

Health Protection Hub

Infection Control Reminder for Schools

We are currently seeing a number of educational settings with outbreaks of gastrointestinal infectious disease, and cases of COVID-19 are increasing, so we felt it timely to provide you with a reminder of the importance of the following control measures, and some resources to help you see-out the rest of the term with as little disruption as possible!

Exclusion

Prompt exclusion of children, young people and staff who are unwell with an infectious disease is essential to preventing the spread of infection in education and childhood settings.

Children with mild, respiratory symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education or childcare setting.

Children who are unwell and showing [the symptoms of an infectious disease](#) or a diagnostic result should be advised to stay away from their education or childcare setting for the minimum period recommended. [Chapter 3](#) of the “Health protection in education...” website and the accompanying table provide further detail on the symptoms of different infections and recommended action. Feel free to contact the Hub on the email below if you need any advice in specific situations.

Ventilation

Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.

If there are areas of the setting identified that may have poor ventilation, there are several simple things that can be done to improve ventilation.

These include:

- partially opening windows and doors to let fresh air in
- opening higher level windows to reduce draughts
- opening windows for 10 minutes an hour or longer can help increase ventilation – where possible this can happen when the room is empty in between lessons, for example

You should always balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

Respiratory hygiene

Covering the nose and mouth during sneezing and coughing can reduce the spread of infections.

Spitting should be discouraged.

Anyone with [signs and symptoms of a respiratory infection](#), regardless of the cause, should follow [respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette](#), specifically:

- cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, and dispose of used tissue in non-healthcare risk waste bin and perform hand hygiene
- cough or sneeze into the inner elbow (upper sleeve) if no tissues are available, rather than into the hand
- keep contaminated hands away from the mucous membranes of the eyes and nose
- carry out hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects and materials

Handwashing

Hand washing is one of the most important ways of controlling the spread of infections, especially those that cause diarrhoea and/or vomiting and respiratory infections.

Settings should ensure that staff and students/children have access to liquid soap, warm water and paper towels. Bar soap should not be used.

All staff and pupils should be advised to [wash their hands](#) after using the toilet, before eating or handling food, after playtime and after touching animals.

All cuts and abrasions should be covered with a waterproof dressing.

Alcohol hand gel can be used if appropriate hand washing facilities are not available but should not replace washing hands particularly if hands are visibly soiled or where there are cases of gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting) in the setting. Alcohol hand gel is not effective against norovirus. Further information is available here [Choosing hand sanitisers and surface disinfectants to use during the COVID-19 pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](#).

Cleaning

Effective cleaning and disinfection are critical in any education or childcare setting, particularly when food preparation is taking place.

In the event of an outbreak of infection at your setting, we would recommend enhanced and more frequent cleaning, to help reduce transmission - for example twice daily cleaning of areas (with particular attention to door handles, toilet flushes and taps) and communal areas where surfaces can easily become contaminated such as handrails, with hot, soapy water and an appropriate disinfectant. Milton is recommended especially when you have outbreaks of D&V, used in accordance with the instructions.

Dedicated cleaning equipment should be colour coded according to area of use.

Dealing with soiled clothing

Staff dealing with soiled clothing should ensure that:

- manual sluicing of clothing is not carried out as there is a risk of inhaling fine contaminated aerosol droplets; soiled articles of clothing should be rinsed through in the washing machine pre-wash cycle, prior to washing
- gloves and aprons should be worn when handling soiled linen or clothing
- hands should be thoroughly washed after removing the gloves and aprons

Clothing may become contaminated with blood or bodily fluids. If this occurs, clothing should be removed as soon as possible and placed in a plastic bag. It should be sent home with the child with advice for the parent on how to launder the contaminated clothing -any contaminated clothing should be washed separately in a washing machine, using a pre-wash cycle, on the hottest temperature that the clothes will tolerate.

Resources

The Spotty Book gives advice on general control measures and advice of specific diseases:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/08/spotty-book-2021.pdf>

We would advise that it's read in conjunction with the "Health protection in education and childcare settings", which has chapters on introduction to infections, infection prevention and control, public health management of specific infectious diseases, action in the event of an outbreak or incident, immunisation, educational visits and an exclusion table. The landing page is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>

If you require any specific advice, or to advise us of an outbreak, please email HealthProtectionHub@telford.gov.uk and we'll provide advice and assistance.