

An abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes in various colors including blue, red, yellow, green, and black. The composition is dynamic and textured, with a central area of light green and yellow. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the painting.

E-ACT

Welcoming our
students back
to academy

As you will already be aware, the government has given us the green light to welcome back all our students, full-time, from 8 March.

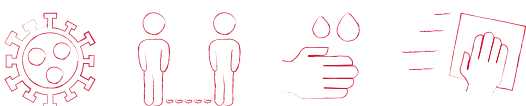
We know the huge toll lockdown continues to have on the mental and physical wellbeing of young people. Coupled with the fact that cases, hospitalisations and deaths have fallen since lockdown started, we are very keen to welcome our students back as soon as possible.

Our priority is to keep our students in academy where we can support their education and wellbeing. The longer they are away, the more their ability to learn new things now and in the future could be hampered.

However, we also understand that some parents and carers are anxious about what lies ahead as children prepare to return to a full academy.

This guide outlines the measures we are taking to ensure our students return to the safest possible academy environment in March.

We hope you will find this guide useful, but please do get in touch in the usual way with any questions. You can find more information on the Department for Education's website by clicking [here](#).



The importance of being back in academy

The impact of missing school

There is clear evidence that missed education is detrimental to children's academic development and can affect their attainment and life chances. Despite remote learning arrangements being in place, we know that learning at home, for example, can present challenges.

Attending school is also vital for the mental and physical health and wellbeing of children – especially our most vulnerable. For many, school provides an important routine and rhythm to the week. Children have been missing friends and their teachers during lockdown and these connections are a key part of wellbeing.

The view from the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies continues to be that missing out on classroom-based education has severe impacts on young people, so we're very keen to have our students back in academy where we can give them the support they need.

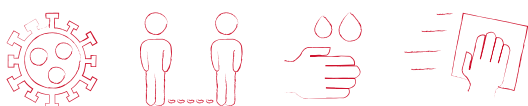
The risk of illness remains low

Cases, hospitalisations and deaths have fallen since lockdown started, and the data is beginning to show the benefits of vaccination in preventing infection and symptomatic cases.

The overwhelming evidence is that the risk to young people from COVID-19 is low. There continues to be strong evidence that children and younger people are much less susceptible to severe clinical disease than older people.

Whilst education settings can be places where transmission occurs, there is no strong evidence of them driving largescale community transmission. Rather, case rates within education settings have been shown to reflect those in the local community.

Furthermore, despite initial concerns, the new variant is not disproportionately affecting children and young people.



Testing in schools

Testing within the academy

From week beginning 8 March (though some schools have started sooner), students will be tested in a dedicated space within the academy three to five days apart, after which point they will receive their first home test kit.

All secondary aged students can swab themselves if they are able to.

Testing at home

Following their first three tests in academy, students aged 11 should be tested by an adult at home and students aged 12-18 should self-test.

Staff in secondary schools will also be supplied with kits to test themselves twice a week at home.

The home test kits will include instructions for testing and reporting results.

The lateral flow device test

Our students and staff will be offered lateral flow device tests.

These tests can help identify people who have high levels of the virus but may not be showing any symptoms. They are quick and convenient, allowing results to be delivered in 30 minutes.

How does it work?

The tests are self-administered by students and staff, but when taken in academy, testing will be overseen by trained personnel.

The test involves gently swabbing the throat and nose before placing the swab in a solution. Lateral flow devices do not require a laboratory to process the results.

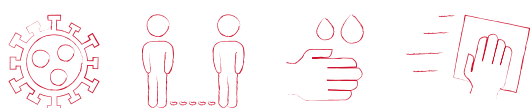
The tests will be carried out in line with our strict safety measures, which include social distancing, good hand and respiratory hygiene and keeping academy spaces well ventilated.

How will students and staff taking tests in the academy be supported?

We have formed a testing team which will be made up of trained academy staff, agency staff and volunteers, all of whom will have had relevant background checks.

As the lateral flow device is simple to use, medical experts are clear that no clinical oversight is necessary whilst tests are carried out. These tests have already been administered routinely and safely in our academies as well as in other schools, care homes and universities.

That said, we will provide whatever support is needed to our students and ask that parents get in touch with any questions or concerns.



Parental consent

Please note that whilst participation in testing is optional, we recommend that students are tested as figures show that one in three people who have COVID-19 never display any symptoms but may be infectious.

However, if you do not wish to consent to your child taking part in testing, they will still be able to attend the academy unless they develop any symptoms.

Why lateral flow device tests?

Lateral flow device tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals and are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show that lateral flow device tests are effective at detecting a high viral load in an individual, including currently circulating COVID-19 variants.

Why is testing important?

The evidence shows that as many as one in three people who contract the virus show no symptoms, so could be spreading the disease unknowingly. Asymptomatic testing is designed to help identify positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmission.

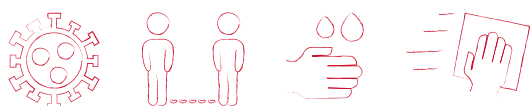
For students who are unable to self-swab

We recognise that self-swabbing may cause concerns for some students, for example those with special educational needs or disabilities. We will provide whatever support is needed for these students and ask that parents get in touch with any questions or concerns.

Reporting a positive test result

All students who are testing at home and receive a positive result must inform:

- The academy
- NHS Test and Trace either by visiting www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by calling 119



Other protective measures

Face coverings

Since September, students and staff have been wearing face coverings in indoor communal spaces. In following the latest government guidance, all students and staff will also be asked to wear face coverings in all indoor settings, including classrooms.

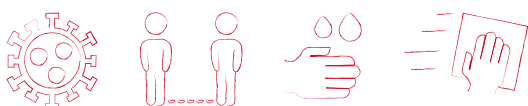
This will not apply where a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in PE or when exercising outdoors.

The wearing of face coverings in classrooms is being introduced for a limited time until Easter and will be kept under review.

The government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has advised that face coverings can be effective in reducing transmission in public settings. This is because they help to reduce the release of virus-carrying particles when worn by an infected person.

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) adults and children

Children and staff who are confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable will be asked to stay at home while shielding advice applies nationally.



Protective measures already in place

Alongside testing, we have in place a range of protective measures to minimise the risk of the spread of infection as detailed below.

The system of controls are the government's mandatory safety measures which help to create a safer environment for our students and staff.

Prevention

Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the academy

Face coverings used in recommended circumstances

Everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual

Good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

Enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often

Minimising contact across the site and maintaining social distancing wherever possible

Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

In specific circumstances:

Individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary

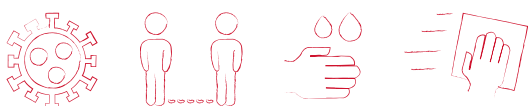
Asymptomatic testing, where available

Response to any infection

Engage with NHS Test and Trace process

Manage and report confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst the academy community

Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice





listen@e-act.org.uk



[@EducationEACT](https://twitter.com/EducationEACT)

WWW

www.e-act.org.uk

Contact us

We hope this guide will help to answer any questions you have about the measures we are taking to ensure the safety of our students.

Please contact us in the usual way with any feedback, questions or concerns. You can also email listen@e-act.org.uk at any time.

We take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support.

