

Public health advice for special educational needs contexts regarding PPE and infection control concerns.

From a public health perspective, public health guidance on staying at home (if either a child or a staff member at the school has symptoms), and social distancing guidance, mean that there should be no-one (staff or pupil) attending schools who has either,

- Got symptoms of coronavirus – see [Guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
 - Lives with someone who has symptoms – see the same [Guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
- OR
- Belongs to a vulnerable category for coronavirus – see [Guidance on social distancing and for vulnerable people](#)

We understand concerns around the specific activities involved in caring for pupils at special educational needs schools. However, please be reassured that the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for coronavirus is only applicable to those who are caring for people with symptoms of coronavirus.

This applies even in scenarios where staff might be dealing with exposure to bodily fluids (including reflux spray when feeding children, and contact with vomit, loose stools and urine), the changing of nappies, dressings and the showering of children, and any required cleaning of such bodily fluids. Of course, the usual infection control policies should apply, however no additional protection is needed in light of the coronavirus situation. This is of course different, should a pupil or staff member develop symptoms, at which point you should carefully follow the [Guidance for educational settings](#), in particular the section titled “*What to do if someone develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) on site*”.

To provide additional reassurance, the same guidance for the use of PPE applies in healthcare settings. The NHS guidance for the use of PPE refers to situations where staff are caring for those with symptoms of coronavirus. Even then, the requirement for masks is confined to two specific scenarios. These are:

- The use of Fluid-resistant (Type IIR) surgical masks (FRSMs) to protect the wearer from the transmission of COVID-19 by respiratory droplets when working in close contact (within 1 metre) of a patient with COVID-19 symptoms.
- The use of FFP3 masks only for those undertaking Aerosol generating Procedures for symptomatic persons (as defined in https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874316/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)

This reassurance regarding PPE is reiterated in guidance available for other settings where personal care (similar to the circumstances you mention below) is provided, such as:

- [Residential care provision](#), which says that “*If neither the care worker nor the individual receiving care and support is symptomatic, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices.*”

As an important aside, public health would highlight, in the [Guidance for educational settings](#), the section titled “*Limiting spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in educational settings*” where it mentions the role that settings can play in reducing the spread of coronavirus. Staff, pupils, and families are reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds and more frequently than normal. Objects and surfaces that are touched regularly in the school should be frequently cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products.

Please be aware that public health guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) may change on a regular basis. Please refer to the DHSC / PHE web links at www.gov.uk for the most up to date guidance.

Ealing Public Health Team