



CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOL SETTING – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STAFF

Where a case of confirmed COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has been reported in a person with links to a school setting, all close contacts of the case who need to take specific actions with regard to testing and self-isolation will be identified, contacted and advised by the Public Health Agency (PHA) Contact Tracing Service.

If you are contacted by PHA Contact Tracing Service, please follow the guidance that they provide to you. Information on the latest self-isolation requirements can be found on NI Direct (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>). **The advice on what to do if a close contact changed on 16th August 2021.**

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

Please book a free PCR test, even if an earlier one was negative. Your child should stay at home and self-isolate until you receive the result. Please see [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) for guidance on whether other people in your household also need to self-isolate while you are waiting for your child's PCR result.

Tests can be arranged at your closest testing site or by requesting a postal kit which will be sent to your home address. You can choose whichever option is more convenient for you. Going for a COVID test is one of the reasons your child can leave home during the self-isolation period, however, they should not use public transport. Please order a postal test if you do not have private transport to a test site.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

- **Please get vaccinated if you are eligible and haven't already done so**
- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further information

For further information, please see the NI Direct website [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) the Public Health Agency website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus> or contact NHS 111. If your child feels unwell and you are worried about their symptoms or about anyone else in the home, please contact your GP.

Public Health Agency advice to schools regarding the revised arrangements for the Identification of Close Contacts of COVID-19 cases in Schools

Following the joint memo to the Executive from the Ministers of Education and Health dated 9th September 2021, from 8am Friday 10th September 2021, the 'Operational Guidance on managing positive COVID-19 notifications in the school setting' version 19/08/2021 has been withdrawn.

School leaders will no longer be required to respond to every COVID-19 case and identify contacts. Instead, the Public Health Agency (PHA) Contact Tracing Service will undertake a more targeted approach and will only contact the school Principal for assistance in certain circumstances, for example, to obtain parent or staff contact information. This will help reduce the potential for large numbers of pupils being required to self-isolate and also reduce the amount of time spent by schools contact tracing.

From Friday 10th September 2021, when the PHA Contact Tracing Service (CTS) contacts a confirmed COVID-19 case associated with a school (either a pupil or staff member), they will ask for their support (or that of their parent or guardian) in identifying their close contacts.

Those identified as close contacts by this process will be contacted by the PHA CTS by phone or text, advised they have been identified as a close contact and directed to advice on self-isolation and testing

(<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>). Parents will be encouraged to inform the school of their child's positive test or identification as a close contact as part of routine absence reporting.

PHA management of positive cases will all be coordinated by PHA CTS so schools will no longer need to contact the PHA COVID-19 Schools Team or complete the online form if they are made aware of a positive case. The online form will no longer be available from 8am Friday 10th September 2021.

If you require advice about a case, or other measures required in the school setting, you can contact the Education Authority (EA) emergency helpline for COVID-19 suspected or confirmed cases on 028 9041 8056 or at confirmed.covid19@eani.org.uk. This helpline is open term-time Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and 10am to 2pm at weekends and Bank Holidays. Should public health advice and assistance be required, the EA will pass the details to PHA and request they contact the school principal.

The PHA Contact Tracing Service will still need to contact schools in certain circumstances and we would appreciate your continued help and support. These circumstances may include:

- Difficulties identifying close contacts directly with parents or children due to age or issues with communication;
- Difficulty obtaining contact information for cases and/ or contacts;
- Complex settings with particular risk or vulnerabilities where joint assessment is needed;
- Large clusters and outbreaks identified through on-going PHA surveillance.

A 'warn and inform' letter is available on C2K, which schools may wish to use to inform parents of cases in the school and to remind everyone of the steps we should all be taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school and outside it.

It is anticipated that schools will continue to implement mitigations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission including cleaning, ventilation, face coverings, consistent grouping and regular asymptomatic testing using lateral flow devices for all staff and post-primary pupils.

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