



Guidance for Hackney Education staff visiting schools and early years settings during the coronavirus pandemic

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1. Who is this guide for?

- Schools and early years settings staff in the London Borough of Hackney.
- Hackney Education staff or appropriate stakeholders visiting a school or an early years setting to support children or staff .

2. About this guidance

This coronavirus pandemic requires us to adapt some of our working practices to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to children and staff.

Hackney Education and schools and early years settings should work together to consider a balance between carrying out the services that usually require them to meet in person whilst minimising any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means each opportunity to meet should be considered on a case by case basis in line with current government guidance and the guidance outlined in this document.

This guidance has been written so that schools and early years settings and Hackney Education staff are aware of the latest official national guidance on how to reduce the risk of contracting or transmitting the virus that causes Covid-19 when meeting in a school or early years setting or an outside space.

Please note: as government guidance is frequently updated, often at short notice, this guidance may need to be adapted on a regular basis. Schools, settings and Hackney Education staff are advised to check on Aspire or the Services for Schools website regularly to ensure that they are referring to the most current version of this guidance.

3. Introduction

In line with current guidance, it is recommended that schools, early years settings and Hackney Education staff minimise the number of visits to educational and early years settings. This is particularly the case for members of staff whose role would normally require them to visit a number of different settings during the course of their work (please see Section 7 for further information).

Before a visit to a school or an early years setting is agreed it is recommended that the school/setting and the visitor/s explore alternatives to a physical face to face meeting such as a phone call or virtual meeting.

Only if these are not possible should plans be made for a meeting in person.

- This guidance is to help Hackney Education, settings and school staff minimise the risk of the spread of COVID-19.
- This guidance is for Hackney Education staff attending meetings in schools and early years settings and outside spaces. Where Hackney Education staff are meeting any individuals in their dwellings please read this guidance in conjunction with Hackney Council's Entering into dwellings protocol available on the [Intranet](#).

However, please note that practitioners wherever possible should continue to hold virtual meetings with families.

This guidance is consistent with national guidance:

[Guidance for full opening: schools](#)

[Safe working in education, childcare settings and children's social care settings including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)

[Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

[Safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

Please also refer to Hackney Council's [standard operating practice](#) for schools and settings.

4. How should Hackney Education and the school/setting decide if a visit is necessary?

At the moment Hackney Education staff should only be visiting a school/setting if it is important to do so.

The priorities for Hackney Education and the school/setting are as follows from highest priority to lowest:

1. protecting the lives of Hackney Education, school/settings staff and the children attending the premises or outside space
2. protecting Hackney Education, school/setting staff and children attending the premises or outside space from injury
3. supporting school recovery and curriculum delivery
4. protecting the environment
5. protecting property
6. making sure that processes are followed

Examples of reasons for meetings that are high priority which may need to be in person if alternative methods can't be used include:

- child protection visits
- gross misconduct and safeguarding investigations
- priority specialist support and guidance
- providing specialist health or wellbeing support
- providing specialist support and guidance
- serious staffing issues
- supporting school recovery and curriculum recovery
- traded services

Lower priority visits should be postponed for the time being. We will update this guidance to reflect further information from the Government and Public Health England.

When deciding whether or not to visit a school or setting, it is essential that both the school/setting and the Hackney Education staff member/s consider:

- Government [advice](#)
- the level of priority and urgency of the visit
- whether the visit is categorised as lone working – Hackney Education staff should refer to the Guidance for Lone Workers for further details
- the control measures the school/setting has in place in line with government guidance
- whether the visit can be carried out using alternative methods e.g. virtually.

For the remainder of this guidance, meetings are defined as those that cannot be undertaken using alternative methods and are considered to be important (as outlined in Section 4).

5. Deciding if individual staff can attend meetings in a school or setting

Schools/settings and Hackney Education staff should decide if it is appropriate for staff on an individual basis to attend a meeting. This will depend on an assessment of a combination of factors for each individual including:

- Is the member of staff classed as part of a vulnerable group (either clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable) or living with or care for people who are clinically vulnerable and has concerns regarding attending the meeting?
- What are the social distancing arrangements and hygiene measures for the meeting?
- How will the staff member be travelling to and from the meeting?

Staff with underlying health problems increasing their risk of illness from COVID-19:

As shielding has been paused from 1st August, Hackney Education and schools/settings staff who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable or who live with or care for someone in these groups can participate in meetings provided that the school or setting can implement the control measures as outlined in government guidance and the measures outlined in this guidance.

If a person who is categorised as clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable wishes to contribute to the meeting through other methods other than attending in person then they should be supported to do so. If it is considered essential that the person attends the meeting, arrangements should be made to discuss any concerns the individual may have and make accommodations to the meeting to reduce these concerns.

Staff who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable can also attend meetings provided that social distancing and control measures can be

adhered to. If these staff have any concerns then they should discuss these with their manager.

Please note: discussions around arrangements for staff with medical conditions should be handled sensitively and the individual does not need to disclose the nature of their medical condition/s with other parties involved in the meeting. They should disclose to their manager if they are classed as part of a vulnerable group so decisions on appropriate arrangements can be made.

Staff who have symptoms including:

- A high temperature.
- A new, continuous cough.
- Loss or change of sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

should not attend meetings and should follow the stay at home guidance.

6. PPE

The current government advice is that the majority of school/settings staff will not be required to wear PPE beyond what they would normally need for work. There are a certain circumstances where PPE is required:

- where an individual child or young person becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at school, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- where a child or young person already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

In line with this guidance, Hackney Education and schools/settings staff would not be required to wear PPE during a meeting or visit unless their visit/s will involve the circumstances as outlined above.

The government has also published [guidance for face coverings in education](#) from 1st September which covers the general approach to face coverings and also when local restrictions apply. Visitors should check with the school/early years settings what the approach is for wearing face coverings prior to their visit and, where possible follow this approach whilst on the premises.

Depending on the circumstances of the visit including: contact with others, handling of equipment, requirements of the school/setting, personal circumstances of the individual and frequency of meetings/visits attended, Hackney Education supports the right of the attendees to wear appropriate PPE if they wish (provided this is not detrimental to the nature of the visit and is in agreement with the school/setting). Individuals should discuss any arrangements for wearing PPE with their manager and the school/setting prior to the visit.

There is further guidance on [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) which includes information about preventing and controlling infection, including when, how PPE should be used, what type of PPE to use, and how to source it.

7. Frequency of meetings

Some Hackney Education staff may be required to visit a number of sites during the course of their work. Whilst there is no current guidance on the set number of visits external visitors can make, it is recommended that they follow these measures when deciding whether to attend a meeting:

- Only attend meetings considered important (see Section 4).
- Plan visits to reduce travel between meetings/home/office and at quieter times of travel and the working day.
- Become familiar with and follow the school/setting's control measures.

8. Planning for the visit

If both the school/setting and the Hackney Education service are in agreement that a meeting is important and cannot be carried out using alternative methods of communication, then both must make arrangements for the visit to minimise any risk of transmission of COVID-19.

- Decide on a meeting organiser who can coordinate and communicate arrangements for the meeting.
- The meeting organiser should keep a record of the meeting attendees for contact tracing reasons.
- Agree the best time to carry out the meeting e.g. in less busy times for the school or setting (e.g. out of schools hours where possible) and avoiding peak travel times.
- Attendees to become familiar with and follow the school/setting's control measures, allowing appropriate additional time before meetings to implement necessary controls
- Does anyone attending the meeting have any underlying medical conditions or live with someone who has underlying medical conditions? If so, please refer to Section 5.
- How will the visitor/s be travelling to/from the school/setting? If by car or bike, can parking or safe bike storage be arranged? If traveling by public transport, meetings should be scheduled to avoid peak periods. Attendees are required to wear face coverings whilst travelling on public transport. Please see government guidance on [safer travel for passengers](#) for further guidance.
- How will the visitor/s be entering the meeting location? Can this be done in a way to minimise contact with other staff and children?
- Who will be present at the meeting? Essential people should only attend. The school/setting and Hackney Education staff should consider accepting contributions from other possible attendees via video link/phone call in order to reduce the number of attendees present.

- Will social distancing be possible during the meeting? If for any reason social distancing cannot be maintained, then the school/setting staff and Hackney Education staff are recommended to wear appropriate PPE.
- Will any attendees be required to or wish to wear PPE?
- Will any equipment be required for the meeting? This should be cleaned prior to and following the meeting. Attendees should prepare to bring their own equipment, stationary and refreshments to avoid any sharing of items.
- Attendees should avoid bringing additional items e.g. bags or shared equipment where possible.
- Arrangements should be made for appropriate toilet facilities.
- Attendees should keep in regular contact in the lead up to the meeting and all attendees should be informed of any changes (such as any attendees or anyone at the school/setting displaying [symptoms of Covid-19](#)) as soon as possible which may result in the meeting being postponed or cancelled.
- Will the visitor/s be attending any classroom/childcare settings where children will be present or will the visitor will have contact with any children? If so, please refer to [government guidance](#).
- Children will be accommodated in bubbles, and practitioners must adhere to risk measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 between bubbles.
- Before entering the meeting, attendees should wash their hands, for 20 seconds, using soap and hot water or use hand sanitiser if this is not possible.

9. During the meeting

- All attendees should be made aware of the evacuation procedures for the meeting in case of fire etc.
- Arrangements for a side room for pre meeting and adjournments allow for social distancing, if applicable.
- If possible, meeting rooms should be well ventilated.
- Social distancing should be adhered to at all times.
- If for any reason, any individual feels uncomfortable with arrangements during the meeting, the meeting should be adjourned.
- Strict hygiene standards should be followed
- Visitors should not be in the school/setting any longer than necessary or visit any areas not previously arranged
- Meetings should be confined to agreed areas.
- Attendees should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

10. After the meeting

- All equipment used should be removed e.g. laptops and wiped with an alcohol based wipe. If the equipment has stayed in the bag and not been used then they do not need cleaning. Dispose of waste in the usual way.

- Meeting areas should be cleaned in line with government guidelines
- After leaving the premises, visitors should use soap and hot water to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available.
- If, within 7 days of face to face contact, any attendee either develops symptoms of coronavirus (i.e. high fever, continuous dry cough and / or loss of sense of smell or taste) or is tested positive for coronavirus, they should:
 - Immediately self-isolate for at least 14 days (in line with government [stay at home guidance](#)).
 - If symptomatic, immediately request a coronavirus test using the [online tool](#) or dialling 119. Essential workers should follow the [guidance for essential workers](#)
 - Alert the school / meeting organiser (the school should refer to advice set out in [Standard Operating Practice guidance](#)).

11. What if a member of staff wants to have a meeting in an outside space?

There may be occasions where it is more convenient for a member of Hackney Education staff and other individuals to meet in an outside space such as a garden or park. Meetings can be arranged in outside spaces but as for meetings in the school or early years settings, these will take planning and precautions including:

- Meetings should be kept to a minimum time and only essential individuals should attend (with no more than 6 people attending a meeting).
- Consideration should be given to if any clinically vulnerable individuals would be attending the meeting and if it is possible for them to do so.
- Consider all forms of transport before using public transport and where attendees are taking public transport, meetings should be held at times to avoid travel during peak times.
- Maintain social distancing and hygiene measures.
- Avoid using public facilities if possible or practice social distancing and good hygiene.
- Make sure it is possible to maintain confidentiality during the meeting.

12. What if there is a suspected or known case of Covid-19 in the school

Government guidance on [protective measures](#) for the full reopening of schools and sets out actions to follow for symptomatic and confirmed cases in schools and settings. It advises that symptomatic individuals must be sent home and advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) guidance.

There is more specific guidance in the Council' [standard operating practice](#) for schools and settings.

If anyone in the school/setting develops symptoms of Covid-19 or a case/s has been confirmed then visits should be postponed, unless the visit is considered an emergency.

Visits may resume once either testing for Covid-19 is negative or the school ends any self isolation measures following confirmed cases.

If the visit is considered an emergency and no alternative arrangements can be made, visitors would need to wear PPE and abide by infection protection guidelines.

13. What should visitors do if they only discover a person has symptoms of Covid-19 when they arrive at a school/setting?

Unless it is an emergency, the visit should be immediately postponed. If the meeting cannot be postponed, visitors should wear PPE or if this is not possible keep 2 metres separation from the people in the school/setting at all times while they are on the premises.

Everyone in the school/setting, especially if they have symptoms of Covid-19, should keep separate from visitors, ideally staying in another room.

If this is not possible due to the size of the meeting area then visitors must wear PPE.

If possible, open windows to ventilate the work area, air movement will disperse airborne droplets.

There should be no physical contact with other people. If a child tries to approach a visitor (for example, to hug them) they should ask them to stay the required distance away and alert a member of the school/setting staff. If a child manages to make physical contact, then the visitor should follow guidance to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.

Appendix 1: Checklist for visiting schools during the coronavirus outbreak

| Action | Who | Complete |
|--|-------------------|----------|
| Prior to the visit | | |
| Decide with attendees if the visit is urgent/necessary | All | |
| Decide on a meeting organiser to coordinate the visit | All | |
| Keep details of meeting attendees for contact tracing reasons | Meeting organiser | |
| Arrange the meeting time to minimise contact with other individuals in the school setting /busy travel times | Meeting organiser | |
| Attendees should become familiar with details/procedures for control measures for the meeting site, allowing appropriate time to implement necessary controls | Meeting organiser | |
| Who will be attending the meeting? Keep attendees to a minimum. | Meeting organiser | |
| Check if accommodations need to be made for individuals who are clinically vulnerable or live or care with anyone who is clinically vulnerable | Meeting organiser | |
| Discuss travel arrangements to and from the meeting. Attendees traveling by public transport will be required to wear face coverings whilst travelling | All | |
| Plan how attendees will enter the building/use toilet facilities to minimise contact with others | Meeting organiser | |
| How will social distancing/hygiene standards be maintained during the meeting? | Meeting organiser | |
| Will a side room be required for pre-meets/adjournments | Meeting organiser | |
| Are any of the attendees required to or wish to wear PPE? | Meeting organiser | |
| Will any equipment be used during the meeting? If so, make arrangements for it to be cleaned before and after the meeting. Attendees should avoid bringing additional items e.g. bags or shared equipment. | All | |
| Will the attendees be visiting any classroom/childcare settings or have contact with any pupils? If so please follow government guidance . | All | |
| Attendees should bring their own refreshments, equipment and stationary | All | |
| Keep in contact prior to the meeting and update attendees of any changes | All | |
| Communication on arrangements for the meeting sent to the attendees | Meeting organiser | |
| During the visit (attendees to familiarise themselves with guidance before the meeting) | | |
| If possible; meeting rooms should be well ventilated | Meeting organiser | |
| Social distancing should be adhered to at all times | All | |
| All attendees are made aware of fire and evacuation procedures/toilet arrangements | All | |
| Follow strict hygiene standards | All | |
| Meetings in the school/setting should be no longer than is necessary | All | |
| Meetings will be confined to an agreed prearranged area. | All | |
| Attendees should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. | All | |
| Following the meeting | | |
| Remove all equipment that is used and arrange for it to be cleaned | All | |
| Meeting rooms should be cleaned following a meeting in line with government guidance | Meeting organiser | |
| After leaving the meeting attendees should use soap and hot water to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available | All | |
| Attendees should alert the meeting organiser, if they become symptomatic of coronavirus in the 14 days following the meeting | All | |