



Integrated Children's Services

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Dear Colleagues

COVID-19 operational guidance update for schools and settings

As infection rates continue to fluctuate nationally and across the county, I am writing with a reminder of key points from the existing DfE Guidance Contingency framework: education and childcare settings (October 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance> to support you as we start term 2.

We are all committed to the government's priority for schools to continue safely delivering face to face high quality education to all pupils. All schools will already have implemented the standard infection control methods of

- 1/ Good hand and respiratory hygiene
- 2/ Appropriate cleaning regimes
- 3/ Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
- 4/ Following public health advice on testing, isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

and more detailed information is included in Appendix A.

As circumstances in individual schools vary and can change quickly, it is important to undertake regular risk assessment as this will support leadership decision making about proportionate control measures to take should infection levels start to rise significantly. It is essential to have this decision-making documented so that should you deem it necessary to take additional action, your rationale can be shared with staff, pupils, parents and DfE colleagues if needed.

In addition, in line with the national guidance, KCC advise leadership teams to review contingency plans/outbreak management plans in the near future so that there is clarity across the school community about what action will be taken in the event of significant increase in infection rates. DfE guidance on contingency plans can be viewed here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>

The thresholds for considering additional action are

- 5 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period
- 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

For special schools, residential settings, and settings that operate with 20 or fewer children, pupils, students and staff at any one time:

- 2 children, pupils, students and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

The Guidance recommends planning for the possibility of taking action regarding

- Testing
- Face coverings
- Shielding
- Limiting visits from and to the school or setting
- Attendance restrictions (as a last resort and a short-term measure, with priority being given to vulnerable children and children of key workers to attend school and high-quality remote learning being put in place).

Should you need to consider additional action, then please discuss with KCC Public Health colleagues and your Area Education Officer, who will support the decision-making process. The infection rate is being monitored both locally and nationally and there are defined thresholds in place for action to be taken by the council and ministers if necessary.

Vaccination is a key strand of the government's strategy to minimise restrictions and many thanks to secondary colleagues who have been hosting vaccinations centres in schools. There continues to be opposition to this vaccination programme both locally and nationally which has included intimidation of staff and pupils. Generic legal guidance is available from your AEO should that be helpful and support is available through the Education Safeguarding Service. The Prevent Team also offer support on managing threats and protests regarding the vaccination programme. Please contact:

Jill Allen - jill.allen@kent.gov.uk (East and South Kent) Tel: 03000 413565

Sally Green – sallygreen2@kent.gov.uk (Medway, North and West Kent) Tel: 03000 413439

I hope this is a helpful summary and supports you in your responsibility to maintain a safe environment for pupils and staff during these challenging times.

With best wishes

Christine McInnes

Christine McInnes
Director of Education