NYCC Public Health advice for educational settings

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Please note – this document contains changes to guidance adopted as part of the Government's 'Living with COVID-19' plan introduced 21st February 2022.

Further changes in guidance for education settings, workplaces, care settings and the general public will be introduced on 1st April 2022. As such, this document will be valid until that time, and will then be replaced in line with further 'Living with COVID-19' guidance [not yet released].

All education and childcare settings are advised to revisit their contingency plans to ensure they align with the latest guidance.

Overview of changes to national guidance 24th February 2022

On 21st February 2022 the Government published its plan for removing the remaining legal restrictions while protecting people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and maintaining resilience: COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19 <u>COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u>. Key changes for education and childcare settings are summarised below.

1. Changes to testing in education and childcare settings and children's social care services

From Monday 21 February, the Government removed the guidance for staff and students in most education and childcare settings to undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic testing.

What regular asymptomatic testing is still advised?

Staff and students of secondary age and above in SEND settings, alternative provision settings, and SEND units within mainstream settings, or equivalent in further education colleges, are currently advised to continue twice-weekly testing. This is because of the increased risk for some in these settings of poor clinical outcomes, as well as the higher risk of closures due to high staff/student ratios and the need to employ specialist staff. SEND settings may also deliver therapeutic services on site to their students and so closure of these settings potentially disrupts access to vital health services. Please see specific guidance for SEND settings in the box below.

If you are in a specialist SEND or AP setting and need to order more test kits to enable staff and pupils / students (in year 7 and above) to continue regular, twice weekly testing in you should place an order through the online ordering system. Orders placed by 3pm on a Tuesday will be delivered during the following week. You can order test kits through the online ordering system 10 calendar days after receiving a delivery confirmation email, which confirms the scheduled delivery date of your forthcoming order. You should only order the test kits you need. When placing your order, you should input how many staff and pupils /students need test kits and you will be provided with 1 box of 7 test kits to enable them to test twice per week for 3.5 weeks.

If you are mainstream educational setting with a specialist SEND unit, the pupils / students in year 7 and above, and staff within the unit should continue to be advised to test regularly, twice per week and you should supply them with test kits to enable them to do this. This is because these pupils / students are more likely to be vulnerable and at higher risk of poor clinical outcomes as a result of Covid-19.

If you think you are experiencing an outbreak in your SEND unit, you should refer to the <u>contingency framework</u> and contact North Yorkshire Public Health team at <u>dph@northyorks.gov.uk</u> for advice and support.

What other asymptomatic testing may be advised?

Nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and FE colleges may be advised to re-introduce asymptomatic testing for targeted groups of staff and pupils/students (in Year 7 and above) in the event of an outbreak. Outbreaks will most likely be contained within a class, a year group or other defined group (such as a football team). If you suspect that your setting may be experiencing an outbreak please contact us at dph@northyorks.gov.uk for advice and support – testing is only one of the measures that we can consider, depending on the situation in your setting.

The education testing delivery channels will remain open so that staff and students of secondary age and above can access tests if needed to respond to local public health advice, in particular in relation to outbreaks. Staff and students are also able to access test kits from their local pharmacy or online.

Asymptomatic testing does not replace current guidance for those with symptoms, and anyone with symptoms, should book a free NHS test and follow the latest government guidance.

For further information, please visit the Department for Education's <u>frequently asked questions</u>

2. Changes to self-isolation and daily testing of close contacts

From Thursday 24 February, the Government removed the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days, and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days. In addition, the Government will:

- No longer ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days, and remove the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- End self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- End routine contact tracing. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests. Staff, children and young people should attend their education settings as usual. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home.
- End the legal obligation for individuals to tell their employers when they are required to self-isolate.

For more information on the guidance for cases and contacts, please refer to the COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts guidance.

3. Closure of the UKHSA advice service

Following the Prime Minister's announcement confirming that self-isolation is no longer a legal requirement following a positive test and the publication of the <u>Living with COVID-19</u> plan, the UKHSA advice service will be decommissioned from 31 March 2022.

The UKHSA advice service, accessed through option 1 of the DfE COVID-19 helpline, was introduced by UKHSA's predecessor, Public Health England (PHE), in September 2020. This was to provide advice to education and childcare settings on the action they should take to respond to positive cases of COVID-19 in their setting.

The DfE COVID-19 helpline will still be available to answer questions relating to COVID-19 in education and childcare settings, once the UKHSA advice service is switched off.

4. Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for healthy 5 to 11 year olds

The NHS is currently offering vaccines to at-risk children and those who live with immunosuppressed people in this age group. Parents and guardians of at risk 5 to 11 year olds should wait for the NHS to contact them, with local NHS teams already contacting those who are eligible.

On Wednesday 16 February, the government accepted the advice from the independent JCVI to make a non-urgent offer of COVID-19 vaccines to all children aged 5 to 11 in England.

The JCVI advice follows a thorough review by the UK's independent medicines regulator, the MHRA, which approved Pfizer's paediatric vaccine, as safe and effective for children aged 5 to 11.

Children without underlying health conditions are at low risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and the priority remains for the NHS to offer vaccines and boosters to older age groups and vulnerable children, as well as to catch-up with other childhood immunisation programmes.

The NHS will prepare to extend this non-urgent offer to all children during April so parents can, if they want, take up the offer to increase protection against potential future waves of COVID-19, as we learn to live with this virus.

The updated JCVI advice for vaccinating 5 to 11 year olds, which was published on Friday 18 February by the NHS, confirms that community pharmacy-led local vaccination services and vaccination centres should be the primary delivery models for this cohort.

5. Early years settings no longer required to notify Ofsted of positive cases

From Monday 21 February, early years settings are no longer required to notify Ofsted of COVID-19 cases in their setting.

It remains a legal requirement under the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework to report cases of serious illness. You should notify Ofsted as soon as practical, and in any case, within 14 days of a notifiable event happening. For information about what is classed as a notifiable event or serious incident and what to tell Ofsted, please refer to the guidance on reporting a serious childcare incident.

Please see specific guidance for Early Years settings in the box below.

6. Contact tracing

All contact tracing for COVID-19 ceased on 24th February, and contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or take daily lateral flow tests.

Fully vaccinated close contacts, and those aged under 18 are no longer required to take daily lateral flow tests, and those are not fully vaccinated are no longer required to self-isolate.

Pupils, staff and other adults with COVID-19 symptoms, a positive test result, or who are a close contact of a case should follow the <u>quidance for people with COVID-19 and their contacts</u>. This advice includes letting people know who have been in close contact with the positive case to allow them to follow this guidance.

Further guidance:

<u>Schools COVID-19 operational guidance</u> has been updated to reflect these changes (24th February) with a link to the new UKHSA guidance <u>Covid-19:people</u> with <u>Covid-19 and their contacts</u>, where further information is available. Please also see the list of resources below.

Updates for SEND and specialist settings

Face coverings:

Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, students, staff and visitors in classrooms or communal areas. Staff and pupils should follow wider advice on face coverings outside of school, including on transport to and from school or college.

In certain circumstances North Yorkshire Public Health team may advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms (by pupils, students, staff and visitors, unless exempt). In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn.

Stepping measures up and down:

You should have contingency plans outlining how you would operate if you need to take extra measures in exceptional circumstances. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children and young people, any measures in schools and colleges should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible. If you are considering stepping up measures, please contact us at dph@northyorks.gov.uk for advice and support.

Use of PPE:

Most staff in schools and colleges will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a pupil or student already has routine care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used. Additional PPE for COVID-19 is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when performing <u>aerosol generating procedures</u> (AGPs). The <u>guidance on the use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings</u> provides more information on the use of PPE for COVID-19. Please note this guidance is currently under review.

When someone develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test:

Pupils, staff and other adults should follow the updated UKHSA guidance on <u>People with COVID-19 and their contacts</u> if they have COVID-19 symptoms. Pupils in residential settings should usually self-isolate in their residential setting. Only in exceptional circumstances should a pupil self-isolate away from school. Pupils and staff should return to school as soon they can, in line with guidance above.

Asymptomatic testing in specialist settings and SEND units in mainstream setting:

Staff and pupils in specialist SEND settings, AP and SEND units in mainstream schools or equivalent in FE colleges, (for example those completing courses which are specifically for students with disabilities and/or learning disabilities such as Supported Learning courses and Foundation/SEND courses), are currently advised to continue regular twice weekly testing.

As a specialist settings you may have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing, please refer to <u>additional</u> <u>guidance on testing in specialist settings</u> Testing is voluntary and no child or young person will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.

In the event of an outbreak, we may advise a setting to increase testing for staff and students of secondary age and above for a period of time.

Please continue to maintain appropriate cleaning regimes – see our general advice on key prevention measures below.

Please refer to updated guidance for SEND and specialist settings: additional COVID-19 operational guidance for further detail.

Updates for Early Years and Childcare providers:

Reporting COVID-19 cases to Ofsted:

From 21 February 2022, you are no longer required to notify Ofsted, or the childminder agency with which you are registered, of any COVID-19 cases in the setting, whether that is of a child or staff member.

Stepping measures up and down

You should continue to have contingency plans outlining how you would operate if you needed to take extra measures in exceptional circumstances. If you are considering stepping up measures, please contact us at dph@northyorks.gov.uk for advice and support.

Tracing close contacts and self-isolation:

<u>Public health advice for People with COVID-19</u> and their contacts changed from 24 February. Contacts are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and contact tracing has ended.

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test

Children and staff, including children aged 0 to 4 years, should return to the setting as soon as they can, in line with updated guidance for <u>People with COVID-19</u> and their contacts.

Please continue to maintain appropriate cleaning regimes – see our general advice on key prevention measures below.

Please refer to updated guidance for Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic for further detail.

NYCC general advice on key prevention measures

Infection prevention and control measures

Hand hygiene

- Settings should encourage regular hand hygiene, particularly before meals and after using the bathroom. Settings should display appropriate signage encouraging effective handwashing.
- Supervision should be in place to support pupils with handwashing where needed.
- Washing your hands with running water and soap is recommended. Use paper towels (or hand driers where there is limited particle spread). Avoid shared towels.
- Hand sanitiser should be available in classrooms, eating areas and public places (e.g. reception)
- Hand sanitiser points should be checked regularly and stock replenished where necessary.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth if hands have not been washed.
- Respiratory hygiene is also important emphasise 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. Provision of sufficient waste bins that are emptied regularly.
- Ensure visitors and contractors also comply with hand/respiratory hygiene and other measures (e.g. appropriate distancing) whilst on site.

Cleaning

- Regular cleaning schedules, with particular focus on cleaning frequently touched areas e.g. light switches, handrails, door handles, taps
- Have cleaning wipes available in classrooms so that individuals are able to clean e.g. shared equipment between users. Similar for staff rooms/shared office spaces and cleaning of kettles/photocopiers/vending machines etc.
- Reducing clutter and removing difficult to clean items
- Surfaces that are visibly dirty should be cleaned prior to disinfection.

Ventilation

- All spaces should be risk-assessed to ensure ventilation is adequate. Where schools have access to CO2 monitors, these should be used to identify areas of poor ventilation.
- Consider the appropriateness of spaces for the activities they are being used for e.g. perform higher risk activities (singing etc.) in large spaces or outside.
- Air conditioning units should be set to 'fresh air' not 'recirculating'.
- Opening windows and doors (balanced with the need to maintain a comfortable temperature if unable to have them open all the time then open them for e.g. 10 minutes every hour).
- Where possible provide ventilation breaks during or between room usages.

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	 Air cleaning and filtration units can be used (where available) to supplement improved ventilation. More information on ventilation and air filtration is available from HSE: Work equipment and ventilation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic - HSE
Face coverings	Face coverings are not mandatory in educational settings but anyone (pupil or staff) who wishes to wear one can do so. No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are, or are not, wearing a face covering.
	Face coverings should continue to be worn on shared transport (school buses, train etc.) in line with wider advice on face coverings in enclosed spaces.
	North Yorkshire Public Health on behalf of the Director of Public Health may advise settings experiencing outbreaks to use face coverings as part of their responsibilities in outbreak management. Settings should ensure their contingency plans cover this possibility.
Testing	Although regular twice-weekly testing for most education settings formally ended on 21 st February (except SEND settings – see above), until 1 st April LFD tests are still accessible for individuals to order through 119 or online Order coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Testing guidance for the general population on when to use LFDs is available here: Rapid lateral flow coronavirus (COVID-19) tests - NHS (www.nhs.uk).
	Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and take a PCR test. If your test is positive, you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people. You may choose to take an LFD test from 5 days after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms) followed by another LFD test the next day. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, the risk that you are still infectious is much lower and you can safely return to your normal routine.
	From 24 th February close contacts are no longer required to isolate or take daily LFD tests for 7 days. However, non-household contacts should follow the national guidance on staying safe and preventing spread <u>Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u> . This guidance notes that you may wish to take rapid lateral flow tests as a way to manage your personal risk and the risk to those around you. This may be particularly important before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19.
	LFD kits can be accessed at local pharmacies or ordered through 119/online at Order coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) until 1st April.

	N.B. Anyone who has tested positive on a PCR in the last 90 days does not have to do a repeat PCR test unless they become symptomatic.
Contact tracing	Contact Tracing officially ended on 24 th February 2022. From this point, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will not be contacted directly to ask who their close contacts are. However, individuals who have tested positive are advised to let people who they have been in contact with know about their positive result so they can follow the guidance for close contacts: COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
	Although there is no expectation that education settings undertake contact tracing, good practice would be to continue to inform pupils and staff who are most likely to have been contacts (for example the class, the bus, football team, friendship group) that there has been a confirmed case in the school community and their child may have been exposed, so they should be vigilant for signs of illness and seek a PCR test if any symptoms develop (see suggested warn & inform letter).
Social distancing	Educational settings are advised to keep measures in place where it does not cause disruption to regular activities. This could include staggered breaks, minimising numbers for in-person meetings/training sessions or holding online where possible, maintaining messages about 'respectful space' etc.
	Continue to review pinch points and areas of congestion and particularly target these e.g. one-way systems, improved ventilation, staggered use, tackling congestion at school gates etc.
	Risk assess occasions where large numbers of people mix (e.g. school assemblies, parent's evenings) and consider staggered timings, virtual events etc. where it is not possible to mitigate risks fully (e.g. improving ventilation).
Communications	General communications to parents setting out measures introduced and importance of following guidance (e.g. stay at home/get test if symptomatic)
	If you are aware of an increased number of positive cases in a particular cohort (such as a sports team), you may want to send the amended 'warn and inform' letter to parents of that cohort—see suggested wording below.
Attendance	All pupils should be encouraged to attend school (unless they have symptoms of COVID/have tested positive, or for other suitable non-COVID reason). Disruption to face-to-face education can have significant negative impacts, including on educational attainment, social behaviours and physical and mental health.

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should go home to isolate and get a PCR test as soon as possible. Schools should have a risk assessment in place covering how/where to manage potentially infectious individuals until they can be transported home (which should be by parent/guardian rather than by school transport).

• If a pupil is awaiting collection, they should be left in a room on their own if possible and safe to do so. A window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if possible. Any rooms they use should be cleaned after they have left.

The legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test has been removed; however, guidance for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 remains to stay at home and to avoid contact with others. After 5 days, they may choose to take a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test followed by another the next day - if both are negative, and they do not have a temperature, they can safely return to their normal routine. Those who test positive should avoid contact with anyone in an at risk group, including if they live in the same household. Please see UKHSA updated guidance on Covid-19: people with Covid-19 and their contacts.

NYCC guidance on additional measures for outbreaks

Should settings have increased numbers of cases with likely in-setting transmission, additional measures are advised:

Infection prevention and	Hand hygiene
control measures	 Measures as above – continue to regularly promote and make sure adequate supplies available.
	 Cleaning Increased frequency of cleaning in the affected areas and of communal areas e.g. toilets Follow guidance for cleaning areas that a symptomatic person has come into contact with, plus waste disposal advice - COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
	 Ventilation Consider additional ventilation measures if possible, both inside and also holding sessions outside if appropriate
Face coverings	Where there is a high likelihood of in-setting transmission face coverings can be re-introduced for at-risk cohort(s) in communal areas (and, exceptionally, in classrooms) for: • Staff and pupils in secondary school/college • Staff in primary schools (although any pupils who do want to wear one should be free to do so)
	This should be for the minimum number of people possible, and for a limited period of time only (until cases decline). In all cases any educational and wellbeing drawbacks in the recommended use of face coverings should be balanced with the benefits in managing COVID-19 risk.
Testing	The public health team under the Director of Public Health can advise on additional testing if required, to support other outbreak measures already in place. Please contact us via dph@northyorks.gov.uk to discuss whether testing may be appropriate, and if so for which cohorts/how often/how long for.
Social distancing	 Where clear cohorts are affected, consider need to minimise risk of transmission across the rest of the school, for example by implementing: Staggered break/mealtimes Avoid shared transport wherever possible (and wear face coverings if do need to use shared transport) Avoid other shared facilities where possible (e.g. use separate bathroom if one available)

	If any staff/pupils are at high risk of severe disease with COVID-19 or in the third trimester of pregnancy then a more cautious approach may be needed for those individuals (in line with their individual risk assessments).
Attendance	Attendance restrictions are only to be considered as a last resort if all other risk mitigations proved insufficient to prevent severe operational impacts or identified health risks of a COVID-19 outbreak.
Communications	General "warn & inform" letter advised to at-risk cohort(s)
	If cases are widespread across the setting risk assess whether to avoid non-essential school events e.g. residential visits, open days, transition/taster days, parental attendance in settings, concerts, sports fixtures etc.
	Consider re-configuration of classrooms to minimise face-to-face contact, with set seating plans to minimise number of close contacts within the classroom setting itself.
	 Avoid students in affected cohorts taking part in non-essential taster/transfer days, school trips, live performances etc. Avoid taking part in higher risk activities e.g. singing, close contact sports/performance arts, residential trips Consider arriving at school in PE kit on days where PE lessons occur to minimise close contact in changing rooms

General "Warn and inform" letter (suggested wording)

I am writing to let you know we are aware of a [number of] confirmed case[s] of COVID-19 within the school community, and your child may have had contact with them during their infectious period.

Since 24th February 2022, close contacts are no longer required to undertake daily LFD testing for 7 days (or isolate if an unvaccinated adult). Instead, you are advised to carefully follow the general guidance <u>Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u> to limit the risk of further spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Getting vaccinated (as appropriate according to age)
- Letting fresh air in if you meet with others indoors, or meeting outside where possible
- Continuing to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces, especially where you come into contact with people you do not usually meet
- Staying at home if you are unwell
- Taking a test if you have COVID-19 symptoms, and staying at home and avoiding contact with other people if you test positive
- Continuing to use lateral flow tests as a way to manage your personal risk and the risk to those around you. This may be particularly important before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19
- Washing your hands regularly and following advice to 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it'

There is additional guidance for contacts who live in the same household or who have stayed overnight in the same house as someone who has tested positive with COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and take a PCR test (until 1st April 2022 you can continue to order PCR tests from https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

However, other commonly reported symptoms of recent variants include headache, sore throat, tiredness, and cold-like symptoms, so please be aware of these as well and stay at home and seek further testing if you are in any doubt.

A list of local testing facilities and opening times is available here: https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-testing

Useful links

Education guidance

Schools COVID-19 Operational Guidance - Schools COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Education Contingency Framework Contingency framework: education and childcare settings (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Early years & childcare Guidance – Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Further Education Operational Guidance – Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Special Schools Operational Guidance – SEND and specialist settings: additional COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Vaccination guidance for schools – COVID-19 vaccination programme for children and young people: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Use of PPE in education and childcare – Use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

After school/out of school settings – <u>COVID-19</u>: <u>Actions for out-of-school settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u>

Transport to schools/colleges guidance – Dedicated transport to schools and colleges COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

General COVID-19 guidance

COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts - COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Cleaning non-healthcare settings – <u>COVID-19</u>: cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home - <u>GOV.UK</u> (www.gov.uk)

Guidance for pregnant employees - Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

How to stay safe and help prevent the spread of coronavirus – Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)