

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Guidance for schools

Where can I find details of the Covid-19 guidance for schools?

The links below provide details of the guidance as follows:

Guidance for full opening schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Actions for schools during coronavirus outbreak

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): cleaning in non-healthcare settings

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Covid-19 Symptoms, Symptomatic & Positive Result

What are Covid-19 symptoms?

The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:

- a new continuous cough and/or
- fever (temperature of 37.8 degrees or higher)
- loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

Children may also display gastrointestinal symptoms.

Please see link for symptoms:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

What is the mode of transmission?

Covid-19 is passed from person to person mainly by large respiratory droplets and direct contact (close unprotected contact, usually less than one metre). These droplets can be directly inhaled by the person, or can land on surfaces which another person may touch which can lead to infection if they then touch their nose, mouth or eyes.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period (i.e. time between exposure to the virus and developing symptoms) is between 1 and 14 days (median 5 days).

When is a person infectious?

A person is thought to be infectious 48 hours before symptoms appear, and up to seven days after they start displaying symptoms.

Are children at risk of infection?

Children of all ages can catch the infection but children make up a very small proportion of Covid-19 cases with about 1% of confirmed cases in England aged under 19 years. Children also have a much lower risk of developing symptoms or severe disease.

Can children pass on the infection?

There is some uncertainty about how much asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic children transmit the disease but the evidence so far from a number of studies suggests children are less likely to pass it on and do not appear to play a major role in transmission. Most children with Covid-19 have caught the infection from adults and not the reverse. This is unlike flu.

What should I do if a staff member or child has symptoms?

The staff member/child should self-isolate immediately for 10 days and book a test. Please refer to the Covid-19 flowchart.

Who should I notify if a staff member or child is positive with Covid-19?

If you have a single case of Covid please fill out the entire Schools Checklist (all 5 pages) and send it to Birmingham City Council Public Health Team by emailing contacttracing@birmingham.gov.uk. Please do NOT contact Public Health England.

If you have two or more confirmed cases of Covid-19 notify Public Health England on 0344 2253560 option 0 option 2 and they will ask you to complete the checklist.

Who is considered a contact in a school setting?

A person who wore appropriate PPE or maintained appropriate social distancing (over 2 metres) would not be classed as a contact.

A contact is defined as a person who has had contact (see below) at any time from 48 hours before onset of symptoms (or test if asymptomatic) to 10 days after onset of symptoms (or test)

- A person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre) with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, including:
 - Being coughed on, or
 - Having a face-to-face conversation, or
 - Having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - Any contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- A person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for coronavirus for more than 15 minutes
- A person who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 or in a large vehicle near someone who has tested positive for Covid-19.
- People who spend significant time in the same household as a person who has tested positive for Covid-19.

If setting has been notified of symptomatic pupil/staff member, should the rest of the class/bubble be excluded?

No, the class/bubble should continue to attend school as normal. The symptomatic case should stay at home and follow the stay at home guidance: the staff member/child's parents encouraged to get tested. Any siblings of the child attending the setting/staff's household member should self-isolate for 14 days

Should a child/staff member come to school if a member of their household is unwell?

No. If a member of the child's/staff member's household is unwell with COVID-19 symptoms then the child/staff member should isolate for 14 days starting from the day the household member(s) became ill. If the child subsequently develops symptoms then they should isolate for 10 days from the date they developed symptoms. See [Stay-at-home-guidance](#). The

household member(s) should be tested within 5 days of symptom onset. If all symptomatic household members test negative, the child/staff member can return to work.

If a bubble has been excluded, should their siblings self-isolate for 14 days with the bubble?

No. Siblings of a bubble are contacts of a contacts therefore, they do not need to self-isolate unless their sibling develops symptoms.

The household of the confirmed case of Covid-19 should have isolated when the person showed symptoms.

If a child has COVID-19 symptoms, gets tested and tests negative, can they return to school even if they still have symptoms?

If the child is NOT a known contact of a confirmed case the child can return to school if the result is negative, provided they feel well and they have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If the child is a contact of a confirmed case, they must stay off school for the 14 day isolation period, even if they test negative. This is because they can develop the infection at any point within the 14 days (the incubation period for COVID-19), so if a child tests negative on day 3 they may still go on to develop the infection.

If a child who was a contact of a confirmed case tests negative, can they return to school?

No, the child should complete 14 days of isolation.

If a child/staff member has a temperature which disappeared and 111 informed the parent that they do not have Covid-19 symptoms, can the child/staff member return to the setting?

No, if the child/staff member has had a temperature they must not return to the setting until they complete the 10 days self-isolation. After the 10 days self-isolation has completed then they can only return to the setting if they have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If a child/staff member has a cold and 111 informed the parent that they do not have Covid-19 symptoms, can the child/staff member return to the setting?

Please refer to the symptoms of Covid-19 above. If the child has had any of the Covid-19 symptoms they must book a test, failing which they will have to self-isolate for 10 days before they return to the setting.

If I get confirmed cases does the school need to close?

The school does not need to close on public health grounds. Schools will generally only need to close if they have staff shortages due to illness or being identified as contacts. It is expected that only the class of a confirmed case will need to be excluded. If there are a number of confirmed cases across different classes and year groups at the same time then the school may be advised to close by the Health Protection Team in consultation with other partners.

What happens if the household member of a child/Staff member who attends school tests positive or is symptomatic?

The child should complete 14 days of isolation. No further action at the school is required. The bubble/close contacts of the child/staff member are not required to isolate or excluded from school UNLESS the child/staff member *tests positive* and they had attended the school in the 48 hours prior to developing symptoms. In this event, close contacts will be identified and advised regarding self-isolation.

What happens if a staff member/child has Covid-19 symptoms but feels well the next day and is unable to qualify for a Covid-19 test. Can the staff member/child return to school and can their household end their 14 day isolation?

The child/staff member should complete the 10 day self-isolation and the household should self-isolate for 14 days because they are contacts of the child/staff member. If the symptoms disappear and 119 confirmed that they do not qualify for a Covid-19 test then they should book a test through the website for the entire household.

The child/staff member and their household can only return to work/school if they have a negative test and they feel well and have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If they are unable to obtain a test then they should complete the isolation period of 10 days and 14 days for the household to be on the safe side.

To book a test online please select the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Should close contacts of a positive case get tested?

No, they are not required to get tested unless they develop symptoms during the 14 days of isolation.

Should educational settings ask parents to report pupils' temperatures at the start of each day?

Parents, carers and settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning. Routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

Should a child or staff member be excluded from the setting if they have recently been abroad?

Please review the government guidance about travel corridors as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

The link above will provide the answers regarding returning from countries and whether a child or staff member must self-isolate for 14 days upon their return.

Covid-19 Whistleblowing Telephone Number

What if the education setting is not adhering to the guidance?

You can contact Birmingham City Council whistleblowing on 0121 303 1116 and report any concerns you have. All calls are anonymous.

Alternatively, you can notify Birmingham City Council Public Health by email using the following email address:

BCCCOVID19@birmingham.gov.uk

Testing

How can a parent/staff member arrange testing?

The parent can arrange for any child to be tested via [NHS UK](#) or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone if they do not have internet access. A staff member can also arrange for a test using the same number above.

What if a parent refuses to get their child tested?

You should advise the parent to get their child tested if they have Covid-19 symptoms. Unfortunately, a test is not compulsory however, it is advised in order to ascertain whether the child has Covid-19 symptoms and in order to establish whether the entire bubble should self-isolate for 14 days.

If a child gets tested and it is negative the child can return to school before 10 day isolation period ends only if they feel well and they do not have a fever for 48 hours

If a child does not get tested, they will have to remain at home for 10 days and you should notify Birmingham City Council Public Health by emailing BCCCOVID19@birmingham.gov.uk and they can arrange for a test to be hand delivered to the parent.

Will the school be informed of any test results?

The school will be informed if a child or staff member tests positive as part of NHS Test and Trace. The school will not be informed of any negative results.

Can the school request to see negative test results before allowing pupils back in school?

No. Government advice states that schools “should not request evidence of negative results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation”

How can a staff member get tested?

All education and childcare workers are considered essential workers and can apply for a test if they are symptomatic via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-workers>.

Can they be tested if they do not have symptoms?

In general, only people displaying symptoms are eligible to be tested. However, people may be eligible for testing if the following applies:

- your local council has asked you to take a test
- you live in England and are told to take a test before you go into hospital, for example, for surgery
- you’re taking part in a government pilot project

Please click on link for further guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/testing-for-coronavirus>

If a staff member was confirmed positive or a contact of a positive case, should they request a test after the isolation period has ended and only return to the setting if the test is negative?

If a staff member or child has been tested for Covid-19 and they are confirmed positive they will have to self-isolate for 10 days. If a staff member/child is a contact of a positive case they will have to self-isolate for 14 days.

There is no requirement for a staff member/child to be re-tested after the isolation period has ended in order to return to the setting. But the staff member/child should only return to the setting if they feel well and they have not had a fever for 48 hours.

Covid-19 can develop at any time within the 14-day isolation period for contacts therefore, it is crucial that the contact self-isolates for the duration. A person is thought to be infectious 48 hours before symptoms appear and up to seven days after they start displaying symptoms. If a person has completed their 14-day self-isolation then they should no longer be infectious however, you should remind staff members to socially distance at all time and continue to wash their hands regularly.

Will antibody testing be available to school staff in Birmingham?

There is currently no antibody testing for school staff. Please see link to government guidance on antibody testing for school staff:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-antibody-tests/coronavirus-covid-19-antibody-tests#who-is-eligible-for-an-antibody-test>

How can we access the home testing kits for schools mentioned in the Government guidance for full opening of schools?

From 26 August, all schools and FE providers will receive an initial supply of 10 home test kits. Home test kits should only be offered to individuals in the exceptional circumstance that you believe an individual may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere. The best and fastest way for students or staff to access a test is to visit a testing site.

This guidance is intended to support schools and FE providers in offering home test kits. It applies to all mainstream, special, alternative provision and FE providers. Further guidance is provided on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers>

Cleaning

What additional cleaning is necessary following a symptomatic or confirmed case?

All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, including:

- objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells

Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings, following one of the options below:

- use either a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine or
- a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 parts per million available chlorine). Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants or
- if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses

Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning.

- Wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning.
- Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as bathrooms, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles.
- If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, use protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as wearing gloves and an apron.
- Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned by washing should be disposed of.
- All the disposable materials should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, and after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning.

[Do toilets need to be cleaned after every use?](#)

Toilets are frequently touched surfaces, so they need to be cleaned frequently throughout the day, but not after every use (except if used by a symptomatic person whilst waiting to go home).

Increase the frequency of cleaning toilets to at least five times a day:

- Before school starts
- After morning break
- After lunch break
- After afternoon break
- At the end of the day

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Why are staff and pupils advised not to wear PPE in school?

Transmission of Covid-19 is usually through droplets; the mainstay of control measures are as follows for the risk to be minimal:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does are excluded from the educational setting;
- Cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products because high contact surfaces will present the main risk in terms of indirect transmission
- Minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times)

Why are face coverings not advised in Education settings?

- There is no evidence of benefit in an Education setting
- Can't be managed by many children under the age of 11
- Negative impact on communication thus education

It is recognised that evidence may change especially for Secondary school children and the advice remains under constant review.

Government advised in the media on 25/08/20 that secondary school pupils can wear face mask in communal areas for areas in local lockdown;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-face-coverings-in-schools>

No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering and education settings should take steps to have a small contingency supply available to meet the needs of the students in case they forgot to bring face mask or if its soiled and unsafe to use.

High Risk Groups

Can our pregnant members of staff work? What if staff have pregnant household members?

Pregnant women are currently advised to work from home where possible. Education and childcare settings should endeavour to support this, for example, by asking staff to support remote education, carry out lesson planning or other roles which can be done from home.

If they cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible, although the individual may choose to take on a role that does not allow for this distance if they prefer to do so. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, settings must carefully assess and discuss with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

If a staff member lives with someone who is pregnant, they can work.

Should children or staff who are shielding (classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions) attend school?

Current Government guidance is advising that you do not need to shield at the moment because coronavirus (COVID-19) disease levels in the community have fallen since the peak of the pandemic in England. The advice for people who were shielding is now the same as the advice for those who did not have to shield:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-young-people-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-most-likely-to-become-unwell-if-they-catch-coronavirus>

(updated 18th August 2020). This means:

- All pupils should return to school from the beginning of the autumn term. This applies whatever your family circumstances or year group
- you can go to work if the workplace is COVID-secure, but should carry on working from home wherever possible

Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Should children or staff who have family in the shielding group be coming to school/work?

Yes, all pupils/staff including those who have household members in the shielding group are expected to return to school at the beginning of the autumn term

Attendance

Should I penalise pupils for non-attendance?

School attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply.

You should note however that a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised and it is expected that schools should be able to immediately offer them access to remote education.

Supply Staff

Can I use supply staff?

Government guidance states schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other staff during the pandemic.

Can supply staff move between settings?

Yes, however, school leaders will need to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the setting and ensure the individuals comply with the settings arrangement of managing and minimising risks.

Educational Visits

Can we go on Educational visits?

Schools can go on non-overnight domestic Educational visits from the start of the autumn term and they should be done in line with protective measures. A thorough and full risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure the trip/visit can be done safely.

Schools should consider the Health and Safety on Educational visits guidance when planning visits:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

Do you have any school information leaflets/public health information in additional languages for our school community to use please?

Covid-19 related information in various languages can be found at the link below:

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/#>

New restrictions from 15/09/2020

Birmingham have implemented some restrictions, what the details of the restrictions and when do they commence?

The restrictions apply to Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull which came into force on 15 September 2020. Specific details of the restrictions are provided on the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/birmingham-sandwell-and-solihull-local-restrictions?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

Where can I find more information about the restrictions?

There is a list of frequently asked questions on the following link:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50231/coronavirus_covid-19/2254/new_coronavirus_restrictions_in_birmingham_%E2%80%93_faqs?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=



Further Support and Guidance

Where can I find updates regarding Covid-19?

You can view the school's noticeboard for updated information, the link is as follows:

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/blog/school-nb>

Who can I contact for further support and guidance?

If you have any further queries you can contact Birmingham City Council Public Health Team by emailing BCCCOVID19@birmingham.gov.uk. The email is checked throughout the day and your queries will be answered within 48 hours.