



## Clinically extremely vulnerable: supporting school attendance for anxious parents and children

We know that some pupils and parents may be feeling anxious about attending school during the current period: particularly those who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable or who have other medical conditions.

Schools and local authorities are already working closely with these families and others to support them to ensure high levels of attendance.

### Guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable is changing from 1 April

From 1 April shielding will be paused and all clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are expected to return to their school or other education setting. Only a very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician not to attend, do not need to return.

The decision to pause shielding is based on the prevalence of the virus. We know that since the national lockdown and shielding measures were introduced in January, cases of COVID-19 have fallen considerably across all parts of the country. The decision to pause shielding measures is based on the latest evidence and has been agreed with the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England.

The advice for pupils who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable continues to be that they can and should attend school. Clinically extremely vulnerable adults should also now have been offered at least one dose of the vaccine.

### How to support anxious families and children

- Emphasise the benefits of school attendance for the pupil's wellbeing, mental health, attainment and long term development
- Remind parents of the protective measures you have put in place, including the rapid Covid-19 testing programme to help reduce the risk of transmission. For more information parents can visit [gov.uk/backtoschool](https://gov.uk/backtoschool)
- Have a conversation with the family and discuss if any other adjustments can be made to ensure that the pupil can regularly attend school or college
- Signpost pupils and parents to appropriate [resources](#) if anxiety or mental health is a concern
- A conversation with a familiar teacher may help to reassure pupils about their attendance at school. To prepare for such conversations, staff may wish to refer to PHE's [Every Mind Matters](#) and [Rise Above](#) platforms, which have been adapted for the context of the outbreak.

- Draw on the resources of the school nursing service in your local authority to support your re-engagement efforts
- Use your existing pastoral staff to support continued engagement with families

Where pupils and parents remain anxious about attendance, schools should develop an action plan with the family, local authority and health representatives to support the return to school.

As usual, headteachers have discretion to grant leaves of absence for individual pupils. These should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and should take into account the specific facts and circumstances, and background context behind the request. Where leave is granted, we expect it to be for a specific period of time and reviewed on a regular basis.

Schools and local authorities can continue to use their attendance enforcement powers, where appropriate, to improve attendance.

### **Further resources**

Schools may also wish to refer to our [good practice advice](#) which sets out actions they may want to consider to secure high levels of attendance for all pupils.

For further information on attending schools and colleges in the spring term 2021, including the protective measures in place, parents and carers can visit our guidance at [gov.uk/backtoschool](https://www.gov.uk/backtoschool).