

SCHOOL INFORMATION PACK ON MANAGING COVID IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

This document has been produced by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and aims to support schools and pre-schools in preparing and managing their response to cases and clusters of COVID-19 within the school setting.

Related documents for carrying out the risk assessment with the PHA COVID19 School Team can be found on the COVID-19 page of C2K Exchange.

For ease of use, this document is split into Section 1- Managing a positive case and Section 2- Managing more than one positive case.

Contact Details

When a school receives notification of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (that is, confirmed with a positive test) in a pupil or member of staff, in the first instance, you should contact the Education Authority emergency helpline for COVID-19 suspected or confirmed cases on **028 9041 8056** or at confirmed.covid19@eani.org.uk. They will provide initial advice and prepare you for phoning the PHA COVID19 School Team. This helpline is open 7 days a week 8am to 8pm.

You should then contact the PHA COVID19 School Team on **028 9536 0484** who will discuss the risk assessment and answer any questions that arise in relation to this. The PHA team is open Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm and Saturday to Sunday 10am to 2pm.

If your query is not an emergency you should contact:

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| EA Education Restart Helpline | 028 38368186 | Options: 1. Human Resources 2. Provision of school meals 3. Home to school transport 4. Health and Safety related (inc. Risk Assessments, PPE, Confirmed Covid case within school) 5. Learning and Curriculum 6. Ordering PPE and cleaning materials 7. Cleaning advice for premises | Operating Hours 9am – 5pm Mon - Fri |
| EA Covid-19 assistance via email | Covid-19@eani.org.uk | | Operating hours 9am – 5pm 7 days per week |
| Confirmed Covid-19 case – please see flowchart diagrams for further information | Contact Education Authority. Complete the 'Confirmed Covid-19 Case Pro-forma' (available through C2k and the EA website) and email it to EA at confirmed.covid19@eani.org.uk | | |
| EA Cleaning Service | EA Cleaning Service can be contacted on 028 9041 8057 | | |

The School response to confirmed COVID-19 in a school community will be tailored to the situation and will vary, for example, a small number of pupils and/or staff may need to self-isolate for a period of time. Sometimes whole classes or year groups may be asked to self-isolate. In rare circumstances the school may have to close.

You will normally be told about a confirmed case by the parent of the child or by the member of staff concerned. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 usually receive this result by text and/or email and receive this as soon as the result is available.

When you are informed of the positive result you should ask the following:

- Name and date of birth
- What date did they first develop symptoms?

- What date did they have a test?
- When were they last in school?
- Which class/es are they in?
- To make sure the information about the positive case is accurate you may wish to ask if the parent/staff member would be willing to share a screen shot of the positive result. (If you do this, do not share this information with anyone outside public health.)

Having gathered the initial information above, identification of close contacts in the school can begin. You need to consider the **2 days** prior to the child/member of staff feeling unwell (becoming symptomatic) – this is considered to be the infectious period. If the child/member of staff did not have any symptoms when they took the test then you should consider the 48 hours prior to the test being taken.

A close contact is:

A person who has been close to a confirmed case from 2 days before the person was symptomatic to 10 days after the onset of symptoms and:

- **Lives in the same household**
- **has travelled in a car with the case OR**
- **has been within 2 metres of a case for more than 15 minutes OR**
- **has been within 1 metre of a case and had face-to-face contact including:**
 - **being coughed on**
 - **having a face-to-face conversation**
 - **having skin-to-skin physical contact**

Individuals should **only** be classed as a **close contact** if they meet the above definition. The approach set out in the Department of Education New School Day Guidance are designed to limit close contacts within the school using measures such as “pupil bubbles”, fixed classroom floor plans with named forward facing seating and social distancing. Implementation of the guidance should make the identification of contacts easier and limit the number of close contacts identified.

Practical aspects of identifying contacts

Confirmed case in a pupil

Pupils

- Consider close contact definition above. For older primary children and secondary pupils, this will be the children who have sat within 2 metres of the positive child/staff member in their class/each of their classes. Your floor plans should help you identify these children.
- Consider areas like study halls and libraries too.
- You should also consider any friendship groups out with classes, for example, lunchtime and breaks.
- How they travelled to school and traveling in a school vehicle for whatever reason.
- For younger children in primary school it is much more difficult to be confident children have not come into close contact. In most situations the entire class bubble will be identified as close contacts.

Classroom staff

- It is recommended that teachers and classroom assistants maintain 2m social distance from children. However, it is acknowledged that this is not practical in many primary school classes. Consider whether staff would meet definition above. In post primary schools adult pupil distancing is more reliable. However, some staff – for example special educational needs assistants are more likely to have close contact with a positive case.
- Remember to think about staff who have been in the class who are not based there all the time. For example, substitute teachers.

Wider school

- If the school has implemented the bubble approach, close contacts in other classes should be very few.
- Consider contacts in other areas – implementation of new school day guidance should mean that office, catering and other staff should not usually be close contacts but sometimes for genuine reasons they will have had contact with the child which meets the definition.

Confirmed case in a member of staff

- The same definition should be used to identify staff and students who meet the close contact criteria should the confirmed case be a member of staff.
- **As well as the classroom and pupil facing environment contact between staff in staff rooms and on breaks should be explored.**

At this stage you should contact the Education Authority emergency helpline for COVID-19 suspected or confirmed cases on **028 9041 8056** or at confirmed.covid19@eani.org.uk

You should then phone the PHA COVID19 School Team on **028 9536 0484**. They will send you the **School Action Card and Close Contacts template list for Schools** and then discuss the risk assessment and answer any questions that arise.

When the close contacts have been identified between yourself and the PHA you should enter the close contact information on the **Close Contacts template list for Schools** and email it to the dedicated PHA COVID19 School Team email address at: EducationalSupport@hscni.net

As contact tracing is vitally important to slow the spread of COVID19 and data sharing for this purpose is in the public interest for public health reasons, schools do not require the consent of parents or pupils to share a pupil's personal data with the PHA COVID19 School Team for this purpose. You should however still make parents and pupils aware that you are required to share pupil's personal information with the PHA COVID19 School Team for this purpose.

All those on the contact list should be contacted by the school to advise them not to come to school/nursery for 14 days and that a letter will follow. They will then need the letter sent to them that provides details on the name of the school, the date of last contact with the case and the date they should return to school (14 days). **(Letter A)**.

You may also wish to send a separate letter to all other parents/carers and staff **who have not been** identified as close contacts (**Letter B**). This is a general advisory letter– staff and families - and advises that there has been a positive case and that close contacts have been identified and advised to self-isolate and that everyone else should be vigilant for any symptoms.

Section 2: Managing more than one positive case of COVID19

If you receive information of a new confirmed case in your school you should follow exactly the same steps as outlined in section 1.

A **cluster** of cases is two or more confirmed cases where the first date of each of their symptoms is within a 14-day period within the school setting.

If the new confirmed case(s) is one of the previously identified close contacts, then no further close contacts will be identified and no further action is required by the school.

If the new confirmed case(s) is in NOT in a previously identified close contact, for example a different class, then further close contacts will need to be identified and letter(s) sent.

The PHA will discuss whether wider measures need to take place with you on the phone. If the number of cases of COVID19 in the school continues to escalate, the PHA will work closely with the school to risk assess the situation, determine whether there is evidence of transmission within the school setting and consider whether further mitigation or infection control measures are required. So far in our experience, there is limited evidence of transmission within the school setting and the need for wider measures has not been required.

If the PHA determines that cases are a cluster of cases associated with transmission within the school setting they will set up an Incident Management Team (IMT) to assess the need for further management. IMT membership will generally include individuals from the school, PHA, the Education Authority, CCMS and others, as

appropriate. Further measures may include consideration of wider testing of school pupils, school closure, further communication with parents and carers and the media.

PHA COVID School Team documents on the COVID-19 page of C2K Exchange

The following documents can be accessed:

- Copy of this guidance
- School Action Card
- Close Contacts template list for Schools
- Letter A (for close contacts)
- Letter B (optional letter for other staff and pupils in the school)