![UK Health Security Agency logo]

1 April 2022

Dear Headteacher/Manager/Colleagues,

Re: Living with Covid 19 Strategy and Education and Childcare Settings

I would like to thank you for all your work during the COVID 19 pandemic which was above and beyond anything I have seen before. I have really appreciated your tireless efforts to control COVID 19 in your setting and ensure that the children and young people have received the education they need.

I would like to give you an update on the relevant changes that come into place from the 1st April 2022 in relation to COVID 19 and other infectious diseases.

Over the course of the pandemic the response required from the education and childcare sector has varied in line with the different stages:

1. Schools closing in lockdown to all except vulnerable children or children of keyworkers yet still providing remote education.
2. Strict control measures to reduce mixing, class or year group 'bubbles' with contact tracing and instructing classes or groups to self-isolate.
3. Fewer control measures as close contacts who were children no longer had to self-isolate, but implementing regular asymptomatic testing and responding to cases and outbreaks by introducing measures such as keeping classes separate, wearing face coverings, and testing in response to cases whilst maintaining face to face education.
4. Focus on baseline control measures with fewer outbreak measures and only testing where outbreaks are causing severe disruption and operational issues.

From 1st April we will move to what I hope is the final phase. All testing, both asymptomatic and symptomatic, has ended for the general public. Testing will only be available to those individuals who, despite vaccination, are still clinically vulnerable (and those people will have been identified and written to with specific instructions) and for high risk settings such as care homes or the NHS but even this is at much lower levels than previously.

There is new national guidance for people who have symptoms of respiratory infections including COVID-19 and/or a positive test result People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). This includes advice for children and young people attending education and childcare settings. The key points are:

- Children with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or mild cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education or childcare setting.

- Children and young people who are unwell and have a [high temperature](#) should stay at home and where possible avoid contact with other people. They can go back to education or childcare setting when they no longer have a high temperature and they are well enough.
- If a child or young person has a positive COVID-19 test result they should try to stay at home and where possible avoid contact with other people for 3 days after the day, they took the test. The risk of passing the infection on to others is much lower after 3 days if they feel well and do not have a high temperature.
- Adults with a positive COVID-19 test result should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days.
- Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal.

For the education and childcare sector, the management of COVID 19 will be in line with how other respiratory viruses such as colds and flu are managed. This means that there will not be any restrictions within the setting and testing for COVID 19 is unlikely to be available for outbreaks.

The guidance for respiratory infections including COVID 19 and flu is now in [Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#) which has been updated. The focus is on ensuring good baseline infection prevention and control measures with the details in chapter 2 of this guidance. These will not stop respiratory infections spreading but aim to interrupt the cycle of infection so that transmission of infection is reduced overall. The key baseline measures are:

- Good respiratory (catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and dispose of as soon as possible) and hand hygiene (washing hands including after using the toilet and before eating)
- Environmental cleaning
- Ventilation and use of outdoor spaces
- Vaccination of those eligible.

An action card for respiratory infections is attached and contains further details about the baseline measures and when staff and children and young people should stay home and not attend the setting.

Most of those who were considered extremely clinically vulnerable to COVID 19 are now not considered have this level of vulnerability because vaccination has been shown to protect at high levels against severe disease. Those whose immune systems means they are still vulnerable have been offered additional vaccinations and access to the new anti-viral medications and will continue to have access to tests.

The [Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#) guidance covers all infectious diseases, outline actions that educational settings should take for specific diseases and gives details on when you may want to seek additional advice from the UKHSA Health Protection Teams.

Most infectious diseases in education settings can be managed by following the advice provided in Chapter 3 of this guidance and ensuring students and staff follow the recommended exclusion periods (for chickenpox and diarrhoea and vomiting for example).

Several more serious infectious diseases such as meningococcal meningitis, measles, mumps and rubella are required to be notified to the local health protection teams by clinicians. Education settings will be contacted by the Health Protection Team if there are any actions required within the setting as part of managing the case.

With best wishes

Trish Mannes
Regional Lead, UKHSA South East