



Tomlinscote School

20th September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

In the past few days we have been informed that all children aged 12 to 15 years are being offered the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. Department of Education guidance has been provided and I can now provide a summary of the information below. However, the link to the full document is:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools/covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-children-and-young-people-guidance-for-schools>

Children who are 12 years old and over on the day the School Age Immunisation Service (**SAIS**) team visits the school, will be offered a vaccination as part of the in-school vaccination programme. Like all school-based vaccination programmes, the vaccines will be administered by healthcare staff working closely with the school and it will follow the usual approach to school-based immunisation. 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.

For those aged 12 to 15 years consent will be sought by the SAIS provider from the parent or person with parental responsibility in the same way as for any other school vaccination programme. A consent form and information leaflet provided by the SAIS team will be used to seek parental consent. Parents will also be provided with a contact number for the SAIS team in case of any queries.

Our role, as a school, in the vaccine programme is as follows:

- to provide information to their SAIS provider on which children on roll eligible for the vaccine
- to share the information leaflet, consent form and invitation letter supplied by the SAIS team with parents and children
- to provide the space within school, and the time away from the timetable, to enable vaccinations to take place.

I have copied the following Question and Answer part from the guidance document -

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

The [NHS leaflets](#) 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 be available.

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 or those with parental responsibility are asked for consent and will usually make this decision, jointly with their children. 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 child is not Gillick competent or does not want to be vaccinated, the immunisation will not proceed.

You can read about [Gillick competence](#) on page 8 of chapter 2 of the Green Book on immunisation. 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?

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.

What about those children turning 12 years of age within the school year, after the date of the vaccination session?

SAIS providers will vaccinate all children aged 12 years and over on the day of the school visit. Young people in Year 7 who are aged 12 years and have consented will be identified by SAIS and vaccinated at the same session, alongside pupils in Years 8 onwards.

A follow-up offer will be made to any children who miss the first vaccination in their school. This will help to ensure that the following pupils can access the vaccine:

- those turning 12 years after the session
- those who were absent from school on the day
- those who have recently had a COVID-19 infection
- those who subsequently change their minds or take longer to reach a decision.

It is anticipated that this will be delivered outside of school settings to minimise any further disruption to education and other immunisation programmes.

Will 16 and 17 year olds be vaccinated in schools?

16 and 17 year olds are already being offered a vaccination through the adult vaccination system. The NHS will contact 16 and 17 year olds when it's their turn to get the vaccine, and they will be invited to a local NHS service such as a GP surgery. Additionally, some walk-in COVID-19 vaccination sites are offering the vaccine to people aged 16 and 17 years. Some SAIS providers may have the capacity to offer the vaccination to 16 and 17 year olds in school who have not yet taken up their first dose. Your SAIS provider will let you know if they are able to offer this.

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. Children with allergies to common food items are not at higher risk of these serious allergies.

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

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

The full document highlights the common and very rare side effects with the vaccination; if you need further information, see [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk).

I will be in touch as soon as we have communication and specific information from the Immunisation Team.

Your sincerely

Mr Major
Principal