

Headteachers' Update

For Schools and Academies

DfE Updates

[Providing school meals during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Page summary: Guidance for schools and local authorities on school meals arrangements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Change made: We have updated the guidance to include information about supplier relief payments and made changes to the period the support covers. We have also added Farmfoods to the list of supermarkets available and updated the information on how to order vouchers.

[Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

Page summary: What all schools will need to do during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak from the start of the autumn term.

Change made: Updated 'Introduction' section to reflect correct position for early years provision over half-term and 'Remote education' section to reflect a duty for schools to publish their remote education offer on their websites by 12 February.

[Responsibility for exams](#)

Page summary: Guidance for schools and colleges on who should enter students for exams, the health arrangements for exams and the support DfE is providing.

Change made: Added information to 'Public health guidance to support exams from January 2021' about scheduled assessments in February and March.

HSE Spot Checks – Feedback

You'll be aware of the programme of HSE spot checks which took place within schools last year. Whilst we are not aware of any recent visits within Northumberland, we have some wider feedback from national visits which we'd like to share with you. We've included some common areas of concern and suggestions of control measures to consider:

Common issues:

- Social distancing in staff rooms - look at limiting the number of staff using the space at any one time to make it easier to maintain 2m distancing. Check seating arrangements – chairs should be 2m. May need to take some chairs out of use.
- Cleaning regimes – enhanced additional cleaning regimes should still be in place. In particular, frequently touched areas/shared areas and shared equipment.
- Lack of Ventilation - see H&S FAQ and Covid risk assessment.
- Where generic risk assessments are used these were lacking specific detail about the arrangements in place within school. The model assessments provided by the Corporate H&S Team are general as they need to be relevant to a number of different school types and sizes, whilst in reality the arrangements within each school will be different. It's important to ensure that school risk assessments record the specific arrangements in place at your school. During visits, HSE may cross check your risk assessment with the covid controls you have in place.
- Lack of effective systems for regular monitoring and review of risk assessments – Covid controls should be monitored regularly to ensure they're being complied with and are effective. Ask staff for feedback, include discussion of covid controls within staff meetings. Keep your risk assessment under review and update it as necessary. Share revisions with staff/unions.

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- Fire doors being propped open to aid ventilation – see H&S FAQ and Covid model risk assessment.
 - Inappropriate rooms being used for isolating suspected cases – ideally pupils should be in a separate room away from others.
 - Inadequate arrangements for managing external visitors or contractors - visitor forms/checklists are available. Essential visitors only; appointments made prior to visit where possible; visitors asked not to attend if they are symptomatic or anyone in their household is symptomatic.

Covid controls commended

- Use of classroom seating plans to help with self-isolation measures – also think about this for canteens if possible.
- A click-and-collect app to purchase food from the canteen to reduce queues and avoid crowding.
- Brightly coloured floor markings in playgrounds to encourage 2m social distancing during drop-off and collection times
- A video walk through for pupils and parents explaining COVID-secure arrangements.

Tree Safety

Following the recent bad weather, schools are reminded to note the content of the [H&S bulletin](#) which was issued last year relating to tree inspections. During wet/snow/windy conditions, it is possible that trees could become destabilised as a result of pre-existing disease or water logging in the rooting area. In particular, conifer trees may be more susceptible due to the prevalence of a full and foliated canopy that presents a “sail area” throughout the year. This allows greater forces to be exerted upon the root plate which if waterlogged may be at higher risk of failure. Schools should therefore be vigilant for abnormal signs, signs of ground cracking in the rooting area or abnormal movement of the stem may suggest a problem. Schools should review any outdoor activities planned during these times. If problems are suspected, then specialist advice should be sought.

It is important that schools action any outstanding recommendations from their tree survey report. Trees should be maintained in a condition which allows easy inspection by the tree specialist.