

Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire

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Dear Headteacher,

I am writing to you with an update on the coronavirus situation across North Yorkshire. Similar to our regional and national colleagues we are currently seeing a significant increase in cases across the County, particularly among young people. Although rates are currently highest in Harrogate District, we are seeing a similar pattern across each of our districts and across the rest of Yorkshire & the Humber.

Educational settings have worked hard to implement new policies in line with the Government's updated [Operational Guidance](#) and [Education Contingency Framework](#). The Public Health Team is also working to support individual settings to manage cases and outbreaks in line with this guidance.

Schools are no longer required to undertake detailed contact tracing at an individual level, which can make the exact nature of transmission difficult to identify. However, there are several patterns that we have identified among situations reported to us. These include:

- Settings with no cases/small number of unlinked cases with no concerns about setting-based transmission
- Settings with cases linked to a particular cohort e.g. an individual class or sports team
- Settings with a proportionally small number of cases spread across classes/year groups with no definable pattern
- Settings with increasing numbers of cases across multiple cohorts, where there are likely to be several clusters contributing to the outbreak

The public health team is working with settings who have reported cases to put in place actions appropriate for the degree of transmission as highlighted above. However, given the general increase in cases we felt it would be helpful to share some of this approach pre-emptively in order to support schools as early as possible with decision-making. I am attaching with this letter a copy of NYCC public health COVID-19 guidance for managing cases in schools, plus a Q&A document with answers to frequently asked questions. The guidance contains general prevention information that we would advise all settings to follow regardless of whether they have cases or not, plus additional guidance that outlines the actions we are recommending to target cases within specific cohorts and more general transmission in line with the national contingency framework.

In light of the number of schools that are continuing to see rising cases, from today the public health team will also hold a daily Incident Management Team meeting to discuss and provide formal support for additional steps required to manage cases where the standard measures have not been, or are unlikely to be, enough to disrupt transmission. This could include recommendations around restricting attendance (for example, as a short term measure whilst awaiting PCR results); however, as per the Contingency Framework keeping as many children in face to face education as possible remains a government priority.

The Department for Education is holding twice-weekly sessions with public health teams across the region. We attend these meetings and raise issues that have been identified by schools, including concerns about the increased risk from household contacts and how to manage those classed previously identified as clinically extremely

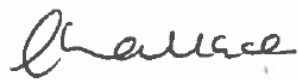
vulnerable. We will continue to update our Q&A document with answers to these queries as and when we receive them.

The rise in cases has been attenuated in age groups who have been offered the COVID-19 vaccination (including 16-17 year olds). I would therefore urge schools with eligible pupils to continue to support the roll out of the 12-15 vaccination programme, and to encourage as many young people as possible to take up the offer of vaccination.

Over the past year schools have become adept at responding to cases of COVID-19, with support from the Department for Education, Public Health England and ourselves. I hope that you will find the attached information helpful to assist with the interpretation of the national guidance – we will continue to work with you to support local decision making around any necessary measures that have been identified, and provide specialist advice and guidance where required (please continue to contact education.COVID19@northyorks.gov.uk).

Thank you once again for working with us to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Kind regards



Louise Wallace

Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire