stored securely by the school.** We appreciate that during this unprecedented time, schools may not be able to easily update pupil attendance

records on SIMS, consequently the Department is content for schools to bulk update pupil records when they are able to return to school.

Q: What dates should I use in SIMS in order to generate 2019/20 pupil attendance reports?

This year's attendance reports should be generated on the same basis as every other year, i.e. using the school's start and end dates for the 2019/20 academic year. Pupil attendance will be unaffected by the Covid-19 situation since, for the majority of pupils, their attendance will be covered by "Code ! No Attendance Required" wef 23 March 2020.

As far as the current circumstances allow, you should ensure that your pupil records are as up to date as possible before generating the report.

For those pupils who have attended school since 23 March 2020, their respective SIMS record should be updated accordingly to reflect their daily attendance as appropriate. We appreciate that in the current circumstances, it may take some time before schools are able to access SIMS and update records as required.

If you need assistance in completing SIMS attendance you should contact the C2k service desk on 0870 6011666.

Q: Can I accept children who are registered pupils at another setting, including in another phase of education?

A: If schools wish to accept vulnerable/ key worker children who are registered pupils at another setting, this needs to be done in conjunction with the EA so that accurate registers of children's whereabouts are maintained.

Q: Can schools work together to provide a service for affected children?

A: Separate guidance is available in relation to clustering arrangements

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/guidance-schools-cluster-arrangements>

Q: Is there a limit on the number of children I can admit into the school or pre-school?

A: While there is no set limit, if you find there to be a high demand for places at your school, you may wish to consider utilising space at neighbouring settings to adhere to the Public Health Agency (PHA) if you can do safely and in compliance with PHA guidelines. Pre-school settings are not suitable environments for older children. The Department and the Education Authority will advise you further if this arises.

Q: My school is a single sex school, can I accept children of both genders at this time.

A: Yes. These children will be in attendance at your school so normal admissions requirements do not apply for supervised learning.

Q: Can the children of teaching and non-staffing teaching staff attend?

A: Yes. Teachers and non-teaching staff are defined as key/critical workers within the guidance.

Q: What are the implications for class size limits and teacher/pupil ratios?

A: This should be assessed based on what is being delivered in the classroom and bearing in mind guidance in relation to PHA advice about social distancing. For non-statutory pre-school providers, the ratio of adults to children is 1:8.

Q: If a hub school is not available and a parent has children which attend different schools, can they be taken to one school?

A: Yes, if one child's host school is not open or has indicated that it is unable to supervise a child, then the parent/carer may approach a sibling's school or an alternative school in their locality. The school would be permitted to admit the child as long as they can accommodate the child safely. The Education Authority School Development service is available to help schools to manage solutions locally. Schools are permitted to work together to provide local solutions for local people.

6. Child Protection Arrangements

Q: Will child protection arrangements be modified in any way during this period?

A: Existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements will continue to apply. DE Circular 2017/04 "Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools" can be found at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

Q: Who will lead on child protections/safeguarding/disclosures? Will pupils from other schools require a teacher present?

A: Existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements will continue to apply. DE Circular 2017/04 "Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools" can be found at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

If necessary schools should seek advice from the Education Authority's Child Protection Support Service on 02895 985590.

Q: If staff are expected to attend different schools, will there be a handover of pupil information in order to fulfil safe guarding measures?

A: Each school has a safeguarding team which includes the Chair of the Board of Governors, Designated Governor, Principal, Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher and often schools have a number of Deputy Designated Teachers. All staff, whatever school they are from, should be alert to all types of abuse and be aware of the procedures to be followed. New staff at the school should look to the Safeguarding Team and the school's policy for direction and support.

Q: For pupils who don't normally attend our school and are Looked After Children or have sensitive information surrounding their case, are staff members informed what measures are to be put in place?

A: The staff member responsible for looked after children, often the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, will be aware of the child's history. However, there is not a requirement to share all of this information, rather the staff member can share relevant information with the new school to assist the successful integration into the school.

7. Health and Safety (including School Counselling)

Q: How will First Aid be covered if no First Aiders volunteer?

A: All schools are advised to have at least one trained first-aider on the premises at all times during school hours. Further guidance can be found at:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/First-aid.docx>

Q: Can staff administer medicine to children or take temperatures?

A: Existing guidance to schools on supporting pupils with medication needs continues to apply. The guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/support-pupils-medication-needs>

Schools should exercise judgement when accepting pupils from other schools and be fully informed by parents of pre-existing conditions and medication needs to determine if a safe environment can be provided.

Q: Will a nurse or a medical professional be available/contactable?

A: Not all schools will have a nurse or medical professional. Schools should seek medical advice from the PHA if necessary.

Q: How will the medical needs and allergies of children be known if schools are providing meals for children from other schools?

A: Schools should exercise judgement when accepting pupils from other schools and be fully informed by parents of pre-existing conditions, medication needs and allergies and carry out a risk assessment to determine if they can provide a safe environment for those children.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/support-pupils-medication-needs>

Counselling Provision

Q: Will counselling continue to be available through the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) for post-primary pupils?

A: Yes, will be provided to existing and new young people via telephone or secure online video calling. Counsellors will be made available on the same day each week

as they would normally have been in the young person's school. Referrals will be made through the school's Key Contact as normal who will then liaise with the school counsellor as appropriate. The Key Contact will provide the counsellor with the young person's contact details to facilitate the session(s). The Education Authority, schools ICSS providers will communicate the interim arrangements to pupils and their parents.

Q: How will schools cater for children of key/critical workers where the child presents significant behaviour challenges?

A: If a school leader concludes that the school cannot deliver a safe and sustainable solution for children with behavioural or other issues, either because there will not be sufficient staff, or too many children are seeking to attend, the school should not offer educational provision. Principals should make contact with neighbouring settings to identify whether they have capacity to arrange suitable provision.

8. Services (including Transport and Free School Meals)

Q: Will there be school transport?

A: Home to school transport is not operating in its usual capacity but the EA will review requests for transport assistance for vulnerable children on a case by case basis.

To request transport assistance for vulnerable children send an email entitled '**Request for Transport Assistance**' to HomeToSchool.Transport@eani.org.uk with the following information:

- i. **Pupil details** - name, DOB, address
- ii. **Details of the transport required** - days/dates, times, pickup & drop of points, any special transport requirements e.g. escort required, wheelchair, behavioural support, assistance to board/disembark etc.
- iii. **Details of the person making the referral** - name, phone number & email
- iv. **Details for the pupil's parent/carers** - name, email, telephone number

Please note that we cannot guarantee transport for children who cannot travel independently (e.g. pupils who require an escort, assistance to board/disembark, secure seatbelts etc.). If we receive a request of this nature we will contact the pupil's school/educational setting to discuss in more detail before approving.

We aim to put in place approved requests within a maximum of 3 working days or sooner wherever possible.

Q. Will free school meals be available?

A: Separate Guidance on Free School Meals is available at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/free-school-meals-payment-scheme>

Q: Should my school continue to offer Extended Schools provision?

A: For staff involved in the Extended Schools programme, with schools being closed for normal teaching to pupils, many of these programmes are unlikely to take place in their usual form. However, there may be scope for schools to deliver different types of support where possible, taking account staffing levels and the needs of the pupils and families in their communities. For example, with regards to counselling, this could be provided via telephone in place of the usual face to face contact.

Schools should refer to guidance which has been published on the [EA website](#) (see FAQs under 'HR') and the [Northern Ireland Extended Schools Information System](#). Any operational queries should be directed to the EA in the first instance.

9. Social Distancing

Q: Is there guidance on what constitutes 'social distancing' in schools?

A: Northern Ireland's Public Health Agency are using 2m as a simple message the public can understand for social distancing. It is a 'rule of thumb' and therefore principals are expected to take account of general NI guidance on social distancing in education settings which can found here and will be continuously updated in line with PHA guidance:- <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/implementing-social-distancing-education-settings-ni-coronavirus-covid-19>

To help ensure the risk of virus spread for both staff and children is as low as possible, settings should:-

- Tell children, parents and others not to visit the education setting if they are displaying any symptoms of Covid-19;
- Consider how children arrive and reduce any unnecessary travel on buses or public transport;
- Ensure class sizes reflect the number of teaching staff available and are kept as low as possible
- Discourage parents from gathering at the school gates.

Q: How many children should be permitted in one room?

A: Room sizes in schools vary considerably and principals should exercise their judgement focusing on the safety of both staff and children and taking into account PHA advice on social distancing, recognising that no class arrangement, including composite classes, should exceed 33 pupils or 20 in practical classes where practical lessons take place. In extremis, a teacher may volunteer to cover over these numbers for a short period of time. There will be no relaxation of class sizes for special schools and units.

Q: Will teachers and other school based staff be provided with Personal Protective Equipment?

The scientific advice indicates that educational staff do not require personal protective equipment – this is needed by medical and care professionals providing specific close contact care or procedures that create airborne risk– such as suctioning and physiotherapy for anyone who has coronavirus (Covid-19) and is displaying symptoms. If you are not providing this care to someone with the virus and displaying symptoms, PPE is not needed

The virus that causes Covid-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air. They quickly fall on floors or surfaces. The advice for schools, colleges and childcare settings is to follow steps on [social distancing, handwashing and other hygiene measures](#) and [cleaning](#) of surfaces.

Some children and young people with special educational needs may be unable to follow social distancing guidelines or require personal care support. In these circumstances, staff need to increase their level of self-protection, such as minimising close contact (where appropriate), cleaning frequently touched surfaces and carrying out more frequent handwashing. We will shortly publish additional advice for settings managing children and young people with complex needs.

Q: Why are we not testing educational staff who display symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Testing is being prioritised for those most at risk of severe illness from the virus including those in hospital with pneumonia or acute respiratory illness and people with symptoms in residential care settings as well as some health and care workers. Updates in relation to priority groups for testing can be found on the Public Health Agency website. <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>

If a member of staff becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in an education setting they should be sent home and advised to follow the [staying at home guidance](#).

Q: Will educational settings have enough cleaning equipment?

A: The Education Authority can provide emergency supplies to those schools that find themselves short of supplies. The Education Authority will be able to provide either a collection or delivery service if schools need supplies. Individual schools will need to contact the Education Authority's Covid-19 Operations Centre 8.00am to 8.00pm. The number is 028 38368186.

10. Young People Displaying Symptoms of Covid-19

Q: What should I do if a child displays symptoms of Covid-19 whilst in school or pre-school education setting?

A: If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in an educational setting they should be sent home and advised to follow the home isolation advice on the PHA website

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least two metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

Q: What do I do if a parent contacts the school to advise that a child who recently attended the school has been diagnosed with Covid-19?

A: Maintain hygiene within the school environment and ensure all staff and children wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. General interventions may include increased cleaning activity to reduce risk of retention of virus on hard surfaces, and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate. Advice on cleaning is available at: - [guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#)

Q: What do I do if a parent contacts the school to advise that the family has moved to self-isolate because a close contact of a child who has been in attendance at the school has been diagnosed with Covid-19?

A: Maintain hygiene within the school environment and ensure all staff and children wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. General interventions may include increased cleaning activity to reduce risk of retention of virus on hard surfaces, and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

11. Pre-school and Childcare

Q: What if my setting or class normally provides part-time pre-school provision?

A: Children should attend as usual.

Q: Does this cover nursery schools and nursery units in primary schools?

A: Yes.

Q: Does this cover non-statutory pre-schools settings?

A: Yes. Non-statutory pre-school education providers will continue to be funded by the Education Authority and will not lose funding as a result of the closure arrangements. Non-statutory pre-school education providers should continue to submit monthly claims to the Education Authority in the usual way. Pre-school education provision in non-statutory community and voluntary settings is provided on a part-time basis, for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day, five days per week.

Q: Can children attend a pre-school setting for part of the day, as well as attending another childcare setting?

A: Parents of vulnerable children and parents who are key workers should only avail of this service if they have no other option. The Department's strong advice is that parents do not send their children to school if they have alternative childcare options. If childcare provision is available in another setting, children should not attend a pre-school or school.

External Providers

Q: Can external childcare providers continue to operate after school childcare provision in the school?

A: Yes, if the school is satisfied that it complies with PHA guidance.

Q: What is the position with childcare provision outside of school?

A: The Department of Health has issued guidance to the child care sector and indicated further guidance will be prepared to provide clarity for the sector.

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/HM%20Letter%20to%20Chilcare%20Sector_0.pdf

The Ministers for Health and Education issued a joint announcement on support for the childcare sector on 9 April. All the relevant information in relation to COVID-19 and childcare, including the joint Ministerial Statement, is available at the link below. This includes advice for parents, childcare providers who remain open for the children of key workers, and those which have closed, and information on the Approved Home Childcare Scheme. It also provides information on the financial assistance available to the sector and a FAQs section.

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Support/91/covid19-childcare-options-and-associated-guidance>

Q: What arrangements are in place for families who cannot access provision in education settings for vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers?

A: The Department of Health has confirmed that it is intending to keep registered day-care and childminding going primarily to meet the childcare needs of key workers with younger children and vulnerable children. While registered day-care settings remain open, the number of children attending each setting must comply with the recent guidance issued by the Department of Health.

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Support/91/covid19-latest-advice-for-childcare-providers>

***If you are a key worker and are struggling to access childcare, please:
Check the Family Support NI website:***

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Support/91/covid19-childcare-options-and-associated-guidance>

for information on available spaces; and If you cannot find a suitable option please call Parentline on 0808 8020 400.

12. Funding

Q: Will I receive additional funding to complete a deep clean or for additional cleaning products?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs, arising from exceptional or emergency situations, such as completing a deep clean, the purchase of additional cleaning products or the setup an isolation room, the school should contact the Education Authority, as funding authority, in the first instance.

Q: When will schools be notified of their 2020-21 delegated budgets?

A: Following the Chancellor's budget statement on 11 March, the Finance Minister laid a statement to the Assembly on 16 March setting out the level of UK Government funding. The final 2020-21 budget for Northern Ireland Departments will be confirmed by the end of March. As soon as the Department is able to do so, it will advise schools immediately of 2020-21 delegated budgets.

Q: Will funding be provided to enable the school to set up an isolation room?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs, arising from exceptional or emergency situations, such as completing a deep clean, the purchase of additional cleaning products or the setup an isolation room, the school should contact the Education Authority, in the first instance. In support of all schools opening on Monday the Education Authority can provide emergency supplies to those schools that find themselves short of supplies.

The Education Authority will be able to provide either a collection or delivery service over the weekend if schools need supplies. Individual schools will need to contact the Education Authority's Covid -19 operations centre, which will continue to be operational over the weekend 8am to 8pm. The number is: 028 38368186.

Q: Will I receive additional funding if I accept children who are not registered at my setting?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs arising from exceptional or emergency situations, the school should contact the Education Authority, as funding authority, in the first instance.

Q: Will my school be indemnified for any legal claims arising out of Covid-19?

A: Existing arrangements will continue to apply for all controlled and maintained schools. Should schools in these sectors be notified of a legal claim (or potential

legal claim), they should contact the Education Authority as Funding Authority in the first instance, who will liaise with the Department as required.

For Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools and non-statutory pre-school settings participating in the pre-school education programme, a letter of comfort was issued by the Minister of Education on 22 March 2020 to provide cover for legal claims specifically in relation to Covid-19.

13. Examination and Assessment Arrangements

Q: What are the arrangements for GCSE; AS and A Level Examinations?

On the 19 March the Minister announced that, in line with arrangements in England and Wales, the summer examinations would not take place. Advice on the alternative assessment arrangements is available at:

<https://ccea.org.uk/news/2020/april/ccea-announces-how-gcses-and-levels-will-be-awarded-summer-2020>