

COVID-19 Guidance to educational settings

Version 1.0

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Introduction

This guidance will assist schools, early learning and childcare settings and other educational settings in providing advice for children, pupils, students, staff and parents or carers regarding:

- the novel coronavirus, COVID-19,
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19,
- what to do if someone who is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 has been in a school or other educational setting, and
- what advice to give to individuals who have travelled from risk areas within the last 14 days-see [HPS COVID-19 website](#) for a list of current risk areas.

With regards to travel information to China or other countries for children, pupils or students resident or boarding in the UK, we recommend checking the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) [country advice](#) pages as this information is updated on a frequent basis.

Main Points

The key principles in managing people with symptoms and a history of travel to a risk area or contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection are:

1. Identify potential cases as soon as possible
2. Prevent potential transmission of infection to other students and staff
3. Avoid all direct physical contact i.e.
 - a. avoid direct physical contact, and exposure to respiratory secretions;
 - b. isolate the patient.
4. Obtain advice from the GP or [NHS24](#) (111)
5. Further advice is available from [NHS Inform](#) or the local Health Protection Team (see **Appendix 1** for contact numbers).

Information about the virus

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after return from a risk area or contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after possible exposure to COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever.

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more affected than other age groups – very few cases have been reported in children.

How COVID-19 is spread

From what we know about other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres or less) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (termed respiratory secretions) are most likely to be the most important means of transmission.

There are 2 routes by which people could become infected:

- secretions can be directly transferred into the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within 2m) or could be inhaled into the lungs
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface or object that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching a door knob or shaking hands then touching own face).

There is currently no good evidence that people who do not have symptoms are infectious to others.

Preventing spread of infection

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

The COVID-19 communications toolkit can be downloaded from [NHS Inform](#) containing public health resources about how you can help stop the spread of viruses, like those that cause COVID-19, by practicing good respiratory and hand hygiene.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol based hand sanitiser if handwashing facilities are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin.
- people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work or any education or early learning and childcare setting
- children, pupils, students, staff and visitors should wash their hands:
 - before leaving home
 - on arrival at school/setting
 - after using the toilet
 - after breaks and sporting activities
 - before food preparation
 - before eating any food, including snacks
 - before leaving school/setting
- use an alcohol based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- if you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child or colleague, please call your GP or [NHS24](#) (111). Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment but phone.
- see further information on [HPS COVID-19 website](#) and [NHS Inform](#)

Face masks for the general public, pupils or students, or staff are **not recommended** to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments.

People who have returned from Hubei Province, including Wuhan, in the last 14 days should avoid attending an early learning and childcare setting, school, work or university until 14 days after they leave Hubei Province. They should self-isolate at home.

People who have returned from other *category 1 risk areas since 19th February 2020 should avoid attending an early learning and childcare setting, school, work or university until 14 days after they leave these areas. They should self-isolate at home.

Anyone who develops symptoms of fever, cough or shortness of breath during self-isolation should contact their GP or NHS24 (111).

Further information on self-isolation is available on [NHS Inform](#).

People who have returned from *category 2 risk areas are advised to stay at home if they develop symptoms and contact their GP or [NHS24](#) (111). All other pupils or students and staff should continue to attend school or university.

*See [HPS COVID-19 website](#) for a list of current risk areas and categories, including relevant exposure dates.

What to do if children, pupils, students or staff become unwell whilst at your educational setting and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19 (either through travel to affected countries or contact with a confirmed case)

Call the GP or [NHS24](#) (111) or 999 in an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk), and explain the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 in the last 14 days. You can do this on their behalf if this is easier. People who become unwell should be advised **not** to go to their GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Whilst you wait for advice or an ambulance to arrive, try to find somewhere safe for the unwell person to sit which is at least two metres away from other people. If possible, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a shut door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the bin. If no bin is available, put the tissue in a bag or pocket for disposing later. If you don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. The room must be cleaned once they leave (see the section on "How to clean educational settings where there were children, students or staff identified as suspected cases of COVID-19" in this document. Waste needs to be retained and disposed of according to the section "How to deal with rubbish, including tissues, if children, students or staff becomes unwell with suspected COVID-19 in the educational establishment".

If required, identify suitable toilet facilities that only the pupil/staff member will use. Make sure that children know to tell a member of staff if they feel unwell.

What to do if a case of COVID-19 (pupil, student or staff) is suspected in your early learning and childcare or education setting

For those who are in contact with a suspected case in an early learning and childcare or educational setting, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID-19 are awaited unless otherwise advised by your local health protection team. There is no need to close the setting or send other learners or staff home. You should contact your local Health Protection Team for advice before issuing any wider communications, always bearing in mind the confidentiality of the person who is unwell. Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that staff members need to take. People who test negative for COVID-19 will be advised individually about return to education/childcare settings.

What to do if children, pupils, students or staff in your institution in your early learning and childcare or education setting are diagnosed with COVID-19

The early learning and childcare or educational setting will be contacted by the local Health Protection Team to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken. An assessment of each early learning and childcare or education setting will be undertaken by the Health Protection Team with relevant staff. Advice on the management of pupils or students and staff will be based on this assessment.

The Health Protection Team will also be in contact with the patient directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts, and will be in touch with any contacts of the patient to provide them with appropriate advice.

Advice on cleaning of communal areas such as classrooms, changing rooms and toilets will be given by the Health Protection Team and is outlined in the section on “How to clean educational settings where there were children, students or staff identified as suspected cases of COVID-19” in this document.

The local Health Protection Team will advise on any closure/restrictions, in consultation with the headteacher and school management team.

What to do if children, pupils, students or staff in your institution are contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 who was symptomatic while attending your childcare or educational setting

If a confirmed case occurs in an educational setting the local Health Protection Team will provide you with advice and will work with the headteacher, principal and/or management team to identify contacts who might require further follow-up.

The definition of a contact includes:

- any child, pupil, student or staff member in close face-to-face or touching contact including those undertaking small group work (within two metres of the case for more than 15 minutes)
- talking with or being coughed on for any length of time while the individual is symptomatic
- anyone who has cleaned up any bodily fluids of the individual
- close friendship groups
- any child, pupil, student or staff member living in the same household as a confirmed case, or equivalent setting such as boarding school dormitory or other student accommodation.

Contacts are **not** considered cases and if they are well, they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others, however:

- they will be asked to self-isolate at home, or within their boarding school dormitory room or residential accommodation, for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case and follow advice for self isolation, which can be found on [NHS Inform](#)
- the Health Protection Team will advise on follow up requirements
- if they develop any symptoms within their 14-day observation period they should call their GP or [NHS24](#) (111) for assessment
- if they become unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath they will be tested for COVID-19
- if they require emergency medical attention, call 999 and tell the call handler/ambulance control that the person has a history of potential contact with COVID-19
- if they are unwell at any time within their 14-day observation period and they test positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be managed clinically as indicated.

Family and friends who have **not** had close contact (as listed above) with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities such as attending early learning and childcare or educational settings or work, unless they become unwell. If they become unwell, they should call their GP or [NHS24](#) (111) and explain their symptoms and discuss any known contact with the case to consider if they need further assessment.

Outside those that are defined as close contacts, the rest of the school/setting does not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities attending educational establishments or work as usual, unless they become unwell. If they become unwell they will be assessed as a suspected case depending on their symptoms. This advice applies to staff and children in the rest of the class/setting who are not in a close friendship group or children undertaking small group work. The decision as to whether children, pupils, students and staff fall into this contact group or the closer contact group will be made between the Health Protection Team, the educational setting and (if they are old enough) the student. Advice should be given as follows:

- if they become unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath they will be asked to self-isolate and should seek medical advice from their GP or [NHS24](#) (111).
- if they are unwell at any time within the 14 days of contact and they are tested and are positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated as such.

What to do if children, pupils, students or staff in your early learning and childcare or educational setting have travelled from anywhere in Hubei province, including Wuhan in the past 14 days, or from other category 1 risk areas in the past 14 days and since February 19th 2020

See [HPS COVID-19 website](#) for a list of current risk areas and categories, including relevant exposure dates.

If an individual falls into this category, contact their GP or NHS24 (111) for further advice:

If they are currently well, they should self-isolate for 14 days after leaving these risk areas. Further information on self-isolation is available on [NHS Inform](#).

If they become unwell please call the GP or [NHS24](#) (111) immediately for them to be assessed by an appropriate specialist. You should follow the advice as above for contacts of confirmed cases in the educational establishment. If they require emergency medical attention, call 999 and tell the call handler/ambulance control that the person has a history of recent travel to risk areas for COVID-19.

What to do if a child, pupil, student or staff member has travelled from category 2 risk areas or have been given health advice by the health protection team:

See [HPS COVID-19 website](#) for a list of current risk areas and categories, including relevant exposure dates.

If they are currently well:

- they are advised to self-isolate only if they develop symptoms
- they can continue to attend work or education
- they do not need to avoid contact with other people
- their family do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities
- testing people with no symptoms for COVID-19 is currently not recommended
- it is useful to always take a mobile phone with them when they go out so that they can contact others if they do become unwell.

If they become unwell:

- they should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as they would with other flu viruses.
- they (or a family member, colleague or member of staff) should call their GP or [NHS24](#) (111) immediately for them to be assessed by an appropriate specialist, as quickly as possible
- they should stay at home and should not attend work or education
- they should not go directly to their GP or other healthcare environment
- if they require emergency medical attention, call 999 and tell the call handler/ambulance control that the person has a history of recent travel to risk areas for COVID-19

See [HPS COVID-19 website](#) and the [NHS Inform](#).

What to do if children, pupils, students or staff return from travel anywhere else in the world within the last 14 days

Currently there are minimal cases outside the risk areas and therefore the likelihood of an individual coming into contact with a confirmed case is low.

There is no need to advise any of these children, pupils, students or staff to avoid normal activities or educational settings unless they have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

If individuals are aware that they have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should contact their GP or [NHS24](#) (111) for further advice.

For the latest country specific information please visit [fitfortravel](#).

What to do with post, packages or food sent from risk areas within the last 14 days

The virus does not survive well for long periods outside the body and so it is highly unlikely that COVID-19 can be spread through post or packages. It is highly unlikely that COVID-19 can be spread through food.

How to clean educational settings where there were children, students or staff identified as suspected cases of COVID-19

Coronavirus symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include cough, fever, or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the patient has come into contact with must be **cleaned** including:

- all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones

Many household detergents (e.g. general purpose) and disinfectants (e.g. bleach based) products are available that are active against viruses.

- Manufacturer's instructions on the detergent/disinfectant product label should be checked for use on the surface(s) being cleaned.
- Manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants must be followed.

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.

If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice.

How to deal with rubbish, including tissues, if children, students or staff becomes unwell with suspected COVID-19 in the educational establishment

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste.

Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste.

Tools for use in early learning and childcare and education settings

Use [e-Bug](#) resources recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence to teach children and students of all ages about hygiene. Key sections that may be useful are:

KS1: Horrid Hands and Super Sneezes

https://e-bug.eu/junior_pack_ks1.aspx?cc=eng&ss=2&t=Horrid%20Hands

https://e-bug.eu/junior_pack_ks1.aspx?cc=eng&ss=2&t=Super%20Sneezes

KS2: Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Hygiene

https://e-bug.eu/junior_pack.aspx?cc=eng&ss=2&t=Hand%20Hygiene

https://e-bug.eu/junior_pack.aspx?cc=eng&ss=2&t=Respiratory%20Hygiene

KS3: Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Hygiene

https://e-bug.eu/senior_pack.aspx?cc=eng&ss=3&t=Senior%20Schools-Hand%20Hygiene

https://e-bug.eu/senior_pack.aspx?cc=eng&ss=3&t=Senior%20Schools-Respiratory%20Hygiene

Further information

Further Information for health professionals can be found on the [HPS COVID-19 page](#).

Information for the general public and travellers returning from at-risk areas can be found on [NHS Inform](#).

Pre-travel guidance can be found on [fitfortravel](#).

Appendix 1: Contacts details for local Health Protection Teams

Organisation	Office Hours Telephone Number	Out of Hours Telephone Number Ask for Public Health On Call
Ayrshire and Arran	01292 885858	01563 521 133 Crosshouse Hospital switchboard
Borders	01896 825560	01896 826 000 Borders General switchboard
Dumfries and Galloway	01387 272 724	01387 246 246
Fife	01592 226435	01592 643355 Victoria Hospital switchboard
Forth Valley	01786 457 283 Ask for CPHM on call	01324 566000 Ask for CPHM on call
Grampian	01224 558520	0345 456 6000
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	0141 201 4917	0141 211 3600 Gartnavel switchboard
Highland	01463 704886	01463 704000 Raigmore switchboard
Lanarkshire	01698 858232	01236 748 748 Monklands switchboard
Lothian	0131 465 5429/5422	0131 536 1000 Edinburgh Royal switchboard
Orkney	01856 888034	01856 888 000 Balfour Hospital switchboard
Shetland	01595 743340	01595 743000 Gilbert Bain switchboard
Tayside	01382 596 976/987	01382 660111 Ninewells switchboard
Western Isles	01851 704704	01851 708033