

Cumbria County Council: Public Health Advice to education and childcare settings – managing cases of respiratory illness (including COVID-19)

Actions to be considered when in-setting transmission is suspected. August 2022

Threshold Level	SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES: Actions to consider for affected YEAR groups (or sub-groups of year groups if close contact is restricted) ACTIONS CAN ONLY BE ADVISED (CANNOT BE MANDATED)
<p><u>BASELINE</u></p> <p>Number of cases below the threshold for Level 1</p>	<p>Ensure routine control measures are in place for all staff and children/students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination. Encourage vaccination against COVID-19 for those who are eligible. • Hand hygiene. Wash hands after coughing, sneezing and blowing the nose, after using the toilet, before eating or handling food, after playtime and after touching animals. Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels should be available to support this. • Respiratory hygiene. Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing and dispose of used tissue in 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. • Regular routine cleaning. Including toys, equipment, and frequently touched surfaces (such as door handles) • Ventilation. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated (balancing the need for ventilation with maintaining a comfortable temperature). • Actions for people testing positive for COVID-19. Staff who test positive should be encouraged to stay at home for five days after the day they took the test. Children and young people under the age of 18 who test positive should be encouraged to stay at home for three days. They can return to the setting after this period if they do not have a high temperature and feel well enough to do so. Note that some people will be infectious for 10 days. If possible, those who test positive should therefore avoid close contact with people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19 for 10 days after the day they took their test. A template letter is available to send to the parent/ carer of a child who has tested positive. The national guidance can be found here. • Actions for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19. Children/students and staff who have symptoms of a respiratory infection and are unwell or have a high temperature should stay at home, where they can. They can go back to school, college or childcare when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend. People with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education setting. Anyone with respiratory symptoms should be encouraged to practice respiratory hygiene. They should also try to avoid close contact with people who may be at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if they are infected with COVID-19 or other respiratory infections. A template letter is available to send to the parent/ carer of a child who has symptoms. The national guidance can be found here. <p>Settings can discuss with Education IPC team for advice and support if necessary. The team can support with risk assessment and provide advice regarding escalation to UKHSA. Email: educationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk.</p>
<p><u>LEVEL 1</u></p> <p>Five children, pupils, students, or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 OR are absent from the setting due to respiratory symptoms within a 10-day period Or 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 OR are absent from the setting due to respiratory symptoms within a 10-day period.</p> <p>Settings that operate with 20 or fewer children, pupils, students and staff at any one time: 2 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 OR are absent from the setting due to respiratory symptoms within a 10-day period.</p>	<p><u>Watchful waiting?</u> If numbers are low – watchful waiting can be considered – discussion between Education IPC team and setting. If agreed, ensure routine control measures are in place (as described above)</p> <p><u>Strengthened system of controls (see checklist in Appendix 1) – including:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cleaning and hygiene • Increased ventilation • Review risk assessments for clinically extremely vulnerable and pregnant staff • Let key workers know if the child they are visiting is in a class that currently has multiple suspected/confirmed cases of COVID-19 • Restrict mixing of affected groups/ classes where possible <p><u>Strengthened communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional warn and inform letter to send to parents and carers to inform them of cases/ suspected cases within the setting or affected group(s) <p>Settings can discuss with Education IPC team for advice and support as necessary. The team can support with risk assessment and provide advice regarding escalation to UKHSA for further outbreak management support. Email: educationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk.</p> <p>National guidance suggests escalation to UKHSA if there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A higher than previously experienced and/or rapidly increasing number of staff or student absences due to acute respiratory infection • Evidence of severe disease due to an infection, for example if a student, child or staff member is admitted to hospital <p>If safe staffing levels cannot be maintained, settings may consider whether affected class or group should move to online learning for as short a period of time as possible, but with on-site provision remaining for vulnerable children and key worker children. This is purely optional but can be considered as part of the risk assessment process.</p>

ANY ADDITIONAL MEASURES INTRODUCED SHOULD BE REVIEWED AFTER 2 WEEKS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED AND STEPPED DOWN IF IN-SETTING TRANSMISSION HAS STOPPED

Cleaning:

- Increase cleaning of frequently touched areas, such as doors, handrails and bathrooms
- Increase cleaning of any shared equipment, such as sports, science and music equipment. Where possible allocate dedicated resources to each child (e.g., iPads, books, stationary)
- Consider wiping down desks and chairs after use by pupils / students in the affected classes (if other groups of children / young people use the same room)

Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

- Encourage all staff and children / students to wash their hands more often for at least 20 seconds, and especially after using the toilet, before eating or preparing food, and after using shared equipment. NB: Hand sanitiser does not kill norovirus, so if there are cases of vomiting or diarrhoea in the setting, hand washing (rather than hand sanitiser) should be used where possible
- Staff could consider wearing a face covering if providing direct care to a child with respiratory symptoms (including COVID-19) with a high temperature who is waiting to be collected
- Have tissues available in every room and dispose of used tissues immediately in a bin
- Encourage good respiratory hygiene

Ventilation:

- Keep windows open to allow fresh air to circulate where possible. In warmer weather, keep windows fully open. In colder weather, keep windows partially open where you can. If it is too cold to keep the windows open, try and move staff and children to another room every couple of hours, so the windows can be opened regularly, and the air refreshed.
- Let parents know that the rooms may be cooler than normal and ask them to ensure children and staff bring warm clothes with them.
- Where reasonable, maximise the time spent outdoors or in better ventilated parts of the building (avoid long periods of time in small, hot, stuffy rooms).
- Avoid / minimise activities indoors that encourage singing, playing wind instruments, shouting or intense exercise – these activities increase the risk of aerosol transmission

Restrict mixing where possible if in outbreak

- Limit the mixing of affected groups / classes with other groups of children in the setting where possible
- Exclude affected classes / groups from any gatherings that encourage close mixing with other classes / groups e.g., collective worship, assemblies, performances (unless they can be carried out outdoors)
- Try and cohort staff with specific groups of children
- Any planned trips, transition visits, open days or non-essential activities that bring visitors into the setting should be risk assessed and measures put in place to mitigate the risks of further transmission. Consider postponement depending on the situation and risk assessment.
- If there are multiple sites, staff working at a setting affected by an outbreak should not work across different sites at the same time

Clinically extremely vulnerable staff / pregnant staff

- If you have staff who are identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable or pregnant who work in any of the rooms / with groups affected by multiple positive cases, please ensure you discuss any possible risks with them and review any individual risk assessments you have in place for that staff member. Consider any additional measures to protect them e.g., can they wear a face covering whilst in the setting? Can they temporarily switch roles so they can maintain 2 metres distance from others more easily?
- Specific guidance can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk>

Transport

- If you have children travelling on school transport who are close contacts in a class / group affected by multiple positive cases, consider letting your transport operator know – they can take extra precautions like ensuring buses are well ventilated. They may also have vulnerable staff they need to review risk assessments for.

Extra information and booklets: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19>

If a significant outbreak occurs and Level 1 measures are not breaking the chain of transmission, the Director of Public Health can work with UKHSA (UK Health Security Agency – previously known as ‘PHE’) and the setting to determine if other infection prevention and control measures are required.