

Briefing: Covid-19 Guidance for Education Settings from 1st November 2021

Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes
Local Authority - Public Health Guidance

Please view in slideshow to enable links

Context:

- We have learned a lot since the COVID-19 response began, and our approach to breaking chains of transmission and protecting the public's health has evolved significantly.
- Vaccines are significantly reducing the link between infections and severe disease and death. With more than 79% of adults fully vaccinated the need for the stringent economic and social restrictions has been reduced. PHE estimate that 22 million infections, ~70K hospitalisations and 60K deaths have been prevented by the vaccines.
- The pandemic is not over. Cases are currently rising, as are hospitalisations. Cases, hospitalisations and, sadly, deaths, will rise further as society and the economy reopen. Vigilance must be maintained, and people will be asked to make informed decisions and act carefully and proportionately, to manage the risks to themselves and others.
- The biggest risk is a variant of concern (VOC) which fully or partially escapes immunity.
- Even without a new variant, winter will see a further resurgence of COVID-19 cases, which would likely be compounded by other seasonal infections, such as influenza, RSV & norovirus.
- Your Local Public Health Team will continue to support you with the management of Covid-19 cases when the thresholds are met, please refer to the latest local flow charts for settings and parents/carers (dated 1st November 2021)
- Only cases from term time (e.g. that have an onset or test date whilst a child is in school) will contribute towards an outbreak
- Daily update emails from the DFE are a useful source of information – please subscribe!

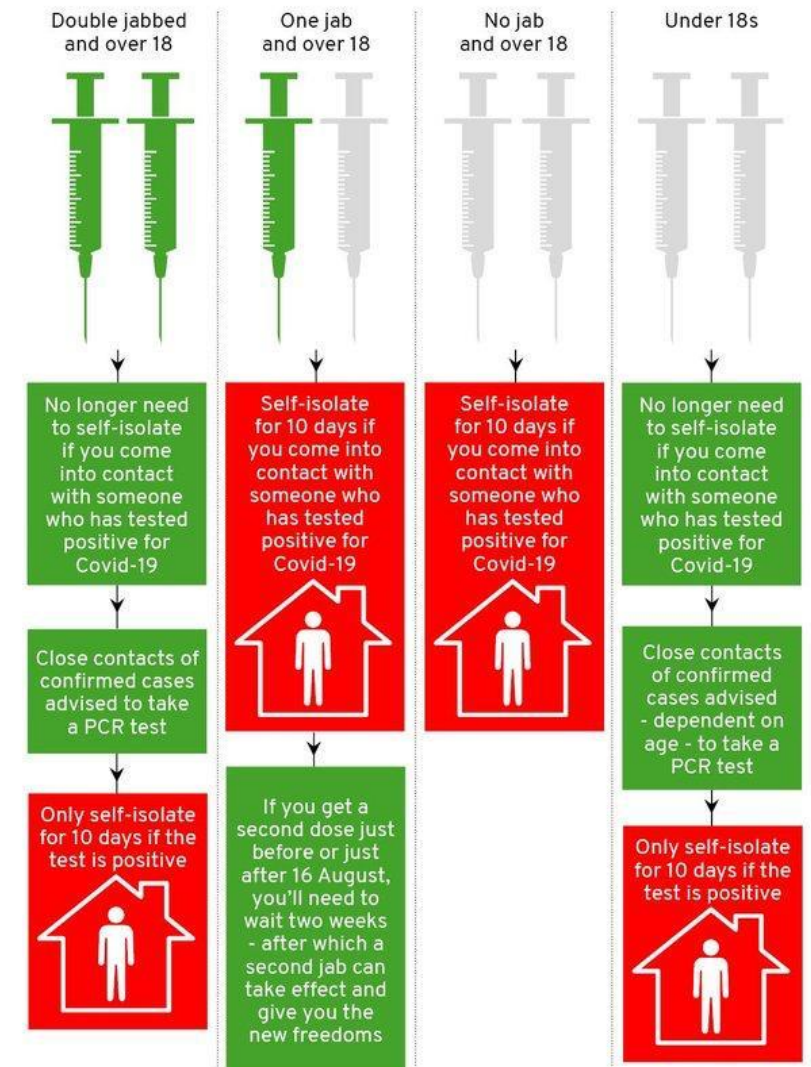
What remains the same?

- It is absolutely essential that all settings do everything possible to help staff and pupils attend their place of learning. This includes allowing staff or pupils to wear masks if they choose to and discussing with them any measures that may make them feel more safe to attend
- Settings must continue to comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures. This includes regular review and updates your risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents'. This should include:
 - Encouragement of twice weekly LFD testing at home for all secondary pupils and staff
 - Support and promotion of the vaccination programme for eligible groups
 - Encouragement good hand hygiene & cleaning regimes
 - Ensuring good ventilation
- Guidance around self-isolation for contacts of those with Covid-19 (see next slide for more details)

Self-isolation of contacts of Covid-19

- **Symptomatic people and PCR positive cases still need to isolate for 10 days**
- LFD testing twice weekly to identify asymptomatic cases continues for staff and secondary/college students
- LFD positive test result=isolate, unless followed by a negative PCR within 2 days
- Contacts who are double vaccinated (more than 14 days past their second dose) and children under 18yrs & 6 months, do not need to isolate and are advised to take a PCR test (children under 5yrs only take a PCR test if they are a household contact)
- Any contact tracing will be done by NHS Test & Trace, who may contact settings for support in exceptional circumstances
- Contacts self-declare their age and vaccination status on the COVID-19 app or to Test & Trace

Who will need to self-isolate from 16 August?



What has changed? Local guidance (1)

There have been no substantial changes to national guidance since the start of term. However, to help prevent a surge of cases over the coming month, the Director of Public Health for Milton Keynes is now advising the following for all schools and settings:

Face coverings:

- **Staff and visitors** to schools and colleges should **wear face coverings in communal areas** outside of the classroom, unless exempt for medical reasons.
- **Students in Year 7 and above** (or Year 5 and above for Middle Schools) should wear face coverings in communal areas outside the classroom, and on both school transport and public transport, unless exempt for medical reasons.

Control measures:

- **Schools and colleges** should take reasonable steps to **reduce INDOOR gathering and mixing** between classes and year groups, e.g. virtual assemblies and consider staggered lunch and break times. **Fully risk assess and take additional precautions** where mixing will take place, e.g. before/after school clubs and trips (see slide 8 for further guidance). **Limit non-essential visits to the setting** and, if possible, hold meetings with parents/carers virtually. **Promote social distancing between staff** within the setting and avoid in-person whole team meetings.
- Please note, the need to limit 'non-essential' visits to sites should be balanced with the broader educational and wellbeing needs of pupils. For example, the benefits of an external services (e.g. family support or counselling) being on-site and working face to face in particular circumstances can outweigh the risk of the provision not being made available

Vaccinations:

- Secondary schools should support the roll out of COVID vaccinations for 12-15 as well as 16-17 year olds, including hosting catch-up clinics and promoting the [national booking system](#)

What has changed? Local guidance (2)

Pupils & Students who are household contacts:

- **Students in Year 3 and above and staff who are household contacts of a positive case** and are exempt from isolation (because they are under 18 or are fully vaccinated) are strongly encouraged to take a **daily lateral flow test for 7 days**, and should only attend school or college if their lateral flow test is negative.
- Lateral flow tests should be taken for 7 days from the date of the first COVID symptoms in the household, or from the date of the first positive test if there were no symptoms.
- In addition to this, **all household contacts are encouraged to follow national guidance and book a PCR test.**
- People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days **do not** need to participate in daily LFD testing or be re-tested with PCR
- **Children in Year 2 and below** continue to be exempt from isolation. They should continue to follow national guidance and take a PCR test if they are a household contact of someone who has tested positive.

Change to advice for settings with an outbreak: We have previously advised settings with an outbreak that students who are household contacts of a positive case should be asked to remain at home and take a PCR test on day 3 to 5. The new LFD advice for household contacts in Year 3 and above supersedes this, and whilst we will not routinely recommend in an outbreak situation that younger children who are household contacts remain at home pending a PCR test result, this is still something we may advise on a case-by-case basis.

In terms of review, schools & settings should plan to keep these additional measures in place until the end of term but will be reviewed during November.

What has changed? Local reporting

Local reporting enables to understand how covid is impacting on your setting and to respond to outbreaks. To help make this process more manageable, we have made the following changes this term:

Secondary Schools & Colleges: Please report your covid cases every Monday & Thursday via a spreadsheet. A template is available on request. The spreadsheet should include the following fields:

- Initials (not full name)
- Year group
- Class or Form
- Onset date of symptoms (or test date if asymptomatic)
- Test date
- Type of test
- Known links to other cases

Early Years, Primary & Special Schools: Please continue to report covid cases via our [online form](#)

Please note:

- In outbreak situations we may ask for additional or more frequent information to help us understand transmission
- Schools or settings do not need to report cases to us during school holidays

Extra-curricular provision

- **Please note, we are not advising all activities should be cancelled.** We are recommending a risk-assessed approach when planning and delivering extra-curricular provision, including after school clubs, educational visits, wrap around care, concerts/plays/events and visiting support.
- Settings should undertake full risk assessments in relation to extra-curricular activities, to ensure they are delivered in the safest way possible. Measures to minimise the risk of transmission should be considered such as the use of outdoor space, maximising ventilation, mask use, additional LFD testing, as well as reducing mixing. Please ensure that any visiting support are aware of the expectations of your setting and measures you require them to take, for example, taking an LFD test prior to a visit to your setting and mask use.
- Settings should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits. [General guidance](#) about educational visits is available and is supported by specialist advice from the [Outdoor education advisory panel \(OEAP\)](#)
- For more information on what is required of out-of-school setting leaders in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk see [Health & Safety Advice for Schools](#) and Keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition. [Keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition.](#)

Ordering rapid tests – A reminder!

- **Primary Schools or settings ineligible to order tests via the online portal:**

You can encourage parents/carers to order rapid or lateral flow tests using [this link](#)

Given the expanded use of LFTs for younger children we would advise that parents/carers ensure they have these available at home. The tests can be ordered via post, accessed through local pharmacies and other settings.

- **Secondary Schools**

Please continue to book your tests for students via the online portal. Feedback from schools suggests they are taking approx. 2 weeks to arrive at this time. This may increase as demand grows through the winter.

Contingency Framework (Updated on 13th Oct 21)

This is a [framework](#) that describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 (including responding to variants of concern) in education and childcare settings, covering:

- the types of measures that settings should be prepared for
- who can recommend these measures and where
- when measures should be lifted
- how decisions are made

Benefits in managing transmission should be weighed against any educational drawbacks

Measures may be needed to:

- help manage an outbreak in a setting
- as part of a package of measures responding to a Variant of Concern (VoC) or to extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the community
- to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS

When would you suspect an outbreak? (Meeting a Threshold)

Your Local Public Health Team will support you when we are informed that any of the following thresholds are reached:

- 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 (e.g. 3 cases in a class of 30). (which ever is reached first)

OR

- If a pupil, student, child or staff member is admitted to hospital with COVID-19, this could indicate increased severity of illness or a new variant of concern and advice should be sought urgently

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

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

Outbreak Management Plans

The purpose of an Outbreak Plan (or Contingency Plan) is to summarise how the setting is

1. Preventing the spread of coronavirus
2. Will respond to outbreaks when the thresholds have been met

General measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus should include:

1. Encourage vaccination for all those eligible – currently this should be everyone 16 years and over, including pregnant and clinically vulnerable staff, children between 12-15 years, including those with certain underlying health conditions or living in households with immunosuppressed individuals
<https://www.blmkccg.nhs.uk/covid-19/>
2. Ensure good hygiene for everyone [Information about the Coronavirus \(e-bug.eu\)](https://www.e-bug.eu/)
3. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-cleaning-of-non-healthcare-settings-outside-the-home)
4. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated [Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-ventilation); [CIBSE - Coronavirus COVID 19](https://www.cibse.org/~/media/Files/2020/04/20200420-Coronavirus-COVID-19)
5. Regular asymptomatic LFD testing for all staff, secondary aged pupils and advising people with covid symptoms not to attend but to isolate and take a PCR test www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Outbreak Management:

If your setting has met the thresholds for an outbreak, there are potential additional temporary measures that could be introduced in your setting to minimise further cases. These will normally be considered and discussed at a joint meeting between the setting and the local public health team. In some instances, we may hold an Incident Management Team (IMT) which will involve regional partners.

A full list of measures can be found in our outbreak management checklist:

Example measures:	Decision generally made by
Face coverings in classrooms- time limited (2 weeks and review)	Director of Public Health in conjunction with the setting
Enhanced home testing or on-site asymptomatic testing (LFD or PCR)	Joint meeting or Incident Management Team (IMT)
Attendance restrictions (priority to keep socially vulnerable children and children of critical workers in, provide on-line education for anyone who is unable to attend)	Setting, LA, & Dept for Education

References and Guidance Documents:

- [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Higher education COVID-19 operational guidance](#)
- [Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [Schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#)
- [Special schools and other specialist settings: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#)
- [Dedicated transport to schools and colleges COVID-19 operational guidance](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for children's social care services](#)
- [Self-isolation removed for double jabbed close contacts from 16 August - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Contain framework: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>](#)
- [Moving to step 4 of the roadmap - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [COVID-19 study finds lower prevalence in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2021-07-23-daily-contact-covid-19-testing-students-effective-controlling-transmission-schools>](#)
- [Covid19 and Schools, 1st Update \(europa.eu\)](#)

Requesting support:

For any general concerns, support or issues contact the DfE National Helpline on **0800 046 8687**

You can also contact your local health protection team by email on

C19SettingsandSchools@milton-keynes.gov.uk

for any support required on implementation of guidance and managing local outbreaks

You can also email public.health@bedford.gov.uk for general support, including over weekends and out of hours