

Key COVID-19 Management Measures for Educational settings

January 2022

06/01/22

Following updated national guidance, linked to the latest Omicron variant and wave, Education and the Health Protection Hub have updated the previous advice related to COVID-19 management for the forthcoming half term. This advice will be reviewed alongside national guidance review points, the first being 26th January 2022.

The Omicron variant is highly transmissible and case numbers are doubling every one and a half to two days. Although the rate of transmission is having a significant impact on the NHS in terms of admissions, emerging evidence suggests that overall people are experiencing milder illnesses; however, the rate of transmission is still of concern for those that experience more serious complications. We have taken this into account in our updated advice below. ***Any local advice/recommendation is in italics and significant changes from last term are in bold.***

We continue to support all schools/settings who choose to keep certain COVID-19 mitigations in place (e.g. staggered start and finish times, zoning of classes, age groups etc.) and would remind you that the general advice on mitigations that was sent-out on the [2nd November 2021](#) still applies.

Positive Cases

- *Please continue to notify us of positive cases via the on line notification form <https://apps.telford.gov.uk/testandtrace/> Education and the Health Protection Hub will continue their commitment to provide advice and support, prioritising those settings with a significantly high number of cases.*
- Positive cases should isolate from the day symptoms started/day of test (if no symptoms) and for the next 7 full days (minimum).
- A day 6 and day 7 negative LFT test is required for de-isolation (staff/children must also be well and not have a fever before returning to school/the setting). *Schools/settings are able to ask parents/carers for the results of those tests prior to children returning, although cannot refuse access to school if the parent/carer declines. It is advised that these tests are carried-out early in the morning so that if both tests return negative, the case can return to the setting on the morning of day 7. As an illustration, if the case develops symptoms on the 15th for example, day 6 would be the 21st.*
- Where children do not take a test on day 6 or 7 then they should self-isolate for the full 10 days.
- ***It is recommended that due to the increased vulnerability of some pupils in special schools, specifically those who have complex learning disabilities and/or medical needs, that where possible, positive cases should remain off school for the full 10***

days. *This is in recognition of the difficulty pupils may have in taking COVID-19 tests but also the clinical vulnerability of some of these cohorts.*

- *Although there has not been any update to the national definition of COVID-19 symptoms (cough, high temperature, loss/change in taste/smell), if COVID-19 is circulating in the school/setting please also be mindful of the wider symptoms of COVID-19 – sore throat, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, blocked/runny nose, shortness of breath, diarrhoea and vomiting, and cold-like symptoms.*

Close contacts

- Daily LFT testing alongside other measures/mitigations outlined in this document and the national contingency plan, now form the key strategy in response to rapid transmission within school. ***We now recommend that the response to a single case in a class/group is to request 7 day LFD testing for the other children in the class/group.*** *This stage has previously been implemented when the threshold of 10% or 5 cases was met.*
- *We will continue to consider additional measures/controls, where a significant proportion of a group has tested positive. Where schools reach a 30% threshold of positive cases in a class/group then they should seek assistance from the health protection hub to discuss measures and controls necessary.*
- *As previously, schools are no longer required to do any contact tracing to identify contacts under the age of 18 years and 6 months. However when there are significant numbers of pupils or staff that are positive schools may be asked to identify all close contacts the pupil/staff cases may have had in their infectious period (in class, break and lunch times, before and after school and transport) and establish if there are links between them.*
- *Notify parents/guardians that their child may have been in close contact with a positive case (see letter template letters on page 8 and 9 of this guidance).*
- *Notify staff that they may have been in close contact with a positive case.*
- *Isolate identified close contacts who are not exempt from isolation: i.e. those who are not fully vaccinated (need to have had both vaccinations and second dose should have been more than 14 clear days prior to first exposure to cases) – they can still be recommended to undertake daily LFT testing, but need to remain isolated for 10 clear days after their last contact.*
Identified close contacts who are exempt from self-isolation must take daily LFTs for 7 days (this may need to extend if transmission continues).

Special considerations

- ***For early years settings we are recommending a single PCR test for child close contacts.***
- *If daily LFT testing is not possible for some special school cohorts we would advise as a minimum a PCR test and any additional LFT testing that they can undertake.*

Regular LFT testing

- In addition to the onsite LFT testing for secondary age pupils on return to school, we continue to strongly encourage LFT testing regularly among staff, children and parents. *Locally we recommend this for all ages – as a minimum twice weekly.*
- *Staff and pupils in Primary settings should access LFDs through the national and local providers:* https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20791/getting_a_covid-19_test_in_telford_and_wrekin

Changes to requirements for confirmatory PCRs

From 11th January in England, people who receive positive lateral flow results for COVID-19 following asymptomatic testing will be required to self-isolate immediately and won't be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This is a temporary measure while COVID-19 rates remain high across the UK. Whilst levels of COVID-19 are high, the vast majority of people with positive LFD results can be confident that they have COVID-19.

People with symptoms must continue to self-isolate immediately and book a PCR test.

Under this new approach, anyone who receives a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test result should report their result on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and must self-isolate immediately but will not need to take a follow-up PCR test. After reporting a positive LFD test result, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace so that their contacts can be traced and must continue to self-isolate.

There are a few exceptions to this revised approach:

- People who are eligible for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP) will still be asked to take a confirmatory PCR if they receive a positive LFD result, to enable them to access financial support.
- People participating in research or surveillance programmes may still be asked to take a follow-up PCR test, according to the research or surveillance protocol.
- Around one million people in England who are at particular risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 have been identified by the NHS as being potentially eligible for new treatments. They will be receiving a PCR test kit at home by mid-January to use if they develop symptoms or if they get a positive LFD result, as they may be eligible for new treatments if they receive a positive PCR result. This group should use these priority PCR tests when they have symptoms as it will enable prioritised laboratory handling.

In line with the reduced self-isolation approach announced on 22 December, anyone who tests positive will be able to leave self-isolation 7 days after the date of their initial positive test if they receive two negative LFD results, 24 hours apart, on days 6 and 7.

Face coverings

- It is recommended that face coverings are now worn in classrooms and communal areas for secondary settings (staff, pupils, visitors). This also applies to school and public transport.

- In primary schools and early years settings it is recommended that face coverings are worn by staff and adults in communal areas and when moving around the school/setting.

Reducing mixing

- Consistent with our advice on 2nd November 2021, we would advise you to reduce mixing between groups as much as possible.
- Consider ways in which children can be "zoned", or how mixing (including staff) might be reduced in ways that will fit with how you are operating your school/setting: e.g. assemblies, at lunch and break times, start and finish times. Think particularly about places people congregate, e.g. foyers, locker areas, staff rooms/offices/meeting rooms, changing rooms etc.
- All sports fixtures, planned trips / educational visits should be risk assessed – please refer to our general guidance issued on 2nd November 2021.

Ventilation

- Please continue to ensure good ventilation in all communal and classroom areas, using the CO2 monitors provided.
- We also recommend you consider the DfE advice and scheme below:
- The Department for Education (DfE) will make up to 7,000 more air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded education settings, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. This is in addition to the 1,000 DfE funded air cleaning units previously announced for SEND and alternative provision settings, and the 350,000 CO2 monitors already delivered to settings.
- All state-funded primary and secondary schools, further education colleges and early years' settings can apply for a funded air cleaning unit if they meet strict eligibility criteria. Special and alternative provision settings, including SEND units attached to mainstream schools, that were not successful or did not apply during the first round are also eligible to apply during this round.
- Further details, including the eligibility criteria, can be found in the [guidance on applying for an air cleaning unit](#).
- Applications for all settings will close at 9am on Monday 17 January.
- If your setting is not eligible for a funded unit, the [air cleaning marketplace remains open](#), enabling you to purchase units at a suitable specification and competitive price

Visitors

- Be mindful about bringing others onto site, and ensure visitors take LFT tests prior to visiting, as well as wear a face covering and leave their contact details.

Vaccination

- Encourage vaccine take up among staff/parents and eligible children.
- Drop-in clinics across Telford & Wrekin and all vaccinations sites that you can book into are in the links below:
- https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20740/i_am_a_resident/5190/covid-19_vaccination

Hand hygiene and cleaning

- Remind children and staff to wash their hands regularly and use sanitiser where possible
- Continue with the regular enhanced cleaning routine and very regular cleaning of touchpoints.

Risk Assessments and Contingency Planning

Settings should ensure their current risk assessments and contingency planning are updated where required in light of new information from the DfE.

We know that settings, in collaboration with the Health Protection Hub and Education team, will do everything possible to keep settings and schools fully open and protect face to face learning. All settings are committed to the principle that they will do everything to prevent restrictions to attendance. When required, as part of your contingency planning, schools and settings should continue to use the measures specified within the [DfE contingency framework document](#) and also consider advice previously outlined in the letter to schools and settings on the [2nd November \(Appendix B\)](#). In addition, the DfE sent out communication at the beginning of January, including an [open letter from the SoS](#) and [What to expect when settings return after the Christmas break](#), which recommended consideration of more flexible approaches to learning, with the aim of keeping children on site, where it might be necessary. Please read the two documents and consider what may work in your settings when updating your contingency plan.

Attendance Restrictions and Remote Education

As an absolute last resort, it may be necessary to introduce attendance restrictions.

To remind high-quality remote education is required for all pupils not able to attend where

- they have tested positive for COVID-19 but are well enough to learn from home; or
- attendance at their setting has been temporarily restricted

Where attendance restrictions are necessary however, all vulnerable children and those of critical workers must continue to attend on-site provision. The only deviation to this will be

where they are required to isolate and then additional check should be completed regarding safeguarding as required.

Onsite attendance should always be given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers. The national definition of vulnerable children has been updated. The previous definition included three categories of children and young people who should benefit from on-site provision:

- those with a social worker
- those with an Education, Health and Care Plan
- a group of children considered locally, including by settings and local authorities, to be 'otherwise vulnerable'

The guidance on children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access school or education settings has been expanded to include a broader definition of children classified as vulnerable. In addition to the above, this list now includes:

- children known to children's social care services in the past
- children whose home circumstances might be particularly challenging because of domestic abuse, parental offending, adult mental health issues, and drug and alcohol addiction

For more information go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Free School Meal provision

Free school meal provision must be provided in the form of meals or lunch parcels/vouchers for pupils who are eligible for benefits related free school meals and who are not attending school because they:

- are self-isolating
- have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves.
- or where attendance at their setting has been temporarily restricted.

Decisions and notification procedure for schools/academies and settings that need to restrict attendance

Where the difficult decision is made to restrict attendance at a school then this is taken by the Head Teacher in collaboration with their Chair of Governors. During working hours it is likely that you will have initially spoken to the Health Protection Hub. Where decisions to restrict access are based on operational reasons (i.e. workforce availability), maintained schools may want to consult with the duty officer in the education team, by contacting COVID19@telford.gov.uk however to confirm the decision lies directly with the school. We understand academies will follow their own Trust decision-making processes. Sometimes decisions will be necessary outside of working hours, where it is not possible to speak with either the health protection hub or, for maintained schools the education duty officer.

When schools (including academies) and settings make the decision to restrict attendance, in all circumstances we request that you email COVID19@telford.gov.uk to inform us of your decision. This should include

- School/setting name
- Reason for restricted access (i.e. 2 teaching staff and 1 TA in year 4)
- Impact of closure (i.e. 2 x year 4 classes for example)
- Anticipated timeframe for closure

This information will help us deal with any enquiries that come through to the Local Authority and help our intelligence about the extent of restricted access across Telford and Wrekin educational settings. We thank you in anticipation of your support.

Appendix A – content for school letter where there is a positive case

Just a quick note to let you know that there has been a positive COVID-19 case within your child's class.

We are taking all the measures we can in school to prevent transmission, while trying to provide a full curriculum of face-to-face learning.

In order to assist us in keeping everybody as safe as possible, while keeping the school operating, we ask that your child test using LFD (rapid) test kits daily for 7 days before coming to school each morning.

Advice on obtaining test kits is available by following these links:

<https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

As always, please ensure you are vigilant for symptoms and if your child does display symptoms, please keep them off school and book them a COVID test using this link: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

As general advice, if your child is a **household contact of a positive case** (even at primary age) we would also ask that they take daily LFD tests for a period of 7 days from the date of exposure to the positive case.

Appendix B – content for Early Years Provider where there is a positive case

Just a quick note to let you know that there has been a positive COVID-19 case within your child's group.

We are taking all the measures we can in nursery/childminders (delete as appropriate) to prevent transmission, while trying to provide high quality childcare.

In order to assist us in keeping everybody as safe as possible, while keeping the nursery operating, on the advice of the Health Protection Hub we ask that you take your child for a PCR test as soon as possible. Tests can be booked using this link: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) The reason for test would be "Recommended by Local Authority"

You do not have to keep your child off nursery while awaiting the results.

As always, please ensure you are vigilant for symptoms and if your child does display symptoms, please keep them off nursery and book them a PCR test using the link above.