

Health Protection Hub

Infection Control Information for Schools

With the return to school for the autumn term, and in anticipation of the customary outbreaks of respiratory illnesses, D&V and other childhood illnesses when the children all get back together, we felt it timely to provide you with information on the infection control measures and resources at your disposal.

We've already received queries from educational settings about Mpox (monkeypox) given the publicity about the new strain in Africa. The risk at this point is low (especially from the new variant). Anyone returning from an affected country should be vigilant for symptoms for 3 weeks after return. If they do develop symptoms they should go home, call 111 and let their staff know the travel history. Please let us in the Hub know. The NHS website has more information on symptoms: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mpox/>

National and T&W guidance on COVID-19 has remained unchanged.

As always, feel free to contact us at the Health Protection Hub at: HealthProtectionHub@telford.gov.uk or call 019542 381800 if you need any information or advice.

Advice for parents

You may wish to share the text below with parents:

We've been asked by the Health Protection Hub to share some information with you on health-related issues – when your child should and shouldn't attend school and how best to keep them healthy.

The NHS has some good information for you to look at here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

It's fine to send your child to school or nursery with a minor [cough](#) or [common cold](#) if they are otherwise well and do not have a high temperature. But if your child has a fever, they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better, and the fever has resolved.

If they have [diarrhoea and/or vomiting](#), they should stay home for at least 48 hours after the last episode.

It is no longer recommended that children and young people are routinely tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional. But if your child has tested positive for COVID-19, they should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 3 days after the day they took the test. Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal.

Vaccines provide the best protection against many common but potentially serious illnesses. Over the past decade, fewer children are getting routine vaccines, putting them at risk of serious disease. This leaves schools vulnerable to outbreaks and increases pressure on the NHS. If your child is up to date with their [NHS vaccination schedule](#), they will already be protected against diseases like whooping cough, measles, mumps and rubella throughout their school career, as most provide lifelong immunity. Unvaccinated children are at higher risk of contracting these illnesses and having more

severe symptoms than vaccinated classmates. They can also spread diseases to others. Check your child's red book or contact your GP surgery to ensure they are up to date on all vaccines.

Good hygiene also stops infections from spreading, which means less disrupted learning time. You can help by teaching your child to wash hands properly for 20 seconds, use tissues for coughs and sneezes, and stay away from others when sick. Letting in fresh air can also reduce the spread of airborne viruses.

How to prevent/mitigate against infections

Exclusions

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 in the [Exclusions table](#)

Some people will still have access to tests for COVID-19; if they do test positive the exclusion periods are 3 days from date of test for children and 5 days for adults (over 18), providing the person is well enough and does not have a raised temperature. They should also avoid contact with people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19, especially [those whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination](#), for 10 days after the day they took their test.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Childhood Immunisations

Here are links to guides on what immunisations children should've had at various ages, which you may wish to share with parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/routine-childhood-immunisation-schedule/routine-childhood-immunisations-from-february-2022-born-on-or-after-1-january-2020>

A guide to share with migrant families, noting that vaccination is free in the UK:

[Moved to the UK: Get up-to-date with your vaccinations 2019206 English \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Resources

The best overall resource is [Health protection in education and childcare settings](#)

This 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.

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.

Health Protection Hub

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