

‘How to’ Apply for a DfE-funded air cleaning unit



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Applying for a DfE-funded air cleaning unit

Last year, the Department provided over 8,000 air cleaning units for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded schools (primary and secondary), SEND/AP settings, FE colleges, early years settings and open children's homes of 6 places or more, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. This programme was well received by education settings. For this reason, and to give eligible settings another opportunity to receive an air cleaning unit, we have reopened the scheme.

All eligible settings can apply [here](#). Applications will be open until 10 February.

Applications will be assessed against strict criteria for their setting type. Making an application does not guarantee allocation of an air cleaning unit: if demand is higher than expected, we may start prioritising spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ levels and occupation density.

Settings with successful applications will be contacted by our supplier to arrange delivery.

Additionally, the online marketplace remains open for those settings that wish to purchase air cleaning units at a suitable specification and competitive price, including for those that do not meet the eligibility criteria or are unsuccessful in their application for a DfE-funded unit. The marketplace can be accessed [here](#).

Considerations before applying for an air cleaning unit (ACU)

When the use of an air cleaning unit may be suitable

Where an area of poor ventilation has been identified that cannot be resolved through simple measures such as opening doors and windows, you should explore what remedial works may be required to improve ventilation on a more permanent basis. Where it is not possible to maintain adequate ventilation, it may be appropriate to consider the use of an air cleaning unit while the underlying ventilation issue is addressed:

- When used properly, ACUs can help reduce airborne contaminants in a poorly ventilated space, including viruses like COVID-19 and influenza, and particles that can cause respiratory allergies and exacerbate asthma. This will help schools where ventilation cannot bring CO₂ levels down to acceptable levels reduce infections risk over the coming winter and beyond, potentially increasing attendance levels.
- ACUs have low power consumption, are mobile and easy to set up.

What you should also consider

- Air cleaning units do not reduce CO₂ levels. They are not a substitute for ventilation and should never be used as a solution for a poorly ventilated space in the long-term.
- Between one and three units will be required for each room, depending on average occupancy. It is worth noting that ACUs are the size of a small bedside table and require free electrical sockets in the room they are intended for.
- The noise emitted by air cleaning units is between 50 and 60 decibel, which is a safe level and comparable to the sound level of a household refrigerator or the average background noise in a workplace.
- Air cleaning units may be an object of interest, particularly for young children. Pupils might try to climb on the units or insert objects into them.

Ultimately, settings will need to make the final decision on whether an air cleaning unit is suitable for their setting. They must consider suitability in line with their own risk assessments and consider the individual needs of their pupils in deciding whether a unit would be suitable, e.g. consider the effect on any children with hearing impairments.

Guidance on how to improve ventilation can be found in the [Health and Safety Executive's \(HSE\) guidance](#) for workplaces.

Eligibility criteria for a DfE-funded air cleaning unit

All state funded schools (primary and secondary), FE colleges, early years settings and open children's homes of 6 places or more can apply for a funded air cleaning unit [here](#).

Before submitting an application for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria **must** be met:

- ✓ **Sustained high CO₂ readings:** there have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to improve ventilation with the current provisions, e.g. opening windows.
- ✓ **Lengthy remedial building works required:** to address poor ventilation that cannot be completed before the end of February 2023. Air cleaning units may be suitable while remedial work is undertaken to address the underlying ventilation issue; they should not be used as a substitute for ventilation.
- ✓ **Suitable space:** air cleaning units will be allocated for **teaching spaces and staff rooms, childcare spaces in early years settings, or common rooms/communal areas in open children's homes (6 places or more)**. We will not provide units for other spaces such as halls, corridors and dining rooms.
- ✓ **Average occupation:** When occupied, spaces must be used by 5 people or more on average to be eligible.

If necessary, we may prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ readings and occupation density.

Questions & Answers

Question: Is my setting eligible for a DfE-funded air cleaning unit?

All state-funded schools (primary and secondary), FE colleges, early years settings and open children's homes (6 places or more) can apply for a funded air cleaning unit if they meet strict eligibility criteria. Special and AP settings, including SEND units attached to mainstream units are also eligible to apply. If your setting is not eligible for a funded unit, an online marketplace is available, enabling you to purchase units at a suitable specification and competitive price. The marketplace can be accessed [here](#).

Question: What option do we have to acquire air cleaning units if we do not meet the eligibility criteria, or we are unsuccessful with our application?

The online marketplace is open for those settings that wish to purchase air cleaning units at a suitable specification and competitive price, including those that do not meet the eligibility criteria or are unsuccessful in their application for a DfE-funded unit. The marketplace can be accessed [here](#).

Question: We have identified poor ventilation but do not know whether an air cleaning unit would be suitable, how do we decide?

Air cleaning units can help reduce airborne contaminants in a poorly ventilated space. They should only be used while remedial work is undertaken to address the underlying ventilation issue. They are not a substitute for ventilation and should never be used as a reason to reduce or not remediate poor ventilation in the long term. It is for settings to decide whether an air cleaning unit would be suitable in line with their individual risk assessments. In making that decision, factors such as the size, occupancy and purpose of the room where you have identified poor ventilation should be considered. Guidance on how to improve ventilation can be found in the [Health and Safety Executive's \(HSE\) guidance](#) for workplaces. More detailed guidance on the suitability of ACUs (including HEPA devices) is available from the [Chartered Institution of Buildings Service Engineers](#).

Question: What should we do if ventilation cannot be improved through remedial work?

Air cleaning units may be suitable while remedial work is undertaken to address the underlying ventilation issue; they should not be used as a substitute for ventilation. It is the responsibility of settings to decide on the use of affected rooms in accordance with their risk assessment procedures and obligations under health and safety law. Guidance on how to improve ventilation can be found in the [Health and Safety Executive's \(HSE\) guidance](#) for workplaces.

For any further questions, please contact: ventilation.operations@education.gov.uk

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