



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

## **School Christmas Events**

### **Introduction**

The Department for Education will not be issuing any additional guidance relating to school Christmas Events. They have concluded that the existing advice in the contingency framework is sufficient. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance> where it says:

“You should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of your risk assessment and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving particular consideration when holding events where visitors such as parents are on-site, for example, school plays.” If schools have queries about this then they can contact the DfE helpline on 0800 046 8687.

Under current guidance, events and gatherings (such as nativity plays or Christmas Fayres) in schools are permitted (when they are outside of the school setting you may need to follow different guidance and should also request to see the risk assessment for the setting you are going to use). However, school event organisers are encouraged to consider including other formats such as outdoor or remote (broadcast online) performances, check Government guidelines regularly and conduct their own risk assessment.

### **Guidance**

We are aware that schools would prefer to have some more specific advice so this paper draws on current published guidance on events which can be applied to school settings. The published guidance on events is part of the [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance) collection. This contains guidance for people who work in settings related to events and visitor attractions. The full guidance can be found at [Events and attractions - Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/events-and-attractions-working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance) and we recommend reading this guidance in full although some of the key points are highlighted below. The school can decide which of these measures are most appropriate for their setting.

### **What to include in your risk assessment**

The main way of spreading COVID-19 is through close contact with an infected person. When someone with COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they

release particles containing the virus that causes COVID-19. These particles can be breathed in by another person as **aerosols or droplets**.

**Surfaces and objects** can be contaminated with COVID-19 when people who are infected cough or sneeze near them, or if they touch them.

Consider the following actions to reduce risk:

- a) Review decision to proceed 7-10 days prior to the scheduled event, considering the number of Covid-19 cases (including if any of these are the omicron variant) among students and staff and ensuring sufficient staffing capacity to continue safely with the event.
- b) Remind invitees that should they develop COVID 19 symptoms, however mild, they should not attend
- c) Consider the use of the NHS COVID Pass (for more details on this see [NHS COVID Pass - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)). DfE have advised that schools can use this at their events as long as it does not unfairly discriminate. Alternatives may include asking attendees to take an LFD test before the event and to self-isolate and follow government guidance should a positive test result be returned
- d) Consider physically spacing the audience to help to reduce risk of transmission or reduce usual occupancy of the space
- e) Recommend only one parent/guardian per child attends in person (if space is limited)
- f) Maximise ventilation by opening windows and doors; highlight to attendees in advance it may be colder than usual
- g) Ensure sufficient breaks between performances to allow for cleaning and ventilation
- h) Discourage audience participation in any activity that can create aerosols, such as singing or shouting (particularly indoors)
- i) Request attendees over the age of 11 to wear face coverings when attending the event unless exempt; have additional face coverings available for those who need them. DfE guidance now strongly recommends face coverings in communal areas and this applies to visitors as well as staff/students.
- j) Consider the use of an NHS QR code ([Create a coronavirus NHS QR code for your venue - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)) and encourage attendees to check in using the NHS COVID-19 app.
- k) Regularly clean frequent touch points such as handrails, door handles and toilet areas
- l) Use marshals to discourage congregation of people in specific areas such as entrances and exits
- m) Provide hand washing facilities and / or hand sanitiser

### **Communicate your plans to attendees**

Organisers may want to issue a code of conduct to attendees, as part of their pre-event communications. This will ensure that attendees know how the school is protecting them and their children and what is expected of them during the event. This could include asking attendees to agree that they will:

- Not attend if they have any COVID 19 symptoms, have tested positive in the previous 10 days or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- Wear a face covering while on the school premises (unless exempt or aged under 11)
- Demonstrate their COVID 19 status with the NHS COVID Pass (if using) through vaccination, testing or natural immunity, as a condition of entry

This advice was written on 29 November 2021. Please keep up to date with national guidance.