

Response to COVID-19 symptoms and cases – Coventry Schools

Context and background

This document sets out the actions that schools and others should take where members of the school community have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. This document is informed by the [DfE Guidance for full opening: schools \(Published 2 July 2020\)](#) - which is aimed at schools full opening in the autumn term (2020). This document sits within the context of the [Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Outbreak Control Plan](#)

It sets out four sets of scenarios:

- Scenario A: Where one person within a school community has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- Scenario B: Where two or more people within a school community have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- Scenario C: Geographical community coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- Scenario D: Coventry-wide coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

This published version is correct as of 14th July 2020. Further updates and versions will follow as appropriate.

Scenario A: Where one person within a school community has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Staying away from school

Any member of the school community (pupils, staff and other adults) should not come into school if they:

- Have [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#).
- Have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 7 days.
- Are in a household (or support bubble) with individuals who have been tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 14 days.
- Have been contacted through the NHS Test and Trace programme and been advised to stay at home.

Where a member of the school community has symptoms developed whilst in school

The **school** should take the following actions:

- Send the person home if they develop a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or have a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).
- Contact the parents or carers of the children/young person affected to arrange for them to be collected.
- If the situation is an emergency and the individual is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk call 999.
- If you are unclear of what to do regarding symptoms, call 111 or access the [on-line 111 Coronavirus advice service](#).
- Whilst the child/young person is awaiting collection, take them to a room where they can be isolated, ideally behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Open a window for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, take them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.
- Take similar, appropriate action for an adult who becomes unwell
- If more than one person develops symptoms, they should be isolated separately
- If the individual with symptoms needs to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom (if possible). Clean and disinfect the bathroom using

a detergent followed by a disinfectant (with at least 1,000 ppm chlorine) before it is used by anyone else.

- Make sure that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is worn by staff caring for any individual with symptoms while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) guidance.
- Inform the individual and their parent/guardian (for children and young people) that a COVID-19 test must be booked immediately by phoning 119 or through the [on-line portal](#), and that they must notify the school of the outcome of the tests immediately.
- Notify the Local Authority as the local Single Point of Contact (SPOC) by emailing Covid19testing@Coventry.gov.uk
- Report the case to **Health Protection Team in Public Health England** by phoning 0344 225 3560 (option 0 option 2) or use the [on-line reporting system](#). Information is available on the [current case definition](#)

- Where one person is showing symptoms, no immediate actions need to be taken to send home any other members of the school community at this stage. **Immediate actions are required if the individual tests positive for Covid-19.**
- Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms (whilst wearing PPE and have managed to maintain 2m social distancing whilst providing care) and any pupils who have been in close contact with them **do not need to go home to self-isolate:**
 - **Unless** they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test)
 - **OR** if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below),
 - **OR** they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

Cleaning

Following the identification of the person with COVID-19 symptoms, clean and disinfect:¹

- All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with, including: objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids; and
- All potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells

In addition:

- 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 (when there has been a symptomatic case in the school):
 - a) a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine or; b)
 - b) household detergent followed by disinfection (the disinfectant should have at least 1000 parts per million chlorine). Note: if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/COVID-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Waste

Any waste from possible cases and cleaning of areas where possible cases have been (including disposable cloths and tissues), should be:

- Put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. That plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied.
- Stored safely and kept away from children. Waste should not be put in communal waste areas for at least 72 hours. It can then be disposed of normally.

Infection prevention and control precautions

Infection prevention & control precautions should continue to be implemented including:

- [Good hand hygiene](#) before entering and after leaving the setting, as well as regularly throughout the day.
- Ensuring that everyone (staff and pupils) catch coughs and sneezes in tissues. If a tissue is not available, then the crook of the elbow should be used rather than hands.
- Dispose of tissues promptly in a waste bin and then perform hand hygiene.

Immediate actions to be taken by the person sent home (or who has stayed away from school)

The person sent home should:

- Follow '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)',
- [Self-isolate](#) for at least 7 days and until well (including no fever for 48 hours). The result of the test may change this isolation period a little (see below for test results)

Other members of their household (including any siblings) should:

- Self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms. The result of the test may change this isolation period a little (see below for test results)
- [Arrange to have a test](#) if they develop COVID-19 symptoms. Tests can be booked online through the [online portal](#) or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing. (Note: the [DfE Guidance for full opening: schools \(Published 2 July 2020\)](#), says that more details on new testing avenues as and when they become available will be published in the future, including schools having access to home testing kits that they can give directly to parents/carers collecting a child who has developed symptoms at school, or staff who have developed symptoms at school).

Actions following the outcome of coronavirus (COVID-19) test result

Finding out the test result

The person who has been tested (for a child/young person this will be their parent/carer) will be sent their own test results directly within 24-48 hours (which they should then communicate with the school).

Actions following a NEGATIVE test result

a) What the individual person should do

- If the person with symptoms tests negative for COVID-19, they are allowed to return to school if they are well, including not having a temperature for 48 hours AND all in their household who have COVID-19 symptoms have also tested negative. (This is important

as there remains some risk of false negatives). Their household can also stop isolating if those criteria are met.² The only exception to this is if the individual tests negative and they are a contact of a confirmed case, in which case they need to continue to self-isolate for the full 14 days, as they are a contact of a confirmed case (please see below for further detail).

b) What the school should do

- No further action is needed by the school.

Actions following a POSITIVE test result

a) What the person should do following a positive test result

- Follow the '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they are well (and have not had a high temperature for 48 hours) - note that symptoms of a cough or loss of sense of smell/taste may persist, as they can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when they first became ill.
- Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

a) What the school and the Health Protection Team should do following a positive test result

The **school** should:

- Contact the local Health Protection Team in Public Health England (on 0344 225 3560 - option 0 option 2).
- Notify the Local Authority as the local Single Point of Contact (SPOC) by emailing Covid19testing@Coventry.gov.uk.

The **Health Protection Team** will:

- Contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.
- Carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious (from 2 days before they developed symptoms and for the duration of their illness), and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.
- Work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take, including definitive advice on who must be sent home. This will be informed by the record that schools have of pupils and staff in each group and any close contact that takes place between children and staff in different groups.
- Provide a template letter to send to parents and staff if needed.

The **school** should then (based on the advice from the Health Protection Team):

- Send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:
 - Direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)

² <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/testing-and-tracing/what-your-test-result-means/>

- Proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- Travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person
- Communicate with parents/carers and staff (e.g. by letter). Do not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless it is essential to protect others.
- Note that it is recommended that schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes place between children and staff in different groups (see [section 5 of system of control](#) for more on grouping pupils). This should be a proportionate recording process. Schools do not need to ask pupils to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

b) What household members of contacts who are sent home should do

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms.

c) What others who have been asked to self-isolate should do

If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)'. Should anyone who has been asked to self-isolate become symptomatic, they should get a test, and:

- If the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- If the test result is positive, they should inform their school immediately, and must isolate for at least 7 days (and until well and have not had a high temperature for 48 hours) from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)'
- Schools should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.
- Further guidance is available on [testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Scenario B: Where two or more people in a school community have COVID-19 symptoms (an “outbreak”)

Scenario description

- This scenario is defined there are two (or more) people with either COVID-19 symptoms **and/or** who are confirmed COVID-19 cases, and who have both been in the school (on the school site) within the last 14 days. These two people could be a combination of children and/or school staff. These two people could be part of the same group (bubbles) or separate groups (bubbles) across the school. This scenario is defined as an “outbreak”.

What the school should do

The school must take the following steps at the point that the individuals become unwell. The school should not wait for any test results.

- Where the individuals are in school, support them in the way that is done for individuals (as set out earlier in this document). Note that individuals who are unwell should be isolated separately
- Report the case to **Health Protection Team in Public Health England** by phoning 0344 225 3560 (option 0 option 2) or use the [on-line reporting system](#).
- Report the outbreak immediately to the local authority using the following Single Point of Control (SPOC) email address: Covid19testing@coventry.gov.uk

What the Health Protection Team will do

The Health Protection Team will:

- Work with the school and gather information from the school to inform a risk assessment. This may involve asking the school to complete a data return and include: the set-up of the school, total number of staff and students confirmed or symptomatic, vulnerability of student population, potential number of contacts and current social distancing and IPC measures.
- Discuss how the school are implementing social distancing and infection, prevention and control (IPC) measures, and provide advice as required (relevant guidance is [here](#) and [here](#)).
- Undertake a risk assessment to consider the severity and spread of outbreak, current control measures and the wider context (including communications from the school, anxiety level amongst students, staff and families, media interest etc.).
- Inform the local authority (SPOC) by e-mail and jointly consider the need for an Outbreak Control Team (OCT). We currently have a single point of contact for this purpose, run by the Public Health Team (see above).
- Help (this may be the OCT) the school to identify contacts who need to isolate (any symptomatic contacts will be advised to access testing). In some cases, they may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – sometimes a small number, but perhaps the whole site or year group.
- Provide schools with letters to be sent to contacts and non-contacts.
- Notify the Local Authority of any COVID-19 outbreaks in school.
- May advise widespread swabbing of staff and the student population, particularly in the early stages of Test and Trace. (However, it is important to note that primarily this would be to add to the overall understanding of COVID-19 transmission rather than to inform the management of individual outbreaks. Further actions may, however, be taken on the results). Arranging this will require discussion with partners in the local system.

Potential outcomes

- School remains open (school communicates with parents, aided by letters provided by PHE). This will be the situation in the majority of cases, where schools are addressing risks and implementing controls.
- If school is a maintained school, and the risk assessment with the HPT suggests that further action may be required to control the outbreak over and above initial measures outlined above;
 - The governing body are given control of the use and occupation of premises and will make further decisions, including around closure, based upon the health and safety of pupils.
 - The Local Authority can also **direct** a schools' closure on the grounds of health and safety, if required, or can also apply for a court order to close the school.
 - The Secretary of State can direct school closure if required.
- If the school is non-maintained (Trust/Academy/Free School), and the risk assessment with the HPT suggests that further action may be required to control the outbreak over and above initial measures outlined above;
 - The governors are given control of the use and occupation of premises and will make further decisions, including around closure, based upon the health and safety of pupils.
 - the Local Authority **advises** the school to close.
 - Should the school decide not to close, the Local Authority can apply to the court for an order to close the school.
 - The Secretary of State can direct school closure if required.

Scenario C: Geographical community COVID-19 outbreak

Scenario description

In this scenario, a “geographical community” is defined as a locality or neighbourhood within Coventry. Please note that these geographical communities may span administrative boundaries such as wards but may have more than one school in this area and potentially include primary and secondary schools.

The scenario would be where there are a high and increasing number of cases (i.e. the growth rate is increasing) within a defined geographical context and there are cases across more than one school. Note that thresholds for action will be defined through detailed public health risk assessment, as in any outbreak, and work with the national Joint Biosecurity Centre, who will be supporting local authorities to identify hotspots and monitor the impact of local interventions.

Actions for the school

Head teachers in the geographical area would work collaboratively with the HPT/OCT to ensure all key infection control actions were being taken, with regard to organisation measures to support social distancing, as well as handwashing and cleaning.

Actions for others

The OCT, chaired by PHE, would require the support of local infection control and microbiology leads, school leaders, business leaders, local authority directors, working with the Joint Biosecurity Centre nationally and would follow routine outbreak management steps:

- Understand the data regarding hotspot areas and trends – analysis by time, place, person.
- Implement immediate control measures – e.g. community engagement regarding social distancing, supporting handwashing and cleaning measures, isolation of symptomatic individuals and their contacts.
- Monitor impact of control measures and evaluate hypotheses for spread.

Should routine control measures not be effective, the OCT would review the need for one or more closures (these decisions would be taken on a case by case basis with each school that has an outbreak. More widespread closure (which would be an intervention of last resort) may be necessary ultimately to contain spread. At this stage that Emergency Planning response structures within the council and with multi-agency partners as part of the West Midlands Strategic Co-ordinating Group (please see below detail re COVID-19 outbreak across Coventry) would be stood up to support management of the outbreak, and any wider “lockdown” measures that would be required.

Potential outcomes

Following the actions set out above, there could be the following outcomes (likely in combination with wider outcome for the local area)

- The LA to direct all maintained schools in the geographical community to close, based on Public Health guidance.
- The LA to advise all non-maintained schools to close in the geographical community to close, based on Public Health advice (should schools opt not close – further enforcement action will be taken).
- School(s) could remain open if the thresholds for action were not considered, by Public Health, to be met.

Scenario D: COVID-19 outbreak across Coventry

Scenario description

In this scenario, the scope would be city-wide (across all of Coventry) including all Coventry government-funded schools. The scenario would be where there are a high and increasing number of cases (i.e. the growth rate is increasing) across all of Coventry context and there are cases across several schools.

Actions for the school

Coventry schools would work collaboratively with the HPT/OCT and follow public health advice given (as for scenario C).

Actions for others

At this stage, a much wider response will be required, involving not just a local outbreak control team, but the West Midlands Strategic co-ordinating group (membership consisting of Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, NHS, PHE, Military, Utilities), which would support the mobilisation of resource to support the emergency response. An internal Strategic emergency response would also be in place to support management of the widespread increase in cases.

Potential outcomes

Following the actions set out above, there could be the following outcomes (in combination with wider outcomes for the local areas:

- The LA to direct all maintained schools close, based on Public Health guidance.
- The LA to advise all other schools to close, based on Public Health guidance. Should schools opt not close – further enforcement action (as outlined in Scenario C) will be taken.
- It should be noted that in a scenario such as the one described. closure of workplaces in the first instance etc may be more effective in reducing spread.
- School(s) could remain open if the thresholds for action were not considered, by Public Health, to be met.
- Note the Secretary of State for Education could direct a school to close temporarily.