

Guidance on responding to potential COVID-19 cases in schools

Q1. What happens if there is a child or staff member with symptoms of COVID-19 in my child's school, will they be tested, how long will that take?

When a child, young person, or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus (COVID-19), they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days and arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19. They can do this by visiting NHS website to arrange or contact NHS 119 via telephone if they do not have internet access. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. Routine testing arrangements now extend to children over the age of 2 years so access to testing at a satellite centre such as Leighton Hospital or one of the mobile testing centres would be relatively straight forward and quick to arrange. At present results take between 24–72 hours to be returned. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where the child, young person, or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

Where the child, young person, or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. As schools are using the “Bubble” approach to limit the number of contacts in each classroom group, only those children and staff closely associated with the child who has tested positive would need to be sent home to self-isolate. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

Q2. Is it safe to send my child in during this time?

If your child has no symptoms and is otherwise well, they can continue to attend school. All schools have completed risk assessments to ensure they are COVID-19 compliant and meet the safety measures set out in the Department for Education Guidance. Parents are asked to avoid public transport and where possible walk or cycle to school.

Q3. What happens if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in my child's school?

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise the school(s) and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases, a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.