



Northumberland County Council



COVID19 Outbreak Contingency Plan

Updated: 1 February 2022

Introduction

All education and childcare settings are required to have an outbreak management plan (sometimes called a contingency plan) which **outlines how they would operate if any of the measures described in this document were recommended for their setting or area**. This includes how they would ensure every child, pupil or student receives the quantity and quality of education and care to which they are normally entitled.

The school leadership team (SLT) recognises the need to respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 quickly, effectively and proportionately, to ensure a safe school environment whilst minimising the effect of loss of face-to-face education by prioritising measures which ensure business continuity. In all circumstances, the potential benefit of measures to reduce transmission will be weighed against the potential impact on education and restrictions on attendance will only be considered as a last resort. The health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors remains our number one priority.

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the school, records the key protective measures in place, including some measures which may need to be re-introduced as part of this plan. Please see our school website.

What is an Outbreak?

Where the number of positive cases substantially increases, this could indicate transmission is happening in the school. At this point, advice may need to be sought from the NCC Public Health Team in the following circumstances:

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

Identifying a group that is likely to have mixed closely will be different for each setting. A group will rarely mean a whole setting or year group. For schools, this could include:

- a form class;
- a friendship group mixing at break-times;
- a sports team;
- a group in an after-school activity.

The school will also seek public health advice if a pupil or staff member is admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Hospitalisation could indicate increased severity of illness or a new variant of concern. Support in managing risk assessments and communicating with staff and parents may be offered.

Communication and Record Keeping

This plan is kept under periodic review by the Headteacher and will be reviewed following an outbreak to identify any aspects which worked well or areas for improvement.

The following arrangements are in place/will be put in place in the event of a case(s) of COVID-19:

- Parents are asked to inform the school of any positive COVID-19 case as soon as possible, as per normal arrangements for reporting sickness absence to the school office;
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts. *Note: staff are instructed not to share contact details of individuals with anyone other than Test and Trace/Public Health Team (staff should not share contact details of close contacts with other parents/carers);*
- Details of the positive case will be kept so that any linked cases can be identified - including dates of symptoms/date of positive test/date last in school/details of class or social group;
- Staff are informed when there has been a case of COVID-19 within the school and to be vigilant of anyone displaying symptoms;
- Inform and advise communications are sent to parents (usually by an initial phone call) and advice letters issued to parents of pupils who may be possible contacts of the positive case;
- All staff cases of COVID-19 are recorded on ANVIL to determine if a case is reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR.

Activating the Plan - Collaboration

The Local Authority, Director of Public Health for Northumberland, and Public Health England local health protection teams are responsible for managing localised outbreaks. They play an important role in providing support and advice to education and childcare settings. In all situations where this plan is implemented, the school will liaise and cooperate with the above to agree on the most appropriate protective measures which may need to be reintroduced to contain an outbreak, bearing in mind the priority of maintaining school attendance.

The plan will be activated in the following circumstances:

- to help manage a COVID-19 outbreak within the school;
- if there is extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and other measures have failed to reduce transmission;
- as part of a package of measures responding to a Variant of Concern (VoC)

The Headteacher will contact the NCC Public Health Team if they consider there may be an outbreak within the school due to illness reported ([via web enquiry form](#)). The NCC Public Health Team will contact a nominated person/Headteacher from the

school if they become aware of a possible outbreak within the school/area from PHE data they receive.

Step A – a single case or cases below the threshold of an Outbreak of COVID-19 in setting

- Parents notify school of a positive case.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts in line with [national guidance](#). The school is not expected to follow up the results of PCR tests.
- School should note details of the case so that any linked cases within school can be identified.
- The actions in the **Communication and Record Keeping section** are implemented.
- Covid-19 risk assessment/existing protective measures are reviewed to identify any areas for improvement [as a very minimum enhanced cleaning, ongoing hand and respiratory hygiene and good ventilation should already be in place].
- Staff/pupils are reminded of the importance of following the protective measures in place within the setting.

Step B - An outbreak of COVID-19 in setting

When the school becomes aware of a possible outbreak, the Headteacher will contact the NCC Public Health Team via their enquiry form:

[NCC Public Health Team Enquiry Form](#)

The NCC Public Health Team will:

- work with the school to identify the cohort the cases belong to and undertake an assessment including number of cases, spread within the school and evidence of ongoing transmission.
- work with the school to determine appropriate public health action in the event of an outbreak
- Hold an Outbreak Control Team meeting if required (informed by the public health team's risk assessment)
- Variant of Concern (VOC) cases – may be managed differently. Additional actions / investigations may be undertaken if a new variant is detected and that this will be led by the Health Protection Team in Public Health England (PHE).

The school/setting will:

- Implement the Outbreak Management Plan (and go through the **Public Health Outbreak Checklist**);
- Follow protocol as in **Step A for a single case**;

- Review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures they already have in place;
- Consider re-introducing the prior two 'bubble groups' to minimise pupil mixing, including splitting the lunchtime groupings so that KS2 eat within their classrooms;
- Consider whether any activities could take place outdoors, including PE and Collective Worship.
- Consider ways to improve ventilation indoors, where this would not significantly impact thermal comfort;
- Arrange a one-off enhanced clean focusing on touch points and any shared equipment;
- Follow the advice of the NCC Public Health Team/Outbreak Control Team to implement recommended additional protective measures;
- Follow the actions in the **Communication and Record Keeping section**.

Possible Protective Measures – Arrangements

The following may be considered as additional protective measures to be reintroduced in school in the event of an outbreak.

Reintroduction of “bubbles”/Limits on mixing of pupils

The DfE advise that any recommendation for the reintroduction of 'bubbles' is not taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education. However, in certain settings (e.g. early years/primary schools) it's likely that this can be done without too much impact on education.

School transport seating plans are reintroduced (if not already in place).

Testing

Close contacts of positive cases of COVID-19 are already advised to carry out daily LFD testing for 7 days.

In addition, an increase in the use of home testing by staff, may be recommended.

These measures may be advised:

- for an individual setting or a small cluster of settings only, (in most cases a 'cluster' will be no more than 3 or 4 settings linked in the same outbreak), or
- for settings across areas that have been offered an enhanced response package.

The NCC Public Health Team will work with the school to agree what testing should be undertaken and identify appropriate resources. The school has pre-planned how on-site testing could be implemented in a way that does not negatively impact on school teaching and learning by:

- Defining testing cohorts – A pragmatic approach is needed based on arrangements within the risk assessment to allow the smallest possible testing cohort to be identified. Whilst the concept of adopting the smallest possible bubble groups has been removed, it may be sensible and practical to avoid the mixing of larger groups based on building, site layouts and natural bubbles as a control within the current school Covid-19 risk assessment;
- Inform and advise letters/messages advising parents of cases in group - get tested, symptoms, infection control advice;
- If further cases are detected in the initial cohort then wider testing may be considered, however, this will depend on setting / degree of mixing / age of children etc.

Face coverings (staff, visitors and pupils aged 10 and above)

The reintroduction of face coverings is one of the least disruptive protective measures and can be quickly and easily activated. Where this is recommended the school will:

- Agree with NCC Public Health Team if these will be worn in communal areas and/or classrooms, school transport (although these are likely to be already being worn) and how long these temporary arrangements will remain in force. Where reintroducing these back into the classroom the impact on learning balanced against the risk of transmission will be considered;
- Review and update the school COVID-19 risk assessment/separate face coverings risk assessment;
- Implement the control measures detailed in the risk assessment e.g. reminders on donning and doffing safely, ensure sufficient bins for disposal, ensure there is a supply of disposable face coverings;
- letter/messages home to parents informing them of the change in practice.

Restricting Attendance

Due to the number of days of missed on-site education, restricting attendance of pupils at school will only be considered if absolutely necessary and on the advice from the DfE/Government/Public Health Team/Director of Public Health for Northumberland.

- Where restricted attendance is in place, the school will reactivate its arrangements to enable high quality remote learning, as per our Remote Learning policy- available on our website. Priority for on-site attendance is given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers.
- [See [guidance](#) for further information and add further details as appropriate to your setting e.g. wraparound care, alternative providers]

Shielding

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, those previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) will not be advised to shield again. Individuals previously identified as CEV are advised to continue to follow the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (and follow the protective measures in place in their individual risk assessment or care plan, which will incorporate any specific advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are required).

Other measures

It may be necessary to cancel, postpone or review arrangements for out of school visits, after school activities or large scale gatherings/events. This will include:

- residential educational visits - Any attendance restrictions should be reflected in the visits risk assessment and setting leaders should consider carefully if the educational visit is still appropriate and safe. Only children who are attending the setting should go on an educational visit. Education settings should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits;
- open days;
- transition or taster days;
- parental attendance in settings;
- performances in settings;

Resources

[COVID-19 management flowchart and Advice letters for close contacts](#) – including link to Public Health enquiry form. *(updated Jan 2022)*

[Outbreak Checklist for Schools](#) - checklist to review current arrangements and additional measures that could be implemented *(updated Jan 2022)*

[Advise and Inform - Model letter to all parents](#)

[Advise and Inform - Model Text message](#)

Government Guidance:

[Operational Guidance for Schools](#)

[“Contingency framework: education and childcare settings”](#)

Document History:

Item	Nature of change	Date of Update
Communication and Record Keeping	Removal of the need to inform NCC public health of a positive case. Change in testing requirements for close contacts. Reminder to record all positive staff cases on ANVIL (for schools where NCC is the employer) - this is not required for pupil cases.	01/02/2022
Step A	Removal of the need to notify NCC public health of positive cases. Updated text to remove need for close contacts to take a PCR test.	01/02/2022
Step B	Addition of NCC public health outbreak checklist.	01/02/2022
Testing	All settings to consider arrangements if increased testing is recommended. Addition of increased use of LFD testing and requirement for close contacts to test for 7 days.	01/02/2022
Restricting Attendance	Removal of specific advice for school tiers.	01/02/2022
Shielding	Removal of shielding advice.	01/02/2022
Resources	Updated links	01/02/2022
<i>First Issue</i>	N/A	27/08/2021