

Health and Safety Executive Inspections

Ensuring a safe return to schools

Ensuring a safe return to schools is vital to the GB recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Like businesses, school dutyholders have an important role to play to ensure that the risks of coronavirus transmission are adequately controlled in line with government guidance.

Alongside businesses in other sectors that are already being checked, HSE will be carrying out spot-checks in schools as they return to full capacity for the start of the Autumn term.

Spot checks will take the form of an initial phone call to review the measures taken for reopening, to minimise spread of the virus causing COVID-19.

Calls made to schools will evaluate dutyholders' knowledge and awareness of the relevant government guidance - [Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#) (Scotland) [DfE Guidance for full opening - School](#) (England), [Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term](#) (Wales) - and the control measures required under health and safety legislation.

Additional COVID-19 guidance for school science and technology activities is provided by [SSERC](#) (Scotland) and [CLEAPSS](#) (Wales and England).

School dutyholders need to be briefed about the HSE spot checks and know about a school's risk assessment and have it to hand if they receive a call from the HSE.

Where the initial call raises concerns about a school's approach, it will be referred for a further intervention which may include a visit to the school.

Inspectors will check that the school has carried out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and put in place measures to make the school COVID-secure in line with the latest government guidance.

We appreciate that guidance is being updated regularly, and schools are working hard to respond to the changes. HSE inspectors are experienced at applying professional judgement and discretion and will seek to take a proportionate approach, focussing on what is reasonable and achievable in an evolving situation.

We know that schools want to do the right thing and are working extremely hard to put in place safety measures. Most of the time we anticipate advice from our inspectors will be enough to resolve the issues that we find, but if inspectors encounter serious risks, they will take enforcement action to ensure people's health and safety is protected.

It is imperative dutyholders at all schools liaise fully with HSE inspectors regarding the spot checks to ensure they are COVID-secure.

Spot checks are already underway in Scotland following the return to school on 11 August. Initial calls to schools are expected to commence in England and Wales from 7 September.