

Covid-19: Return to educational establishments Home Economics Guidelines¹

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1. Overview and purpose

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#), Para 136 states: 'Practical, "hands-on" learning and activities, experiments and investigations are an important part of the curriculum across all subject areas'. This document focusses on the practical, experiential nature of learning in home economics. For teachers working with food in the primary and special setting, the above advice from Covid-19 Education Recovery Group should be carefully applied. The following advice applies specifically to home economics departments in secondary schools.

Home economics provides a critical learning opportunity for children and young people as they re-connect and adapt to the new learning environments in schools.

The practical and interactive nature of the subject will lend itself well to supporting nurturing conversations with learners following the period of school closure. This document will assist teachers and school leaders with risk assessment and decision making, leading to the provision of learning through home economics in a safe and considered way. The preparation needed to enable practical activities to continue will increase and schools will need to reflect on their own context to plan safe working environments for young people and staff.

¹ This advice is current on this date. The advice is reviewed periodically and may change as evidence is published and more about the virus is understood

This advice is a general set of broad guidelines in order to support the significant local variations in resource within home economics departments.

2. How to use these guidelines

This document reflects the latest scientific evidence and advice and the significant progress that Scotland has made in suppressing the virus. A risk-benefit approach to decision making can be helpful while understanding that no risk can be reduced to zero.

This document is designed to promote a consistent and equitable approach against the context of the current pandemic. Local authorities and schools will understand best how these guidelines can be applied in their settings. They should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and staff, and ensure that the risk mitigation measures are implemented effectively. It has been written to stimulate conversations about how home economics can be safely and effectively delivered. Consideration should be given to the costs of food provision within schools and the potential financial challenges that many families experience. Further discussions around supporting learners during this challenging time for many, are likely to be required.

3. Practical considerations

1	<p>Physical Distancing and Ventilation</p> <p>Physical Distancing</p> <p>Enhanced attention is required to observe and implement the current guidance on physical distancing in the classroom, reinforcing the importance of adults maintaining distance from pupils and of the precautionary approach encouraging distancing between young people, particularly in the senior phase.</p> <p>Ventilation</p> <p>Staff should consider ventilation in the classroom, and follow local/school guidelines.</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020, Para 38 and 39 states: ‘Schools should ensure adequate levels of ventilation. Where centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels.’</p>
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	<p>'Wherever it is safe to do so, doors and windows should be kept open to increase natural ventilation (this advice will be reviewed as we head into the winter months). This will also help to reduce contact with door handles.'</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Use of classrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils should enter the room individually and make their way to their workplace. As a precautionary approach, physical distancing should be encouraged where possible, between adults, and between young people, particularly in the senior phase. • The teacher should have an assigned area to ensure a 2m spacing. This should be clearly marked. It is recommended that staff wear a face covering outwith this designated area when interacting with young people; supporting practical tasks. • Outdoor coats should ideally be placed away from the teaching area. If this is not feasible, they should be carefully stored away from food areas. School bags and other personal belongings should also be kept away from food areas. If mobile phones are being used under instruction of the teacher, close attention should be paid to cleaning before and after use. • Use learner voice to reflect on how well protocols are being followed and how practice can be improved, for example, young people could be involved in making plans to overcome excess movement in a classroom and also to avoid sharing equipment. This is an important aspect of problem solving which young people can become involved in and will help support teachers in these efforts. • In textile rooms where possible, desks should be arranged to create a working area adjacent to the sewing machine to minimise movement around the room. Students should be allocated a machine and given instructions on cleaning of machines before and after use, paying particular attention to the balance wheel, presser foot lever and needle and any other touch areas.
<p>3</p>	<p>Purchase/ Storage / Retrieval of food items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School procurement systems are not always able to provide the appropriate items - often local shopping is essential for learning and teaching to continue. Arrangements need to be made to make sure that safe local shopping can happen, for example, face coverings and care with storage of packaged items. • Food items should be handled and stored carefully. A minimum amount of handling is preferable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Packaging: Food Standard Scotland (Covid-19 and Food), point 7; ‘frequent hand washing will help to minimise the potential for indirectly spreading the virus from any surfaces that may have become exposed, including packaged and unpackaged foods...it is advised to wash your hands thoroughly after handling food deliveries or unpacking your food and drink... on returning from the supermarket’. <p>Point 8 states, ‘it (Covid-19) is not known to be transmitted by exposure to food or food packaging. However it is always important to follow good hygiene and preparation practices when handling and eating raw fruit, leafy salads and vegetables which have not been pre-washed. Wash in a basin of clean water or under the tap to remove any contamination on the surface. You should not use soap or disinfectant when washing food. Peeling the outer layers or skins of certain fruits and vegetables can also help to remove surface contamination’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing food across classrooms should be carefully managed. It is preferable that items are retained and stored within each food technology teaching area.
4	<p>Hygiene measures and safe equipment/resource management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should consider whether the home economics department should be linked to the enhanced cleaning programme across the school. • Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020, Para 34 states: ‘Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment (e.g. in practical subjects or for children with additional support needs), sensory rooms, practical subjects with specialist equipment and dining halls, etc. to ensure safe use’. <p>Adjustments may have to be made to clean equipment, including any electronic technology and work surfaces following practical activities. Cupboard and door handles, sinks and taps should be carefully cleaned:</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020, Para 31 states: ‘Local authorities and schools should ensure that an enhanced environmental cleaning regime is in place. This specifies in particular: ‘Ensuring regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (e.g. desks, handles, dining tables, shared technology surfaces etc).’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The usual high expectations of cleanliness and hygiene in home economics classrooms should be applied. Hand washing facilities should already be

	<p>available for each station and learners should carefully wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds on entry to classrooms and before and after practical activity. Paper towels need to be carefully placed in bins and these must be emptied at least daily. Paper towels and soap should be regularly replenished.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible all equipment required for the lesson should be made available for each station to minimise pupil movement around the room. • Where possible dishes which are used daily could be carefully washed in a dishwasher at the end of each day. Cloths, aprons, drying towels and any fabric resources should only be used once, and should continue to be washed daily - as is normal procedure in most schools. Use the warmest water settings (60 degrees where possible) and dry items completely - Core COVID-19 Information and General Guidance for General (Non-Heathcare) Settings 21 August 2020, Para 2.6 page 18. Some young people may bring their own apron from home, for their own use. • The preparation of ingredients and materials could overflow into an empty room if there is one available. • If young people usually collect food at the end of a day for taking home, some consideration will be required about how this can be done safely and with limited movement in corridors. • In textile rooms, sets of basic equipment, for example, pins, scissors, quick unpick could be placed in a plastic tray on each desk with pupils taking responsibility for wiping down equipment at the end of the lesson. Where students require use of an iron etc. then a small area could be set up for this, with students asking permission to enter this area one at a time.
5	<p>Other considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher demonstrations could be done from behind a Perspex screen, but they are not essential. Alternatively, the teacher could use a table at the front of the class and stay an appropriate distance from learners. The use of technology, for example, data projectors, digital cameras / visualisers to project what is being demonstrated may also be helpful. • Where possible, recipes should be shared on the board. Alternatively, or where a young person requires additional support, individual recipe sheets/books may be used, protected in plastic envelopes and cleaned at the end of the lesson.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing learners: The guidance in Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020, does allow brief interactions between teachers and learners closer than 2m. If these are brief (15 minutes or less) then no additional measures are needed. Para 64 states however: 'Where adults cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more), face coverings should be worn'. • Consideration should be given to the needs of young people who require additional support. Where there is a need to work in close proximity with adults and young people the safety measures to protect adults and children and young people alike should be followed. Staff should wear a face covering, and regularly wash their hands before and after contact. Para 114: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020,
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4. Risk assessment

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#), includes information on risk assessment. Para 17 states:

'Specific risk assessments should be completed regarding school cleaning and the use of school kitchens, including those used for home economics.' A risk benefit approach to decision making can be helpful while understanding that no risk can be reduced to zero.

It is a legal requirement that local authorities and head teachers ensure that risk assessments are conducted or updated to reflect a full return to school. All risk assessments should be reviewed regularly as circumstances change to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults is not compromised.

While intended for wider use, the Health and Safety Executive has produced helpful guidance on [COVID-19 risk assessments](#).

5. Conclusion

Changes in incidence of COVID-19, and the potential impact on the practical, experiential learning in Home Economics will be kept under review and updated when necessary. Local authorities and schools will also need to be able to adapt to local issues, for example, outbreaks or community clusters in cases of COVID-19, and follow any locally-determined advice and guidance.

6. Appendix

These policy documents currently provide a frame of reference for Scottish education:

More detail, particularly about wider school issues can be found in Scottish Government advice which can be found here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#),

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): support for continuity in learning](#) (30 July 2020)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase](#) (5 June 2020)

[Education Recovery Group: Blended learning](#) (June 2020)

While intended for wider use, the Health and Safety Executive has produced helpful guidance on [COVID-19 risk assessments](#).

Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC) produced guidance for school Science and Technology departments coming out of lockdown. Much of this guidance is of relevance in all practical subjects. There is also information on the safe use of hand sanitiser. [SSERC Covid-19- Back to school](#) 1st September 2020.

7. Acknowledgements

Education Scotland would like to acknowledge the contribution of Home Economics teachers and local authority colleagues in developing the *COVID-19 Pandemic: Return to educational establishments – Home Economics GUIDELINES 8th September 2020*.