Covid-19 Immunisation pack for schools

2021/22

Helping you prepare for a new vaccination programme

Dear School,

As many of you will be aware via national and local news on the 13th September 2021 the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland recommended a single Pfizer dose for all children aged 12 to 15. The CMOs made this decision following consultation with several independent experts from a range of clinical and public health professions across the UK including the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Directors of Public Health, and representatives from the JCVI (Joint committee on vaccinations and immunisations). They also reviewed data from the Office for National Statistics and published data on the impact of COVID-19 on education.

Education is one of the most important drivers of improved public health and mental health. Evidence from clinical and public health colleagues, general practice, child health and mental health consistently highlights the massive impact that absent, or disrupted, face-to-face education has had on the welfare and mental health of many children and young people. This is despite remarkable efforts by parents and teachers to maintain education in the face of disruption.

It is likely vaccination will help reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools which are attended by children and young people aged 12 to 15 years. COVID-19 is a disease which can be very effectively transmitted by mass spreading events, especially with Delta variant. Having a significant proportion of pupils vaccinated is likely to reduce the probability of such events which are likely to cause local outbreaks in, or associated with, schools. They will also reduce the chance an individual child gets COVID-19. This means vaccination is likely to reduce (but not eliminate) education disruption. The additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption, and the consequent reduction in public health harm from educational disruption, on balance provide sufficient extra advantage in addition to the marginal advantage at an individual level identified by the JCVI to recommend in favour of vaccinating all 12–15-year-olds with a single dose of a covid-19 vaccination.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-15-years-against-covid-19>

Following the above recommendation, the School-aged immunisation team will be visiting all secondary schools across Berkshire over the next 6 weeks to offer all students in years 8-11 a single dose of covid-19 vaccine. No vaccines will be administered without valid consent (see consent section for further details). Consent will be captured via our electronic consent system which requires you to enter your schools unique code, which will be shared via our school e-consent letter (emailed via school). The vaccine is not licensed for anyone less than 12 years, therefore pupils in Year 7, who have reached their 12th birthday, will be called at the end of the programme, after half term.

Your support helps us protect the health of all the children within your school. By providing protection against vaccine preventable diseases, everyone should see a positive impact on school attendance for pupils and staff.

Yours Sincerely

Berkshire School-aged Immunisation Service (SAIS)

How vaccination in schools will work

Like all school-based vaccination programmes, the vaccines will be administered by healthcare staff working closely with the school and following the usual approach to school-based immunisation.

As your local SAIS provider we have been asked to work with schools to plan for the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds. The SAIS will be the primary provider of the vaccination programme for healthy 12 to 15 year olds and will be legally responsible for the delivery of the vaccine and we will be supported with colleagues who have been working in mass vaccination centres.

The SAIS provider will be contractually responsible for the service, as they are for other school vaccination programmes. The expectation is that the vaccination programme will be delivered primarily within schools but there might be certain areas or certain schools where this is not possible.

Benefits for schools

Vaccinating children should help to reduce the need for children to have time off school and should reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools. The main purpose of the COVID-19 secondary schools vaccination programme is therefore to provide protection to the children who are vaccinated and to reduce the disruption to face to face education this winter and the remainder of the academic year.

Educational benefits may include:

* reducing the chance of outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools
* avoiding absenteeism due to COVID-19 infection and for isolation

The role of schools

We are grateful for the support that schools provide by hosting NHS vaccination sessions. Like all school-based vaccination programmes, the vaccines will be administered by healthcare staff with appropriate qualifications who work to nationally agreed standards. Vaccines are offered in schools to ensure easy access for all children.

The local SAIS provider team will be in contact with your school to agree a date for the vaccination session and the best approach for implementing the programme in your school.

Schools will have 3 primary roles which will be familiar to them from other vaccination programmes:

* to provide information to their SAIS provider on which children on their roll are eligible for the vaccine
* to share the parent and young person information that will be emailed to schools via the SAI team (any schools that are unable or unwilling to do this need to come back to us immediately to notify us of this)
* to provide the space within school, and the time away from the timetable, to enable vaccinations to take place

Your local SAIS provider team will try and keep disruption to a minimum and will only ask you to do the things that they cannot do themselves.

You will be asked to:

* work with the SAIS provider team to agree the best approach for implementing the programme in your school
* nominate a named contact for the SAIS provider team to liaise with
* agree a date or dates for the vaccination sessions
* work with the SAIS to identify a suitable location for the session (for example, school hall) and for the 15 minute post-vaccination observation period to take place (this observation will be undertaken by qualified SAIS staff)
* agree a process for providing parents with the invitation letter, information leaflet and consent form
* encourage children and their parents to return the consent form by an agreed date
* send reminders through your usual channels such as email or text distribution lists, parent newsletters, visual display screens
* let parents know on which day vaccination will take place
* let the children know what will happen and when

Sharing personal and health information

As an immunisation team working for the NHS, we ask for and record personal and health information for children and young people who access our services. This helps us treat them now and in the future. This information might be shared with other organisations to help them provide an individual with the best care possible. However, we only provide appropriate information required to support their care and treatment.

Why the school immunisation team needs to collect personal information

Immunisation is a cornerstone of public health. It is one of the most successful and cost-effective health protection interventions and high immunisation rates are key to preventing the spread of infectious disease, complications and possible early death among individuals. High immunisation rates are also vital in protecting the population’s health through both individual and herd immunity.

As such, the school immunisation team needs to access and securely share non-sensitive patient-identifiable information on eligible children. With this information, we can confirm that we have offered immunisation to all eligible children and we can accurately report statistical data to NHS England on a monthly basis. This data allows NHS England monitor trends and uptake and review the incidence of diseases.

Moreover, your support helps us protect the health of all the children within your school. By providing protection against vaccine preventable diseases, we would expect to see a positive impact on child and staff attendance.

Your legal right to release personal information

In the interest of public health, as many people as possible need to be vaccinated. Schools, therefore, have the legal right\* to release personal information to us so we can assure that everyone eligible and their parents or carers have been given the information and opportunity to be vaccinated, understand the risks of not being vaccinated, and have had the chance to ask any questions about vaccination.

\*Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), schools can provide non-sensitive student data with or without consent from parents. Article 6 (1) (e) states that “the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law.” GDPR also governs how the information is stored, managed and processed. This relates to sensitive information such as ethnicity, whether a child has Special Educational Needs, and pupil premium.

To find out more about how we may use personal information, please see the Berkshire Healthcare [Patient Privacy Notice](https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/patient-privacy-notice/) and [Protecting Your Data Privacy Notice](https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/about-us/about-us/protecting-your-data-privacy-notice/).

If you have further queries, please contact your Data Protection Officer at in the Education Department of your Local Authority/Academy.

On the day of your session

Parking and access

It would help the team to be provided with space for parking close to the venue, as there is usually a lot of equipment and supplies to bring along with us.

Timing

The immunisation team will aim to arrive at your school by **9am, at the latest** to set up the session. This will include cleaning surfaces, preparing tables, sorting out equipment and checking vaccines and emergency medication. If you have a large school/ large cohort it may be possible to organise an earlier start/ later finish. Please discuss this with your lead Nurse.

The team will aim to start vaccinating at **9:30am.**

As well as vaccinating the young people the team need to correctly identify them and complete electronic documentation after the vaccination.

Vaccinating safely

The size of your school and the number of students that need to be vaccinated will determine the time it takes our team to vaccinate all students safely.

The safety of all students is our priority so it’s important that, where possible, we are accommodated in an area we can use for the duration of the school day. We understand this isn’t easy for every school (especially very small schools) but staying in the same place prevents us having to move all our equipment midway through a session and take up more of your time.

Help from your staff

If vaccinating within a hall or large room, it would be helpful if each class is accompanied by a member of staff who knows the pupils and can help assist with any unexpected behaviours.

As well as the staff member accompanying children from class, we need a member of staff to be responsible for coordinating the timetabling of the session, so that classes are called and arrive on time, for example.

Pupils to be advised to remove jackets, coats and if possible, to leave their bags behind. No use of phone cameras by pupils during the session.

Following vaccination

Once vaccinated, all children can return to their class if they’re well.

After the session, we will provide electronic record cards to parents. These will provide them with details of the vaccination, as well as information on common side effects.

Any absent children whose parents/carers have returned signed consent forms will be contacted to attend a community catch-up clinic. We will arrange this; you don’t need to do anything for these children.

**Flu vaccination for school aged children is not routinely provided by GP surgeries. It is only for children with an underlying medical condition. Please advise parents to contact us (via the details on page 12) if they have any concerns or miss their school session.**

School Aged Immunisation Team – General information

The School Aged Immunisation team are employed by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and commissioned by NHS England to deliver school-based immunisations. As an NHS organisation, we ensure that all our staff are trained and safe to practice. Everyone in the team undertakes annual safeguarding and information governance training as well as in-depth immunisation training.

In addition, for the COVID-19 vaccinations all registered staff have enhanced child and adult DBS checks, adult/ paediatric basic life support training with anaphylaxis and defibrillator. There will be at least one member of staff at any one session with level 3 child safeguarding training, all other staff will have received level 1 and 2 safeguarding training.

Carrying mobile phones

All immunisation staff carry a smart phone to ensure they can always offer safe clinical practice. They use these to access medical information via online websites and applications on their phones. They may also need to contact parents with medical queries and access help in medical emergencies.

Safeguarding children

All our staff have undergone enhanced adult and child Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking. This is monitored and renewed regularly by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.

Frequently asked questions

Where can I find information on COVID-19 vaccination for children and adults?

The [NHS leaflets](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people) provide more information for parents and children on the vaccine, including how it works and what to expect after COVID-19 vaccination. There are accessible versions of the consent form and leaflets available for those with a learning disability or who live with autism. There are braille and British Sign Language (BSL) videos to order or download. Translations will also available.

When do the vaccinations need to be given?

The COVID-19 vaccinations are being given from the beginning of the autumn term. Your local SAIS will be in touch to arrange a date.

Who will be giving the vaccine to the children?

The programme will be delivered by an NHS commissioned SAIS team which may include nurses, healthcare support workers, administrative staff, and other associated professionals who specialise in the delivery of school age vaccinations.

The team will administer the vaccination according to nationally agreed standards. Staff are appropriately qualified, trained (including in safeguarding) and experienced in vaccinating children and young people. Staff administering the vaccine will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

How will the SAIS provider team identify the children to be vaccinated?

The consent forms will be collected from the school by the SAIS team. This process may happen electronically in some areas. SAIS teams will supply paper versions for families who cannot access the digital or email versions. The team will then have a list of all children for whom consent has been received in advance of the immunisation session.

How does the consent process work?

All parents/carers or those with parental responsibility are asked to provide consent and will usually make this decision, jointly with their son/daughter.

The information leaflet is addressed to the child (as the recipient of the vaccine) and encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with their parents.

In secondary schools, some older children may be sufficiently mature to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not returned a consent form but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session. Every effort will be made to contact the parent to seek their verbal consent. The school has no role in this process.

This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

How are schools involved in the consent process?

Whilst schools may host immunisation services, they are not responsible for securing parental or child consent, for assessing Gillick competence or mediating between parents and children who may disagree about whether or not to consent.

This is the role of registered nurses in the SAIS, who have extensive experience and the expertise to handle these issues and are professionally accountable for their decisions. Legal accountability for offering COVID-19 vaccines to children and young people sits with the SAIS and not with the school.

Can parents refuse to have their child vaccinated?

Yes. The vaccination is not mandatory. Parents will be asked to give their consent for the vaccination. Children may express a wish to have the vaccine and may have the capacity to provide informed consent themselves.

Parents should be encouraged to speak to their children ahead of time so that there is agreement on consent by the vaccination session.

What happens if a parent has not consented, but the child wants to be vaccinated?

Young people who understand fully what is involved in a proposed procedure, such as vaccination, can legally give consent. This is known as ‘Gillick competence’.

If no consent from a parent has been received, but the child wants to be vaccinated and is judged to be Gillick competent by the healthcare professional, the child can still be vaccinated. In this case, the healthcare professional will make every effort to contact a parent to check before they proceed.

If a parent objects to their child being vaccinated but the child wants to be vaccinated and is judged to be Gillick competent, the healthcare professional will try to reach agreement between the parent and child. However, the parent cannot overrule the decision of a Gillick competent child.

Trained professionals in the SAIS team, with expertise in vaccinating children will speak to the child. The SAIS team will assess the individual child’s capacity to self-consent (Gillick competence) and be responsible for deciding the appropriateness of administering the vaccine.

If no consent is received, and the young person has not been assessed as Gillick competent or does not want to be vaccinated, the immunisation will not proceed.

More information about the law and consent for young people, including Gillick competence [Consent to treatment - Children and young people - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment/children/).

This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

What should be done if parents refuse to send their child into school because of concerns about the vaccine?

Schools can reassure parents that if a child does not have parental consent and does not want to get the vaccine, they will not receive it. This will follow usual practice, even if the child is attending school on the day of vaccination.

Schools should also remind parents that school attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and that being in school is the best thing for their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

If parents have questions about whether to consent to their child getting the vaccine, schools can direct them to the local SAIS provider. Parents will be provided with contact details for the SAIS provider with the consent form.

Does GDPR change how consent needs to be obtained?

No. All schools’ immunisation services are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Schools should work with their SAIS provider teams as usual, who will provide appropriate information resources and parental consent forms.

How should schools respond to any disruptive activity in response to the vaccination programme?

Any trespass/unauthorised entry onto school property should be dealt with in the usual way. We are working closely with colleagues in Thames Valley Police to minimise any disruptive activity and dates for immunisations will not be published on our websites.

The primary aims of the schools’ vaccination programme are to provide individual protection to children and to reduce disruption to education from COVID-19. As the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) consider education one of the most important drivers of improved public and mental health, reducing disruption to education will also reduce public and mental health harm.

We know that some schools are receiving campaign letters and emails with misinformation about the vaccine programme and would like advice on how to handle protests in the event they were to take place at school.

The SAIS team will have advice from the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Programme about running this programme securely. Schools are advised to get in touch with the SAIS team at the first opportunity to understand what security planning they have in place, and what if any actions they recommend you carry out ahead of vaccinations in your school.

Schools should already have a security policy, based on a security risk assessment. This process is covered in published guidance on school and college security.

In the event of a protest or disruptive activity outside a school, or if schools know a protest is planned, they should alert the SAIS provider, Local Authority and police contacts to discuss the best way to manage the situation.

What about those children (in Year 7) turning 12 years of age within the school year, after the date of the vaccination session?

The SAI team will not be offering the covid-19 vaccination to students in year 7 within a school-based model. This is to ensure safe administration of the COVID-19 vaccination. The MHRA has licensed the Pfizer/ BioNTech vaccine for children aged 12 and over. If we provide consent forms to all of year 7 there is a chance that a child under 12 could be inadvertently vaccinated off-license. We therefore will be offering any student who turns 12 between the 1st September and the 31st October 2021 a community clinic offer after the October half term.

Will 16 and 17 year olds be vaccinated in schools?

We will be offering a one dose COVID-19 programme to all students in year 11, these may be 15 or 16. Students in years 12 and 13 are not included, but can access their vaccination via the National Booking System and Walk-ins.

What happens if a child is not present on the day when vaccination is offered in the school?

For any children absent on the vaccination day, there will be catch-up arrangements in place that the SAIS provider team will be able to share with the school.

What happens if a child has a health condition or is unwell on the day of the vaccination session?

If a child is unwell on the day, the SAIS provider team will decide whether to proceed with vaccination or not.

All questions on the suitability of the vaccine for individual children should be directed to the NHS SAIS provider team delivering the vaccinations.

For any children who want to be vaccinated but are unable for health or other reasons to have the vaccine on the day, there will be catch-up arrangements in place that the SAIS provider team will be able to share with the school.

Why do children have to be observed for 15 minutes after vaccination?

Serious allergic reactions to vaccination are very rare but tend to happen within a few minutes of the injection. SAIS teams are all trained to spot and manage allergic reactions and so all children will be observed for 15 minutes.

All SAIS providers will bring the necessary equipment to treat an allergic reaction.

What should be done if a child becomes unwell in school after receiving the vaccination?

If the SAIS provider team is still on site, seek advice directly from them. If the SAIS provider team has left the site, manage the situation according to existing policies for pupil sickness in school. Contact the SAIS provider team to ensure they are aware and can report any event related to the timing of administration of the vaccine.

See [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/who-can-get-the-vaccine/) for further information.

Will every school have vaccinations on site?

We expect most vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds to happen at school during school hours**.**

Will children who are home educated be offered a vaccine as part of this programme?

All children in the eligible age group who do not attend school, for example those who are home educated or living in secure accommodation should be offered the vaccine.

The SAIS provider will have plans in place to offer vaccination to these children.

Can a healthy 12 to 15 year old use a COVID-19 walk-in site?

Unfortunately, walk-ins from this age group cannot be accepted. Presently there are no plans to make them available.

Can school staff have the vaccine?

No. Not as part of this schools’ programme. All school staff will already have been offered vaccination as part of the adult programme.

They should make sure that they have had their 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine. If they have not yet been vaccinated, they can still make an appointment with their GP or walk in centre or call 119.

See [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/) for further information.

How should schools respond to misinformation campaigns about the vaccine?

We are aware some schools have received letters or emails which feature false or misleading information (misinformation) about the safety, efficacy and purpose of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Headteachers and teachers are advised:

1. Not to engage directly: misinformation narratives and tactics flourish when they are responded to.
2. Acknowledge receipt: if a response is needed, simply acknowledge receipt of concerns.
3. If there is a need to, refer to the latest scientific guidance on the issue. Some helpful links to trusted sources include:

* [COVID-19 children’s programme guidance and leaflets](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme) from Public Health England
* [Vaccine Knowledge project](https://vk.ovg.ox.ac.uk/vk/)
* the World Health Organization’s [Mythbusters page](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters)
* the [Check Before You Share Toolkit](https://dcmsblog.uk/check-before-you-share-toolkit/)
* [Health Publications website](https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/Home.html) to order and download COVID-19 publications
* information on the [COVID-19 vaccines](https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation)
* information on the [COVID-19 vaccination programme](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/)

**Useful links**

[COVID-19 vaccination](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/) on NHS.UK

[COVID-19 Green Book chapter 14a](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a)

[Consent Green Book chapter 2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-the-green-book-chapter-2)

[COVID-19 programme resources](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme)

[Health Publications](https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/Home.html) to order resources for free.

[Children’s COVID-19 vaccination leaflets](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people) including the ‘What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination’ leaflet.

[Easy-read children’s COVID-19 vaccination leaflet and consent form](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-easy-read-resources-for-children-and-young-people)

[Adult COVID-19 vaccination leaflet](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-guide-for-older-adults) including alternative formats such as braille, BSL video and 26 translations.

[Easy-read adult COVID-19 vaccination leaflets](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-easy-read-resources)

[Patient Information Leaflet for Pfizer/BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine](https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation)

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| Contact NHS Blue |  |
| Contact icon nhs blueThe Berkshire School Aged Immunisation team covers 6 areas within Berkshire:   * Slough * Bracknell Forest * Reading * Wokingham * West Berkshire * Royal Borough of Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead   Call: 0300 365 0077 (Option 1: Clinic Appointments, Option 2: Nurse Queries, Option 3: School Queries, Option 4: Anything Else).  Email:  centralschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Wokingham and Bracknell)  westschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Reading and West Berkshire)  eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Slough and Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead)  (during school holidays, emails are checked weekly) |

Secure patient identifiable information

**If you are sending secure information to the team, including class lists and contact details, please password protect your document and email it to our secure generic email address shown above.**

https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/immunisations