

Staffing in schools - Absence and attendance

8 January 2021

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1. 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

If you are still unwell after your 10 day self-isolation you should seek medical advice.

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

Actions

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](#).

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.

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

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

These staff should not be at school.

Actions

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](#).

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](#).

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.

3. 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

Actions

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:

- $\geq 10\%$ of bubble affected within 14 days
- $\geq 10\%$ 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
- $\geq 10\%$ 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.

4. 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 or if you are asked to do so as part of a wider testing scheme.

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.

Actions

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>

5. 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
- Guidance [NHS Test and Trace: how it works](#)

These staff should not be at school.

Actions

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

6. Staff who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable & shielded group

From 5 Jan 2021 the government introduced a further national lockdown. Shielding has been reintroduced and clinically extremely vulnerable staff are advised that they should not attend the workplace. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are those identified through a letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor as in the group deemed clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV or shielding list). Staff who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable should follow the published guidance.

Staff should be supported to work from home and where this is not possible they should not attend work. Schools should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.

These staff should not be at school.

Actions

The latest guidance issued for the CEV group is shown on this link. This link provides a list of those who would be classified as CEV and confirms how those who are CEV can access support.

[Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#)

If an employee thinks that there are good clinical reasons why they should be added to the Shielded Patient List, they should discuss their concerns with their GP or hospital clinician.

7. Staff who have a member of their household who are identified as being on the clinically extremely vulnerable and shielded group

The latest Govt guidance is that these staff can attend the workplace, if they cannot work from home, but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

[Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#)

Actions

These staff may be very anxious about the possibility of transmitting the virus if they attend the workplace 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 and reassuring in allaying any concerns they have about continuing in the workplace.

If they remain extremely anxious about attending work, they should be advised to seek medical advice.

8. 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~~

If possible, those staff who are clinically vulnerable should work from home. If that is not possible and they need to attend school, they should follow the sector specific guidance in this document https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf to minimise the risks of transmission.

This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing in line with the provisions set out in the 'prevention' section of this guidance. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from others, and where this is not possible avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of others. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to socially distance from other adults including older children and adolescents.

See below specific guidance for staff who are pregnant.

Actions

These staff can be contacted, and a confidential and sensitive discussion held with them to ascertain their concerns and views about continuing in the workplace. They may want to consult their own GP or clinician about the prospect of continuing at work.

If they do attend work, 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 eg social distancing, minimising contact with others, good hand and respiratory hygiene and face masks).

9. 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](#).

Actions

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.

10. Staff who are pregnant

As per national restrictions, staff should work at home where possible. If home working is not possible, pregnant staff and their employers should follow the advice in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees

This document provides advice for women under two sections – up to 28 weeks pregnant and no underlying medical conditions or 28 weeks plus pregnant or an underlying medical condition. Please provide a copy of or access to this document for pregnant employees.

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools. All pregnant women should take particular care to practise frequent thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home or workspace, and follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. Pregnant women are not advised to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Employers should [conduct a risk assessment for pregnant women](#) in line with the model 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 covid risk assessment. We would expect then to see two risk assessments for pregnant staff.

Schools should also take action to review risk assessments where they are notified that a [woman is breastfeeding or has given birth within the last 6 months \(see page 32\)](#).

Actions

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

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

Follow Standard sickness absence procedures

Actions

- 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

12. 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

Some people with characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). Where it is not possible to work from home, these staff can attend school as long as the system of controls set out in the [national restriction 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.

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.

Actions

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

13. 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

Actions

To provide support take a look at some [Wellbeing resources](#)

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

Under national restrictions in force in **England you must not leave home including to travel abroad, unless you have a legally permitted reason to do so, such as for essential work purposes.**

[Travel advice](#)

Employees should check with their clinician or hospital about any requirements or measures prior to a hospital admission. If this requires any period of self-isolation then written evidence can be requested.

15. Staff who cannot attend work due to childcare responsibilities

The new national restrictions are likely to bring an increase in cases of staff having unforeseen 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.

Actions

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

16. Staff who use public transport

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

You can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. Where this is not possible, use public transport or drive. If using public transport 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.

Actions

Parking dispensations still apply for key workers including teachers until 31 January 2021.

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

It is mandatory to wear a face covering when using public transport

17. 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.

Actions

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

18. Staff who have experienced a bereavement linked to COVID 19

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.

Actions

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

19. 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 [Get an isolation note](#) and those reporting in these circumstances should be accepted on face value.