

Managing hands-on activities in schools in locally locked down areas

Unless your school policy prevents the use of any form of equipment, then the good news is that hands on activities can happen in your classroom. However your approach to planning and delivery of activities will need to be different to usual.

Like everyone, CLEAPSS' understanding about the virus, and how to manage its spread, is evolving. We will continue to revise this guidance as we learn more, or if new, or revised, government guidance is published. Check our website and Twitter feed regularly for updates.

Classroom layout



It is likely that your science, art and D&T lessons will take place in the same classroom that your children will be working in throughout the day. If you have been given guidance by your school on how to arrange your classroom and how children must enter and leave, then you must follow this. Bear in mind there will be equipment on the tables, so additional safety instructions may need to be given prior to children entering the classroom eg don't touch anything in the tray. In many ways carrying out hands on activities will be no different from your new ways of working in other lessons.

In order to keep 2 m distancing:

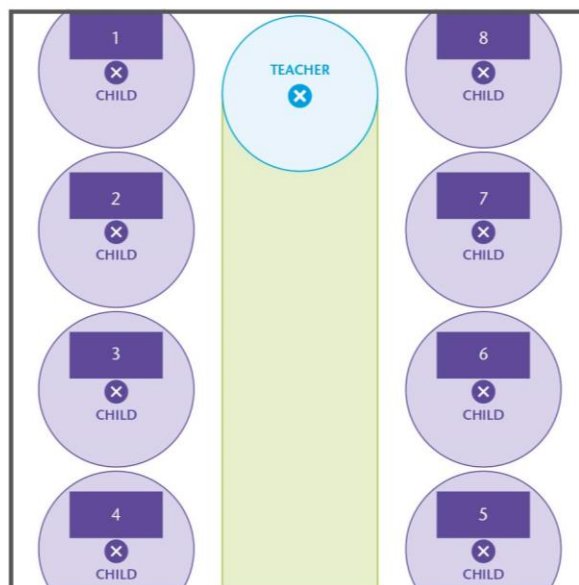
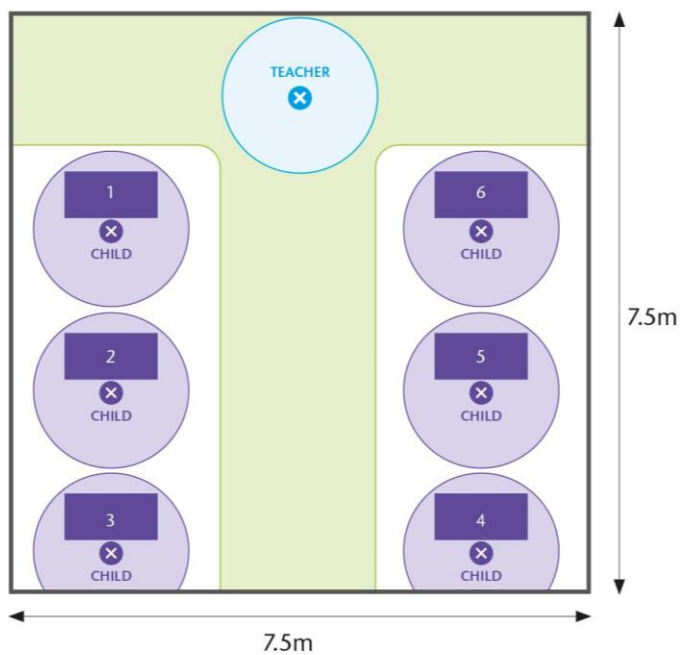
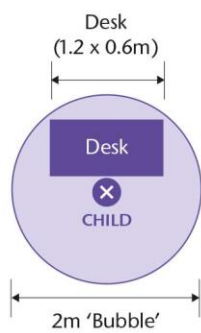
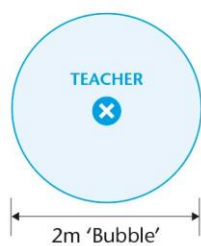
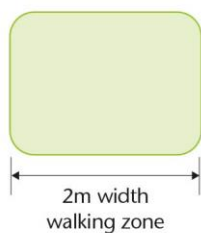
- Each child should be seated at their own table/desk and must not move around the classroom during a lesson. For the purposes of this guidance we are assuming that a table is a rectangle shape that would under normal circumstances seat 2 children.
- Each table must be positioned to adhere to the 2 m distancing rules. An easy way to set out classrooms is to make a cross out of 4 metre rulers joined in the middle. Make sure you align the crosses to meet a 2 m distance. Mark where a child will sit at a table, then use the tool to see how many tables you can fit into your classroom. Make sure there is the 2 m distance between a teacher's desk or a white board to allow a teacher to stand at the front and teach. Don't forget to allow sufficient space along walkways for a teacher to move around the room. Configurations and spacing between will depend on your space; how big it is, what shape it is and the size of your tables/desks.





- The number of tables/desks you can fit in a classroom will depend on the size of the classroom. In a 55 m² classroom, you can expect to fit between 7 - 10 children while maintaining 2 m distancing. Page 2 shows some examples of potential configurations.
- Label each table with the child's name. You will have worked with your children about where they sit in the classroom, so they will know which table they have been allocated. Children will need to remain at the same table for science, DT and art as for their other lessons.
- If you have the luxury of a separate science, DT or art room, follow the same guidance. Under the current circumstances it is unlikely that you will have access to specialist shared space. However, if you do, follow the same protocols as above and any other additional protocols required by your school for multi-use areas, for example, cleaning after use.

Based on an average classroom size of 55m² (Square format)



Managing hands on activities

Planning

We know that, for a range of reasons, hands on activities are most often carried out in groups. The first major difference between before and now is that children will need to work individually. Your approach to planning will need to take account of the following:

Equipment

Each child will need to have their own set of equipment.

Choice of activity

- Each child will have to work alone; some may struggle to do this. Plan an activity that they can undertake without the need for additional support.
- Some types of enquiry or activity will be more suited to working alone than others. For example, a simple classifying activity (such as magnetic and non-magnetic materials) may be achievable, whereas a comparative test, such as **Sunshine absorbency**, which normally compares the absorbency of 6-8 different materials, will be difficult for a single child to complete. This doesn't mean the activity cannot be done. Try simplifying activities, for example by cutting down the number of variables, so for **Sunshine absorbency**, perhaps use just 2 strips of material. Alternatively, you can give each child a different variable and then collate class data at the end.
- Choose activities that the children will have a reasonable chance of completing on their own. Challenging tasks may demotivate the children if they cannot finish them and 2 m distancing prevents you from providing the support that you usually would.
- Rather than introduce new practical skills, choose activities that you know your children will be able to carry out safely and successfully. How skilled/dextrous are your children when working with equipment? How much experience have they had in relation to using a piece of equipment?
- Look for activities that use disposable/single-use resources that can be resourced from the shops rather than standard equipment that will have to be cleaned. For example, our **Light up cards** activity rather than using standard electrical component (wires, crocodile clips bulbs etc).

Note – Children should only bring essential items from home, such as pencils, in to school.

- Think carefully about activities that often require troubleshooting/adult intervention or replacement equipment, for example electrical circuits. These can be notoriously unreliable and you will not be able to directly support the children. Again, this doesn't mean that this type of activity cannot be done, but more planning and management will be required. For instance, you may need to connect the croc-clips before the lesson and if possible, give additional electrical components to each child.
- When possible do door activities outdoors where there's more space. Including activities that you might normally do in your classroom like: **Vinegar and bicarbonate balloons** or **Making and successfully throwing a boomerang**.

Lesson length

Hands on lessons while in lockdown are likely to take longer than usual to complete, so bear this in mind when planning your day. As well as children needing additional time to carry out each step of the activity alone, you will require extra time for set up and clearing up.

Spillages

Additional planning will be required for activities that might result in spills. For example, if you are carrying out our **Overflow** activity, children will need to have paper towels and be taught how to clear up a spill should it occur. You need to have a plan for what to do in the case of a large spill, including what the children need to do. For example you may need to move some, or all, of the children while you clear up.

Clearing up

Hands on activities always require clearing up but this will be different in a lockdown. The extent to which your children are able to help will depend on their age and ability to tidy/clean/follow instructions. Bear in mind tables may need wiping, so plan who will do it and the time it will take. Support older children to clear up their own workspace, provide extra paper towels in their trays and show them what to do.

Risk assessment

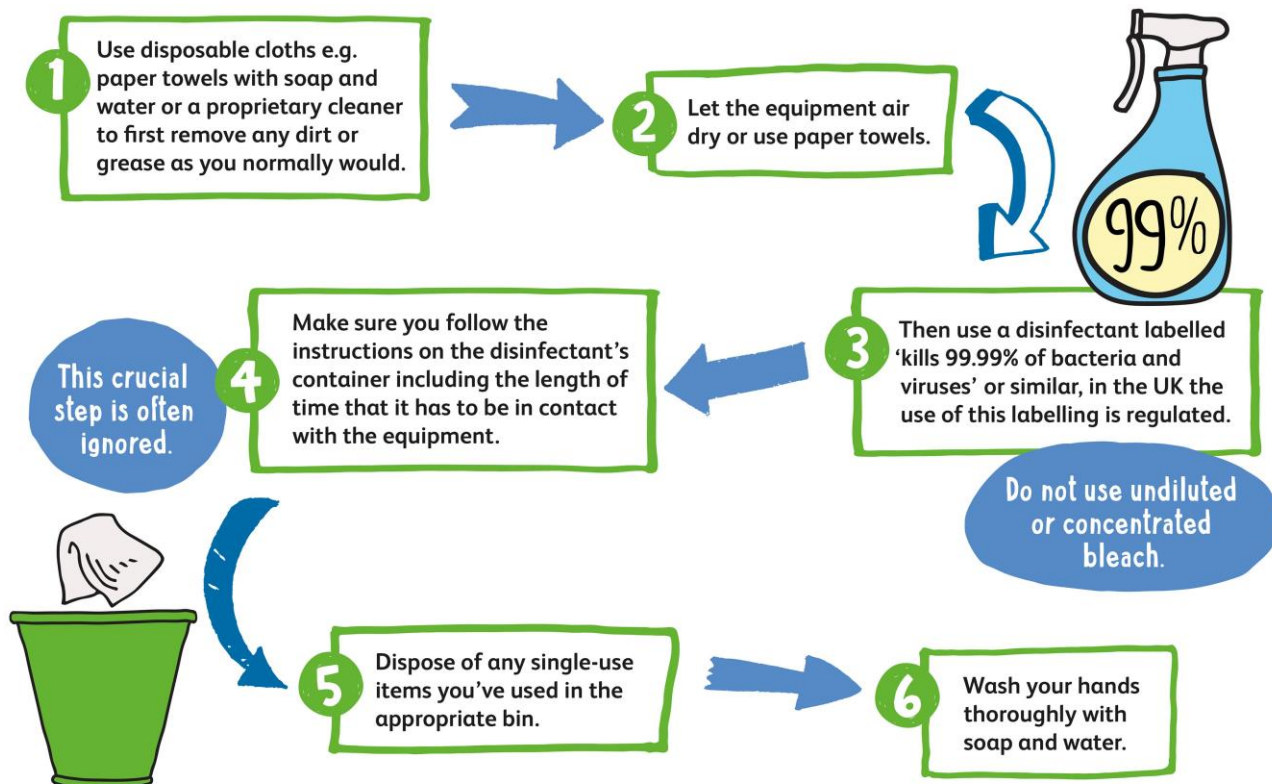
CLEAPSS standard advice and guidance applies. However, in addition to your normal risk assessment process (see **EXPLORE Issue 5** pgs 4-5), the following must also be applied:

1. Children are known to touch their faces without thinking, despite being reminded, therefore telling children to wash hands after touching equipment is not sufficient to prevent potential transmission. This means all equipment given to a child must be clean. As a result, we advise that all equipment is clean before it is used by children. For more guidance see cleaning equipment.
2. Where possible, use disposable equipment available from the supermarket that can be placed in the appropriate waste at the end of the lesson. For example, **Glue from milk**, **Bath bombs** or **Making trace fossils**. If appropriate, manage children to put disposable items in the correct bin one at a time.
3. Think carefully about any SEND children that would ordinarily have extra support during a hands on activity. TAs may not be able to provide direct assistance. If using a TA is one of your control measures, you will need to use an alternative lower risk activity.
4. Avoid higher risk activities that may require extra supervision or direct adult support. For example, our **Investigating burning** activity, normally requires an increase in the amount of supervision, ie more adults in the room. This may not be possible at present. Look very carefully at the yellow safety box on our activities when planning. High risk activities will be harder to facilitate under the current working conditions.
5. Under the new circumstances, it is likely that a number of teachers/teaching assistants will be supervising groups of children that are not from their normal class. When planning a hands on activity, knowing the children well, influences what safety measures teachers chose to put in place and how they are implemented. This knowledge and understanding will include the children's behaviour, or how well they respond to instruction. Without this knowledge and understanding, choose lower risk activities that you can safely plan for.
6. If an accident occurs, follow your school's guidance. Make sure you know this guidance before the lesson and how to implement it. You will need to talk to your children about what to do if an accident happens during this new way of working. What you say will change dependent on the activity.
7. If taking your children outside don't forget that you will still need to maintain their 2 m zone. See **Working safely outdoors** for more advice.

Cleaning equipment

Find out what your employer's cleaning protocol is and make sure you follows this.

How do I clean equipment if I need to?



Will our science, D&T and art equipment be free of microbes (including COVID-19) if we clean it?

Probably not. Primary schools do not have the equipment or training needed to sterilise anything. You can't disinfect everything, and even if you did it won't stay that way. The best you can do is to temporarily reduce the amount of microbes (including coronavirus) on any item of equipment.

Can I avoid cleaning equipment after the children have used it?

Yes, after 72 hours most surfaces (including plastics and metal) are 'COVID free'. Therefore, if you quarantine any equipment that your children have used for 3 days, you'll avoid having to clean it.

Could the children help?

If your children are used to washing up when doing activities like food technology, then there's no reason why they shouldn't wipe and dry other equipment they've used. As with all activities you need to risk assess the children and the activity or equipment. For example, you may decide to not let Y4 children wipe over crocodile clips. Do not let any children use disinfectants.

Children, especially older children, can also help by being mindful when they use equipment. If they wash their hands before an activity and keep their hands away from their faces during the activity, it's likely that the equipment will remain cleaner and easier to disinfect afterwards.

Do I need to use personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Not as a way of protecting yourself from contact transfer while cleaning equipment. Bear in mind that you are already in the environment. Touching, for example, some magnets that the children have used is no different from touching the door handle.

The cleaning product you use may require you to use PPE (very unlikely with shop-bought proprietary products) but this would be to protect you from it, not COVID-19. Again, follow the instructions on the label, they're very important.

Classroom management during a hands on activity

Before the lesson:

- Setup any equipment at the children's tables before the lesson.
- Setup equipment in individual trays for each child. This will help speed up setup and clearing away and the trays will contain any spills.
- If water is required for the activity, then this should be provided as part of the equipment. Children must not leave their table to collect anything.
- Adults will need time prior to and after the lesson for setting up/clearing up.

During the lesson:

- Teacher demonstrations may be required for children to access the activity. Children must not leave their tables to crowd round a demonstration table, so make use of data projectors and digital cameras / visualizers to project what is being demonstrated.
- Use large visual aids to support instructions. Within this highlight/incorporate safety messages, for example, step by step PowerPoint slides on a whiteboard.
- If at any point during the lesson, you feel that the activity isn't working as you had planned or something is about to go wrong, for example, an accident may happen (even though nothing has yet), then stop the activity. This might mean stopping an individual child or stopping the whole class. Ordinarily you would intervene, but now this is much harder/you can't, so you need to take alternative steps. If necessary, swap to a written/oral activity.

End of lesson:

- If your planning has highlighted that clearing up will need to be done. Think about how this will happen and how long it will take.
- Once the activity has finished, children should place all equipment back into the tray. An adult must clear the trays away when the children have left the classroom, and then carry out any cleaning of equipment as required by your school (for more guidance see cleaning equipment).

Opportunities to extend learning using simple hands on activities

None of this means you will have to compromise on learning outcomes. Use the time to extend your children's learning in other ways, simple or low risk activities present new and exciting opportunities. For more ideas about making the most of hands on activities during this time see **EXPLORE Issue 9** - Hands on activities while social distancing.

Note – as with all CLEAPSS primary documents, words in bold in this document can be used as search terms to find the document on the CLEAPSS primary website.