

NASUWT checklist on preparation for the reopening of schools

This checklist provides the key steps which must be factored into the planning of the reopening of schools. **The NASUWT expects that all steps will be completed prior to reopening.**

The checklist takes account of government guidance on planning for reopening schools and will be amended as appropriate in the context of any changes to government and/or public health guidance.

The checklist is in four sections:

- A – schools where the premises have been closed completely since lockdown on 23 March 2020;**
- B – schools which have been partially open throughout the lockdown period;**
- C – actions to be taken which apply to all schools;**
- D – useful links to guidance, which supplements the issues in sections A, B and C.**

Employers are required by health and safety legislation to, 'so far as is reasonably practicable', protect the health and safety of employees by removing or reducing workplace risks. This applies to COVID-19 in the same way as it would to any other hazard.

Employers should remember that the virus can and does cause fatalities in all groups of people and that this should be the guiding issue on the arrangements they make for the reopening of schools.

Section A – School premises which have been closed to pupils and staff since 23 March 2020

Actions required

- Flushing the water system in accordance with the school's legionella risk assessment and policy.
- Checking that there are no leaks in the water system and that there is provision of hot water.
- Ensuring the safety and quality of the water by:
 - disinfecting the water system by raising the temperature of the heating of the system; or
 - in schools which have cooling towers/AC systems, microbiologically testing the water and receiving a positive clearance.
- Testing the fire alarms/smoke alarms/panic and accessible-toilet alarms.

Checking:

- the fire-door mechanisms;
- gas supply;
- kitchen equipment;

- ventilation system;
- key holder information;
- the fixed wiring (if the scheduled tests required by regulations have not taken place in the last six months);
- emergency lighting;
- Inspection of lifts** (if the scheduled tests required by the regulations have not taken place in the last six months);
- Inspection of all known asbestos sites**
These may have been damaged by rodent activity during the closure.
- Inspection for rodent activity and/or infestations**
Commissioning of pest control may be required.
- Cleaning of the premises**
Deep cleaning is not required if no-one has been into the premises during the time of closure. However, if someone goes into the premises within five days before the date of reopening, any areas accessed by that person must have a deep clean of touch surfaces.
- Servicing of reprographic and other equipment**
In accordance with the manufacturer's/provider's requirements.

Section B – Schools which have been partially open for certain pupils and staff

If only part of the school premises has been open, the checks in Section A of this checklist must be carried out for all parts of the building and any other buildings on the site which have been closed for any period of time.

- Cleaning of the school site**
If the school has been partially opened, then a full deep clean of the premises should not be necessary unless it has been required by Public Health Authorities. However, all touch surfaces should be given priority for cleaning, as should have been the case during the partial opening.

Section C – All schools

Planning for the reopening of the school should be on the basis of phased re-entry of pupils, and below are listed the factors which must be taken into account in planning for reopening.

- Assessment of the availability of staff for all activities during the school day, including lunchtime and break supervision, and to provide support for pupils with special or additional needs, taking into account:**
 - staff who have underlying medical conditions (as defined in government guidance);
 - staff who are subject to shielding or are in a household where someone is shielding;
 - staff who are self-isolating, and staff on maternity or any other form of leave, and will, therefore, not be available for work;
 - the availability of supply staff to cover any vacancies or long-term absences.

Defining the expectations about teaching and learning, including:

- how the number of pupils returning to school each day will be managed to ensure that social distancing is maintained and account is taken of:
 - which categories of pupil may be given preference in any phased modification of controls on schools, such as pupils with special/additional education and support needs or who might otherwise be vulnerable, or pupils in particular year groups; for example, pupils who are preparing for qualifications or who may have been among the most disrupted by the partial closure of schools to date;
 - the ability of certain pupils to maintain social distancing;
 - arrangements for staff and pupils during breaks and lunchtimes, including supervision of pupils in the context of social distancing;
 - any subject-specific requirements that may need to inform the numbers and categories of pupils attending school.
- the extent to which existing planning, schemes of work and programmes of study will need to be adapted to take account of:
 - the number of pupils who will be on site;
 - the age and stages of development of these pupils;
 - the frequency with which pupils will be expected to attend;
 - the suitability of materials and resources for working with pupils who may need to attend school irregularly;
 - those pupils with special/additional educational support needs.
- the support, time and resources that will need to be made available to teachers and other staff to make any necessary preparations in respect of the above;
- availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and access to hot water and soap and arrangements for the regular cleaning of touch surfaces throughout the day.

Review of the current risk assessments individual pupils may have

These may not be appropriate or may need extending to take account of the new situation relating to the change in the nature of the provision being made and the provisions of COVID-19 guidance.

Risk assessments of other pupils

- pupils who have not previously been risk assessed but in the new circumstances may pose a risk;
- pupils who need specific care, which cannot be delivered whilst ensuring social distancing;
- potentially violent pupils, especially those with a known risk of spitting and/or requiring physical restraint.

As required under health and safety legislation, all risk assessments should be subject to consultation with staff.

Review of the school's pupil behaviour policy to ensure that it covers COVID-19-related incidents

Make provision for the school to be able to sanction, up to and including exclusion, pupils who wilfully refuse to adhere to arrangements of social distancing and deliberately cough or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk.

- Assessment of the availability of school transport, including transport for pupils with special needs**
Assess the availability of transport and the arrangements being made by the transport providers for compliance with social distancing.
- Review of the arrangements for routine maintenance of the premises**
Assess how this will be carried out while maintaining social distancing and consider minimising risk by limiting maintenance to regulatory requirements and emergencies.
- Risk assessment of any capital building works which were suspended during lockdown, are in progress or scheduled to start when the school reopens**
Review the contractors' risk assessments in the context of government and public health guidance and the presence of staff and pupils on site.
- Conduct of a health and safety inspection with the Union Health and Safety Representatives prior to the school being reopened.**
- Discussion of the plans for reopening, including the information about compliance with health and safety provisions, with NASUWT and other trade union representatives, before they are finalised and the school reopened.**

Section D – Useful guidance

NASUWT website: www.nasuwt.org.uk.

The NASUWT Guidance on risk assessments: www.nasuwt.org.uk/healthandsafety.

Testing and flushing of the water system and receiving back the written results of the testing and confirmation that the water system is safe: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm>.

Testing of the fire alarms: <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-safety-equipment-drills-and-training>.

Checking of the fixed wiring: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm>.

Checking of the emergency lighting: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg38.pdf>.

Inspection of lifts: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l113.pdf>.

Health and Safety Executive guidance: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>.

Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

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