

Staffing in schools - Absence and attendance

2 December 2020

Contents

Staffing in schools - Absence and attendance.....	1
Staff who are symptomatic with COVID symptoms	1
Staff who have a member of their household who is symptomatic with COVID symptoms	2
Staff who have been diagnosed with COVID 19	3
Staff who have members of their household who has been diagnosed with COVID 19	4
Staff who have been asked to self isolate through the test and trace process	5
Staff who are identified as being in the clinically extremely vulnerable & shielded group	5
Staff who have a member of their household who are identified as being on the clinically extremely vulnerable & shielded group	6
Staff who are identified as being in the clinically vulnerable group	6
Staff who have a member of their household identified as being in the clinically vulnerable group	7
Staff who are pregnant.....	7
Staff who are sick with a non COVID related illness or absence	7
Staff who are reluctant to attend work due to anxiety for their own safety related to COVID 19 and who may otherwise be at increased risk from COVID 19.....	8
Staff who will not attend work due to anxiety about transmitting the virus to clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable household members.....	8
Staff who are required to self-isolate (quarantine) after return to the UK or prior to hospital admission....	8
Staff who cannot attend work due to childcare responsibilities.....	9
Staff who do not attend work due to concerns over using public transport	9
Staff who have caring responsibilities for (a) clinically extremely vulnerable or (b) clinically vulnerable household members.....	10
Staff who have experienced a bereavement linked to COVID 19	10
Request evidence from employee.....	10

Staff who are symptomatic with COVID symptoms

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever>37.8 OR continuous cough OR loss of taste and / or smell), however mild:

- Inform school that you have developed symptoms of COVID-19
- stay at home (self-isolate) and do not leave your house for 10 days from when your symptoms started
- follow guidance for [households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
- [Get tested](#)
- Inform school of the test result

Please follow guidance on test and trace and managing a suspected or confirmed case in an education setting, see 5 below

These staff should not be at school

Enter details of 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.

Testing is now available for anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus. If the staff member is symptomatic it is vitally important that they get tested, in accordance with government guidance and advice, for their own safety, welfare and wellbeing and that of others who they may have met.

The following groups of people can access priority testing through GOV.UK:

- essential workers in England
- anyone in England who has symptoms of coronavirus and lives with an essential worker

Guidance [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested](#)

If staff member tests positive, follow guidance for category 3 (below).

If staff member tests negative, they should follow the relevant guidance on this flow chart with regards to returning to work

[What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school](#)

For staff who have self-isolated due to either they or someone in their household displaying symptoms of COVID you do not need to continue to self-isolate if the test is negative, if:

- everyone you live with who has symptoms tests negative
- everyone in your support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
- you were not told to self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace – if you were, see [what to do if you've been told you've been in contact with someone who has coronavirus](#)
- you feel well – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you're feeling better and no fever for 48 hours
- If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped.

If you or others in your household have COVID symptoms but cannot access testing, you must complete the self-isolation period.

[Staff who have a member of their household who is symptomatic with COVID symptoms](#)

If a member of your household has symptoms of COVID-19 (fever>37.8 OR continuous cough OR loss of taste and / or smell), however mild, you should:

- stay at home (self-isolate) and not leave your house for 14 days from the date when the household member first had symptoms
- Follow guidance for [households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
- Ensure your household member gets tested
- Inform the school and get tested if you develop symptoms yourself

Please follow guidance as necessary on test and trace and managing a suspected or confirmed case in an education setting, see 5 below

Testing is now available for anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus.

The following groups of people can access priority testing through GOV.UK:

- essential workers in England
- anyone in England who has symptoms of coronavirus and lives with an essential worker

Guidance on testing is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-COVID-19-getting-tested>

These staff should not be at school.

Enter details of absence on ITrent system or your own HR system. These staff can be asked to work from home.

If the staff member develops symptoms themselves, they should follow guidance for category 1 (above).

If the staff member or a member of their household (including children) is symptomatic it is vitally important that they get tested, in accordance with government guidance and advice, for their own safety, welfare and wellbeing and also that of others who they may have come into contact with. If the household member tests negative, please follow the [What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school](#).

If the household member tests positive, the staff member should follow guidance for category 4 (below).

Guidance: [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)

For Staff who have self-isolated due to either they or someone in their household displaying symptoms of COVID, you do not need to continue to self-isolate if the test is negative, if:

- everyone you live with who has symptoms tests negative
- everyone in your support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
- you were not told to self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace – if you were, see [what to do if you've been told you've been in contact with someone who has coronavirus](#)
- you feel well – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you're feeling better and no fever for 48 hours
- If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped.

If you or others in your household have COVID symptoms but cannot access testing, you must complete the self isolation period.

[Staff who have been diagnosed with COVID 19](#)

Follow Medical Advice, inform the school, and refer to the guidance [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

Please follow guidance on test and trace and managing a suspected or confirmed case in an education setting.

If the member of staff was in school during the infectious period: [What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school](#)

These staff should not be at school

Enter details of absence on ITrent system or your own HR system

School to:

1. For Single case: For a single positive case, school can either

- Use the PHE LCRC school resource pack to manage a case of COVID-19 in schools independently; or
- Contact DfE helpline for support if required 0800 046 8687 (Monday to Friday: 8am-6pm, and Sat/Sun:10am-4pm)

Special schools should still directly contact Public Health England London Coronavirus Response Cell (LCRC) on 0300 303 0450 for a single confirmed case.

2. For Multiple cases: For more than one case in 14 day period, that does not meet the LCRC threshold (below), schools can either:

- Use PHE LCRC resource pack or
- Contact DfE helpline for support if required

When to contact LCRC:

Primary school:

- ≥10% of bubble affected within 14 days
- ≥ 10% of staff within 14 days
- 3 or more bubbles with at least one confirmed case
- Any hospital admissions in students or staff due to COVID-19

Secondary school:

- 5 or more students affected in single school year within 14 days
- ≥10% staff affected within 14 days
- 3 or more bubbles with at least one confirmed case
- Any hospital admission in students of staff due to COVID-19

If your school is a boarding school SEND school, no threshold to contact LCRC

Inform :

- Raj Chowdhury (ChowdhuryR@ealing.gov.uk or 07568 130165) or
- Steve Dunham (DunhamS@ealing.gov.uk or 07940 546 263)
- and the Council's public health team (publichealth@ealing.gov.uk).

[Staff who have members of their household who has been diagnosed with COVID 19](#)

Stay at home (self-isolate) and not leave your house for 14 days from the date when the household member first had symptoms

- Follow guidance for [households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
- Inform the school and get tested if you develop symptoms yourself

Please follow guidance on test and trace and managing a suspected or confirmed case in an education setting, see 5 below

These staff should not be at school

Enter details of absence on ITrent system or your own HR system

These staff can be asked to work from home

In addition please follow the guidance on the link below

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Staff who have been asked to self isolate through the test and trace process

If they are a 'close contact' of a confirmed case of coronavirus.

Staff who have been contacted by the NHS test and trace service should follow any guidance given to them by the test and trace service

Stay at home (self-isolate) and do not leave your house for 14 days from the date when the household member first had symptoms

Follow [guidance for contacts of people with possible or confirmed coronavirus](#)

- Inform the school and get tested if you develop symptoms yourself
- Link to Gov UK test and trace guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

These staff should not be at school

For reference please see [What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school](#)

A 'contact' is defined as a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). For example, a contact can be:

- people who spend significant time in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
- a person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
 - being coughed on
 - having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes a person who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or in a large vehicle or plane near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Staff who are identified as being in the clinically extremely vulnerable & shielded group

From 2 December 2020 the national restrictions will be replaced by a 3 tier system of local restrictions. Updated advice on protecting the clinically extremely vulnerable, based on the [tiers of local restrictions](#) is set out in the link in the column to the right and sets out the steps clinically extremely vulnerable people can take to protect themselves for each local tier.

The advice sets out the additional things people at the highest risk from COVID-19 are advised to do to keep themselves safe for each tier.

In the future, the government will only reintroduce formal shielding advice in the very worst affected local areas and for a limited period. This will only apply to some, but not all, Tier 3 areas and will be based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. The government will write to individuals separately to inform them if they are advised to shield. Individuals are not advised to follow formal shielding advice again unless they receive a new shielding notification advising you to do so. **These staff can attend school**

The guidance in the link below sets out advice for those who are in the clinically extremely vulnerable group. It provides a list of those who would be classified as clinically extremely vulnerable

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-COVID-19/cev-from-2-dec#cev>

The guidance includes a section on how clinically extremely vulnerable people can access care and support to help keep them safe and well and look after their mental as well as physical health.

Everyone is still advised to work from home if possible, however if you cannot work from home you can go to work in all tiers. If you have CEV staff who are currently at home because of the national restrictions, they can be contacted, and a confidential and sensitive discussion held with them to ascertain their thoughts and views about returning to work after the national restrictions end.

If they do attend work then it should only be after their individual risk assessment has been reviewed and any additional measures and controls have been considered which identify how they will be safeguarded on any return to the workplace including measures to support social distancing, reducing contact with others, face masks, personal hygiene measures, more frequent cleaning and travel to and from work.

If having discussed this matter with the CEV member of staff and reviewing their individual risk assessment they are still concerned about returning to the workplace, consider consulting HR and establishing if the staff member wants to consult their own GP or clinician about the prospect of returning to work.

It may be that some schools will have already planned for existing arrangements (for CEV staff) to continue until the end of term and we advise that there is no need to change these arrangements unless the needs of the school or the needs of the individual suggest otherwise.

[Staff who have a member of their household who are identified as being on the clinically extremely vulnerable & shielded group](#)

The latest Govt guidance is that these staff can attend the workplace

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>

These staff may still be very anxious and a sensitive and confidential discussion with them to understand their concerns and anxieties would be beneficial. These staff may feel that an individual risk assessment would be supportive in allaying any concerns they have about continuing in the workplace.

[Staff who are identified as being in the clinically vulnerable group](#)

This group can go to work, if they cannot work from home, if the workplace is COVID secure

See below specific guidance for staff who are pregnant

These staff should by now have been contacted and a confidential and sensitive discussion held with them to ascertain their thoughts and views about returning to work in September. They may want to consult their own GP or clinician about the prospect of continuing at work.

If they do attend work then it should only be after an individual risk assessment has been conducted which identifies how they will be safeguarded on any return to the workplace.

Consider implementing additional control measures if vulnerable staff are on site. referencing the individual risk assessment (e.g. social distancing, face masks).

Staff who have a member of their household identified as being in the clinically vulnerable group

The latest DfE guidance is that these staff can attend the workplace

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>

These staff may still be very anxious and a sensitive and confidential discussion with them to understand their concerns and anxieties would be beneficial. These staff may feel that an individual risk assessment would be supportive in allaying any concerns they have about returning to the workplace.

Staff who are pregnant

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools. Employers should [conduct a risk assessment for pregnant women](#).

As well as the standard risk assessment for pregnant staff (which may have already been completed by the school), you will need to undertake an individual staff risk assessment. Effectively we would expect then to see two risk assessments for pregnant staff.

The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RCOG) has published [occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women](#). **This document includes advice for women from 28 weeks gestation or with underlying health conditions who may be at greater risk.** We advise employers and pregnant women to follow this advice and to continue to monitor for future updates to it.

If as a result of conducting a risk assessment or as a result of concerns raised about the woman's health or pregnancy, then we would expect the woman's GP or clinician to provide a medical opinion confirming if the employee is fit to return to work.

If the GP says the employee can only work from home and the school cannot give them work to do from home or provide any other suitable alternative work, then effectively the employee ends up on medical suspension relating to their pregnancy (on full pay) until circumstances change or maternity leave starts. Please talk to your HR adviser in these circumstances.

The two risk assessments are:

1. The standard risk assessment an employer would carry out for [any worker that confirms that she is pregnant](#)
2. The individual COVID [risk assessment that is conducted for staff](#) – See under the heading "individual risk assessment and support plan template"

So effectively the first RA is something that would be completed for all workers who confirm they are pregnant (e.g. regardless of COVID) and the second RA is COVID related and applies to pregnant women given their clinically vulnerable status

Staff who are sick with a non COVID related illness or absence

- Follow Standard sickness absence procedures
- Enter details of absence on ITrent system or your own HR system
- Follow processes including referral to OH if appropriate.
- Continue to talk to HR about the management of these absences during these exceptional times.
- Understand that there may be a delay in obtaining medical certificates at this time

Staff who are reluctant to attend work due to anxiety for their own safety related to COVID 19 and who may otherwise be at increased risk from COVID 19

Supportive approach to be taken to understand the concerns of the employee.

- Reassure, support and identify how/if you can relieve anxiety or provide reassurance.
- Consult HR on a case by case basis.
- Consider advising that they seek medical advice if anxiety severe.
- Before reaching a point where consideration of any formal action including reference to a breach of contractual obligation discuss with HR.

People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the [COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report](#), which looked at different factors including age and sex, where people live, deprivation, ethnicity, people's occupation and care home residence. These staff can [return to school in September](#) as long as the system of controls set out in the DfE guidance are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future.

Here are [Wellbeing resources](#) to provide support and help.

This could include staff from a BAME background who may have concerns and in these circumstances we would ask that headteachers/managers have a conversation (framed within a confidential and sensitive approach) with the member of staff to understand their concerns.

Here is [guidance and an individual risk assessment on the EGfL](#). See last two documents under the heading Planning a phased return to school

Staff who will not attend work due to anxiety about transmitting the virus to clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable household members

See above for staff living with clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable household member

- Supportive approach to be taken to understand concerns of employee.
- Reassure, support and identify how/if you can relieve anxiety.
- Consult HR on a case by case basis.
- Consider advising that they seek medical advice if anxiety severe.
- Before reaching a point where consideration of any formal action including reference to a breach of contractual obligation discuss with HR.

Staff can be advised to contact their trade union for advice and support

Here are some [Wellbeing resources](#)

Staff who are required to self-isolate (quarantine) after return to the UK or prior to hospital admission

Staff returning from a country which is not on the 'exempt' list will be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days.

Please see details in this link for the [list of exempt countries and the process for self-isolating](#)

Guidance on these requirements was issued in [Joint schools guidance on quarantine on entering or returning to the UK and self isolating before hospital admission 19 June](#)

The document provides some useful guidance on matters that need to be considered if a member of staff has to self-isolate on their return from international travel.

The Government currently advises British nationals against all but essential international travel although some countries are exempt from this advice. Here is [Foreign travel advice](#) There will be exceptions when an employee can demonstrate an urgent need for making essential travel, for example to visit a very sick close relative. Staff in schools should be reminded of this advice and asked to discuss with the school any travel plans that they have

Where a member of staff elects to travel abroad then they will need to accept the risk that this may bring in terms of quarantine on their return or in the extreme being required to remain in the country they have travelled to due to a lockdown. These risks have the potential to impact on their ability to undertake their role and/ or be paid.

The code of conduct for schools now includes a reference to employees following the school's requirements and guidelines for managing the coronavirus. Travelling abroad, for non-essential purposes, especially to an area where the member of staff knows that they are required to self-isolate on their return, does not support the school in its management of the current situation and as well as having their period of self-isolation treated as unpaid leave the member of staff should be reminded about the requirements of the code of conduct.

Please consult your HR adviser if you consider that the circumstances of a case suggest that unpaid leave should be granted for a member of staff required to quarantine upon returning to the UK

[Staff who cannot attend work due to childcare responsibilities](#)

Check and understand background to childcare concerns and ascertain why they cannot now revert to childcare provisions that were in place prior to lockdown.

Is the breakdown in childcare provision temporary?

Can you be more flexible (e.g. with working hours) on a short-term basis to support them being able to work while they make permanent/long term arrangements for childcare?

Can childcare responsibility be shared. Example, with partner.

Can they work from home for a short period whilst they arrange childcare provisions?

Is this beyond their control or is it a matter of choice. Example they do not want to send their child to nursery/school even if a place available.

It is important in some cases to establish if the member of staff is required to self-isolate themselves, this could be the case if their child is symptomatic or has had a positive test result. Please refer to categories 2 and 4 above.

Consult with HR on a case by case basis especially if having exhausted all other options you are considering a period of unpaid leave

Please see additional guidance on [Supporting employees with childcare issues during the pandemic](#)

Ensure that you have consistency in approach

[Staff who do not attend work due to concerns over using public transport](#)

Can they use another form of transport to get to work, cycle, walk, car?

Govt advice currently is to avoid using Public transport if possible, if not observe social distancing rules and wear a face mask.

To what extent is it possible to review hours to support travel outside peak times. This may be possible for some staff but not others.

Parking dispensations still apply for key workers including teachers until 30 Nov 2020.

Consider Govt advice [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

From 15 June 2020 it will be mandatory to wear a face covering when using public transport

[Staff who have caring responsibilities for \(a\) clinically extremely vulnerable or \(b\) clinically vulnerable household members](#)

Consider the different approaches in 6 and 8 above for staff in these categories and establish with the employee whether the circumstances of the person they are caring for have changed. If not then the staff member may have to make a decision about their longer term position.

Please discuss these on a case by case basis with HR.

Guidance for staff: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): providing unpaid care](#)

[Staff who have experienced a bereavement linked to COVID 19](#)

Bereavement leave provisions to be applied.

Discuss with HR

Guidance: [How to cope with bereavement and grief during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

[Staff who have other paid employment as 'Carers' and work with clinically extremely vulnerable and shielded group and clinically vulnerable people](#)

These staff may ask not to attend work due to their other paid employment. It will be reasonable to have a discussion with them and establish if they intend to request a permanent change in their contractual arrangements with the school.

The school may or may not be able to accommodate a request for a permanent contractual change.

[Request evidence from employee](#)

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:

1. A consistent approach must be maintained, please do not ask some staff for evidence but not others
2. Any information received must be treated in strictest confidence and not shared with other staff
3. In some instances, staff may not be able to provide evidence (although someone who is symptomatic and self-isolating can obtain an isolation note through the NHS Online link here <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>) and those reporting in these circumstances should be accepted on face value