COVID-19 and restarting school

Public Health and Children's Services, Hertfordshire County Council

September 2020

Hertfordshire

Thank you from Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services and Public Health Directorates

Thank you for all you have done during the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing to work in challenging circumstances, responding rapidly to change, and by educating and supporting Hertfordshire's children.

We hope you had a well-deserved rest over the summer.

Changes in guidance for Autumn Term 2020

- As you will know, the guidance for schools has changed since last term, with all pupils, in all year groups, returning to school full-time, 5 days a week, from the beginning of the autumn term.
- . Reasons for this include:
  - New cases of COVID-19 have reduced substantially.
  - Office of National Statistics' analysis on coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths linked to occupations indicates that there is no greater risk for staff in educational settings than from other occupations.
  - There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.
  - Risk of children becoming severely ill with COVID-19 is very low.
  - From 1st June 2020 until the end of the summer term, there were no declared outbreaks of COVID-19 in Hertfordshire schools or early years settings.

Changes in guidance for Autumn Term 2020

- However, we still need to be vigilant to prevent further spread of COVID-19 within our communities, so whilst the guidance is not as strict as it was, unfortunately we are not ready for schools to completely return to ‘normal’.
- ‘Schools need to implement a ‘system of controls’ … to create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. …All elements of the system of controls are essential.’ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools

This presentation will cover

- Responsibilities for staff and school from September to help reduce spread of COVID-19
- Infection prevention and control: handwashing, respiratory hygiene, enhanced cleaning, and social distancing.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 and self-isolation.
- What to do if a staff member or child become unwell.
- What happens if there is a case in school.
- NHS Test and Trace.

Responsibilities for staff and school from September to help reduce spread of COVID-19

- Undertake the COVID-19 risk assessment , consult on this and share with all staff.
- Ensure robust hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Continue enhanced cleaning arrangements.
- Reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Staff and children who are ill need to stay at home and arrange to get tested.
- Actively engage with NHS Test and Trace.

Hand washing

- Schools must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including when they **arrive** at school, when they return from **breaks**, when they **change rooms** and **before and after eating**, and after using the **toilet**.
- Staff also need to be vigilant over handwashing, and must remember to wash hands on arrival to school in the morning.

Respiratory hygiene

- Catch it, Bin it, Kill it!
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.
- Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If one is not available, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand.
- Dispose of tissues into a disposable rubbish bag and immediately clean your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser.

Enhanced cleaning

- Enhanced cleaning using standard bleach or detergents should include:
  - Cleaning of rooms (including staff rooms) / shared areas used by different groups should be cleaned more frequently throughout the day, and if possible between use by different groups.
  - Toilets and frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, work surfaces, remote controls and electronic devices, should be cleaned more frequently - at least twice a day including at the start or end of the working day.

Enhanced cleaning

- Classroom based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared within the class; these should be cleaned regularly and always between use by different groups.
- Books taken home and returned to class can be quarantined for 72 hours without cleaning and passed to the next child.
- Resources shared between classes or groups, e.g. sports, art and science equipment, should be cleaned frequently, meticulously and always between groups, or rotated to allow them to be left unused and out of reach for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different groups.

Reducing contacts and social distancing

- Contacts between children should be limited where possible but it is recognised this may be difficult for younger children.
- How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:
  - grouping children together and maintaining consistent groups
  - avoiding contact between groups, for example by managing breaks so that they remain in their groups, staggering start and finish times and no assemblies.
  - arranging classrooms with forward facing desks

Reducing contacts and social distancing

- Staff should aim to social distance from other staff (aim for 2m) and where possible reduce contact with children (although this will not always be possible). This is **particularly important** for staff who move between cohorts of children.
- Staff should minimise time spent within 1m of another person (ideally less than 1 minute).
- Particularly think about how you can social distance during staff break times and lunch times – this may require rotas for the staff room.
- The more you can reduce your contact with other people, the lower the risk of virus transmission.

Reducing contacts and social distancing

- If you effectively social distance, in most circumstances you will not be considered a contact if a colleague tests positive for COVID-19, and therefore will not be require to self-isolate for 14 days.

- Parents should be reminded that they should be social distancing from others outside their household during drop off and pick up, and not congregate outside the school for longer than necessary.

Face-coverings

- Face-coverings are not recommended for use in primary schools.
- This is because:
  - Younger children may have difficulty using them correctly - misuse of face-coverings can increase the risk of spread of COVID-19 (eg because the user is touching their face more often without washing their hands).
  - Within a school children are mixing within the same group.
  - They can impede communication and therefore negatively impact education, particularly for children with SEND.

Temperature checks

- We do not recommend that children have their temperature checked on entrance to school. This is because:
  - There is little scientific evidence to support temperature screening as a reliable method for detection of COVID-19 or other febrile illness, especially if used as the main method of testing.
  - Infected people who do not develop a fever or who do not show any symptoms would not be detected by a temperature reading and therefore may be falsely reassured.

When to self-isolate

- If you have any of the symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- If you have been tested positive for COVID-19.
- If you have a household contact with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (awaiting test/ test results), or who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- If you are identified as being a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 – either by Test and Trace, or as part of a risk assessment following a positive case within the school.

Symptoms suggestive of COVID-19

- A new, continuous cough
- A high temperature (37.8 degrees or more)
- A loss of, or change in, smell or taste (anosmia)

How long should I self-isolate for?

- If you are tested positive for COVID-19, you need to self-isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms.
- If you have a prolonged raised temperature, you will need to continue to self-isolate beyond 10 days, until 48 hours after your last raised temperature.
- If you are a household contact of someone with symptoms or a positive test result for COVID-19, you need to self-isolate for **14 days** from when their symptoms started **EVEN if you had a negative test result**.
- If you have been identified as being a workplace or social contact with someone with COVID-19, you need to self-isolate for **14 days** from your last contact with them **EVEN if you had a negative test result**.

What if I as a member of staff become unwell?

- If you develop any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, do not attend work. If you become unwell whilst at work, inform a colleague as soon as possible, maintain 2m distancing from colleagues and children, and go home. Public transport should be avoided if at all possible. Ensure vigilant hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene whilst leaving school and travelling home.
- When you arrive home, arrange a COVID-19 test by calling 119 or going to the website: https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-workers

What if I as a member of staff become unwell?

- Inform the school by your usual process that you are off work due to suspected COVID-19.
- When you receive your test result, inform the school as soon as possible. (You should have details to inform a relevant member of the school out of hours, in case of a positive result requiring urgent action.)
- If the result is negative, you can return to school when well (unless you have been advised to self-isolate for 14 days as a contact of a positive case).
- If the result is positive, you will need to self-isolate at home for 10 days (as discussed), and will be contacted by Test and Trace.

What if a child in my class becomes unwell?

- Whilst a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, with appropriate adult supervision if required depending on the age of the child.
- A window should be opened for ventilation.
- If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.
- If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

What if a child in my class becomes unwell?

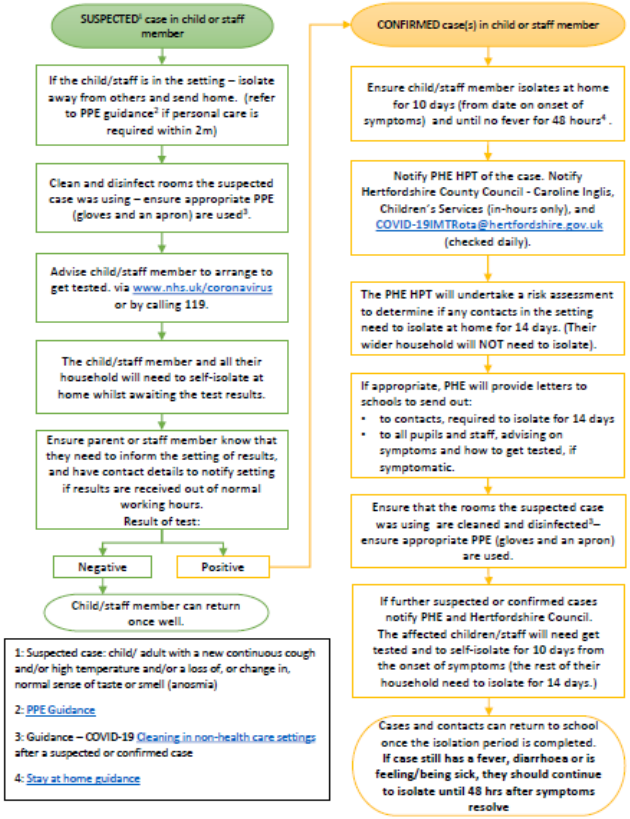
- PPE should be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if direct personal care is needed and a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs). (Fluid resistant surgical mask, and if direct contact – gloves and an apron).
- Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.
- Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

What happens if there is a case in the school?

- If a child or staff member tests positive they must inform the school directly of the positive result (see flow chart).
- The school must then inform Public Health England (0300 303 8537 or eoe.crc@phe.gov.uk) and Hertfordshire County Council covid-19imtrota@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- The school will be advised by Public Health England and Hertfordshire County Council of what further action needs to be taken. If necessary, template letters will be provided for communication with staff and parents.

COVID-19 flowchart for schools (updated 25/08/2020)

Prevent the spread of infection by maintaining high standards of hygiene, including hand washing and regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces. This will help prevent COVID-19 spreading in schools, as well as other infectious diseases. If you have any general questions or concerns, please contact the Hertfordshire Public Health Team by emailing COVID-19IMTRota@hertfordshire.gov.uk. Please note: THIS IS ONLY FOR USE BY SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS STAFF ONLY and it is not to be given to parents or students.
To notify a case(s), please call the Public Health England (PHE) Health Protection Team (HPT) in the East of England on 0300 303 8537 (option 1). If the matter is not urgent you can also email eoe.crc@phe.gov.uk.



1: Suspected case: child/ adult with a new continuous cough and/or high temperature and/or a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

2: PPE Guidance

3: Guidance – COVID-19 Cleaning in non-health care settings after a suspected or confirmed case

4: Stay at home guidance

COVID-19 flowchart for schools

http://www.intra.thegrid.org.uk/info/coronavirus/

NHS Test and Trace

- Test and Trace is informed of all positive test results and contacts those who have been tested positive to identify their contacts during their possible infective period (48 hours before symptoms start until 10 days after), so that the contacts can be advised to self-isolate.
- If a person has identified that they have been in a school during this time (eg as a member of staff or pupil), the school will be contacted, to discuss a further risk assessment.
- However, as previously mentioned, we advise that the individual contacts the school themselves as soon as they have received the result, rather than waiting for T+T, so that prompt action can be taken.

Where can I find more information?

Herts for Learning FAQs

http://www.intra.thegrid.org.uk/info/coronavirus/

Government guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works

thank you

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