

Staffing in schools - Absence and attendance

3 August 2023

Having lifted most restrictions and rules around Covid in February 2022, the Government issued further updates on 1 April 2022 to support its announcement on learning to live with Covid.

As a result, we have amended our staffing guidance document to reflect the current guidance and advice coming from the Government and relevant agencies.

Contents

Evidence to cover employee absence.....	1
1. Staff who are symptomatic with COVID symptoms.....	1
2. Staff who have been diagnosed with COVID 19 or who have members of their household who have been diagnosed with COVID 19	2
3. Staff whose immune system means that they are at higher risk and guidance for those previously considered to be CEV	3
4. Staff who are pregnant	4
5. Staff who have experienced a bereavement linked to Covid 19	4
6. List of key documents for schools for reference and information.....	4

Evidence to cover employee absence

Schools can request evidence from an employee to support their absence from school, much the same as they would receive a medical certificate to cover sickness absence, subject to the following:

- A consistent approach must be maintained, please do not ask some staff for evidence but not others
- Any information received must be treated in strictest confidence and not shared with other staff
- Staff should be able to produce evidence of a positive test result (LFT or PCR)

1. Staff who are symptomatic with COVID symptoms

Guidance

If staff have symptoms of COVID-19 or another respiratory illness (see list of symptoms below), have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, they are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people until they no longer have a high temperature or they no longer feel unwell.

If they consider that they have symptoms of Covid and can access a test for Covid, they should do so and follow the guidance in section 2 below if they test positive. They should notify their school of any test result.

If they test negative, they can return to school if they no longer have a high temperature or feel unwell.

Covid and other respiratory symptoms:

- continuous cough,
- high temperature, fever, or chills,
- loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell,
- shortness of breath,
- unexplained tiredness, lack of energy,
- muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise,
- not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry,
- headache that is unusual or longer lasting than usual,
- sore throat, stuffy or runny nose,
- diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick

NHS Covid symptoms list [Symptoms of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/)

Staff who are symptomatic should not be at school pending the outcome of a test result or whilst they have a high temperature or feel unwell.

Comments

Enter details of any absence on ITrent system or your own HR system. When or if the member of staff feels well during this period, then they can work from home.

If staff member tests positive, follow guidance for category 2 below.

Please also refer to the following scenarios

[Staff Covid-19 infection scenarios | Ealing Grid for Learning \(egfl.org.uk\)](https://www.egfl.org.uk/staff-covid-19-infection-scenarios/)

Staff who have household members who are symptomatic can advise them to follow the guidance

[People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19)

2. Staff who are diagnosed with COVID 19 or who have members of their household who have been diagnosed with COVID 19

Guidance

If staff test positive for covid 19 they should stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

They should notify the school of their positive test result and the date it was taken.

Enter details of absence on ITrent system or your own HR system and the person who has tested positive should stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days after they took the test.

Please also see the infection scenarios referred to in the comment's section, which highlight that it is particularly important to avoid close contact (for 10 days after the day you took your test) with anyone who is at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if they are infected with Covid-19.

See guidance for staff who get a positive covid test result [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19)

If a household member of one of your staff tests positive for Covid 19, they can be shown the guidance in the link above about 'How to reduce the spread of infection in your household' and 'What to do if you are a close contact of someone who has had a positive test result for Covid 19'.

The guidance on how to reduce the spread of infection in your household is replicated in the comment's section.

Staff who have tested positive or are awaiting a test result should not be at school as is detailed above

Comments

Please refer to the scenarios

[Staff Covid-19 infection scenarios | Ealing Grid for Learning \(egfl.org.uk\)](#)

Staff who are well may be able/agree to work from home if that is practicable

Reduce the spread of infection in your household

While you are infectious there is a considerable risk of passing your infection to others in your household. These are [simple things you can do to help prevent the spread](#):

- try to keep your distance from people you live with
- in shared areas wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask, especially if you live with people whose [immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness, despite vaccination](#)
- ventilate rooms you have been in by opening windows and leaving them open for at least 10 minutes after you have left the room
- wash your hands regularly and cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms
- advise anyone that does need to come into your home that you have a positive test result, so they can take precautions to protect themselves such as wearing a well-fitting face covering or a surgical face mask, keeping their distance if they can, and washing their hands regularly

[GermDefence](#) is a website that can help you identify simple ways to protect yourself and others in your household from COVID-19 and other viruses. People who use GermDefence are less likely to catch flu and other infections and are less likely to spread them at home.

3. Staff whose immune system means that they are at higher risk and guidance for those previously considered to be CEV

Guidance

Please refer to [COVID-19: guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This guidance confirms which groups are at highest risk and may therefore be eligible for treatments and further vaccinations.

See also guidance for people previously considered CEV

[Guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The way that Covid treatment is accessed has now changed.

If your medical records currently show that you have a health condition which means that treatment could reduce the chance of you becoming seriously ill from Covid, this needs to be started soon after you begin to experience symptoms. You may have previously been told that the NHS would contact you about treatment once you report a positive Covid test. This is no longer the case.

1. You should keep lateral flow tests at home

You should keep lateral flow tests at home but only use them if you get symptoms. If you do not have any tests, you can order them free of charge from <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> or by calling 119. You can also now use tests purchased from a pharmacy or shop.

From 1 October 2023, the way you access tests may change. You will be able to check www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments for more information closer to the time.

2. Take a rapid lateral flow test if you get symptoms

If you have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), take a rapid lateral flow test as soon as possible, even if your symptoms are mild.

3. If you test positive for Covid:

You should **contact your GP practice, NHS 111 or hospital specialist as soon as possible after you test positive** so that they can consider referring you for an assessment for treatment.

More information is available at: www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments

Following referral from your GP, NHS 111 or your hospital specialist, our local Covid Medicines Delivery Unit (CMDU) will contact you where there will be an assessment carried out by a clinician who will advise and arrange COVID treatment if suitable.

Our North West London CMDU service is based at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital and is available for all highest risk patients, including children who are eligible for COVID treatments and registered with a GP in the North West London boroughs of Brent, Central London, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, West London.

4. Staff who are pregnant

Guidance

These links give current advice to pregnant workers about the care they will receive and if they have pregnancy related questions on Covid-19:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-women-s-health/coronavirus-covid-19-infection-in-pregnancy/coronavirus-covid-19-infection-and-pregnancy-faqs/>

[Pregnancy and coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/pregnancy)

General advice on Covid-19 can be found here [Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19)

It is still a requirement to undertake a pregnancy related risk assessment for a member of staff who informs you that she is pregnant. The link to the generic risk assessment template on the Ealing Grid for Learning is here [Pregnancy risk assessment example April 2023 .docx \(live.com\)](#)

If the pregnant member of staff has any concerns about Covid, the workplace and her pregnancy then she should raise these with you and discuss them with her clinician or medical adviser.

5. Staff who have experienced a bereavement linked to Covid 19

Guidance

Bereavement Leave Provisions to be applied.

Discuss with HR.

If your school buys into the employee assistance programme provided through workplace options, they may be able to provide support through counselling.

Comments

Please refer to guidance

<https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/how-cope-bereavement-and-grief-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

6. List of key documents for schools for reference and information

- [UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) health protection in education and childcare settings](#)
- [DfE emergency planning and response](#)
- [DfE good estate management for schools](#)
- [guidance for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19, or a positive test result for COVID-19](#)
- [living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19](#)
- [ventilation of indoor spaces to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections](#)
- [COVID-19 guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk](#)
- [Reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, in the workplace - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)