**Managing COVID-19 in education**

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**1. Living with COVID-19 and the way forward**

The Government has set out its [next steps for living with COVID](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-next-steps-for-living-with-covid) and [the end of routine testing in schools, colleges and childcare settings](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/03/30/living-with-covid-the-end-of-routine-testing-in-schools-colleges-and-childcare-settings/).

We know that this will be concerning for some, however thanks to the success of the vaccination programme and access to antivirals, alongside natural immunity and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk, the population now has much stronger protection against COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic enabling us to move to a less restrictive way of life and respond to COVID-19 in the same way as other respiratory viruses.

The level of infections within a setting will be influenced by the community picture and everything we have learnt through the pandemic will help us to [live safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19) having embedded these into our day to day professional and private lives. Please remember;

* If you are eligible, please take up the offer to [get vaccinated](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/?utm_source=29%20March%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)
* Ensure good [ventilation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus/ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19#ventilation-in-the-workplace-and-non-domestic-settings) is in place
* 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
* Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day
* Make use of face coverings where recommended (e.g. on school transport when respiratory virus rates are high)
* If you have [symptoms of a respiratory illness](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#symptoms-of-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19), **and** a high temperature, or do not feel well enough to attend your setting, stay at home and avoid contact with people until you are well enough to resume normal activities and no longer have a high temperature (and no longer need medication to reduce a temperature)
* [Children and young people (aged 18 years and under) who have mild symptoms of a respiratory infection](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#children-and-young-people-aged-18-years-and-under-who-have-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19) such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education setting
* Adults and children who have experienced diarrhoea or vomiting should stay away from school for two days after symptoms have gone.
* If you do have access to tests and [test positive for COVID-19 and are an adult](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#what-to-do-if-you-have-a-positive-covid-19-test-result) you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 days after the day your test was taken (or longer if you are still poorly/have a temperature), which is when you are most infectious. Or for 3 days [for children and young people aged 18 and under](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#Children) (or longer if you are still poorly/have a [high temperature](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/)). More detail is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19)

**2. People who are Close contacts of a positive case**

If you are a contact of someone with COVID-19 but do not live with them or did not stay in their household overnight, you are at lower risk of becoming infected. There is guidance on protecting yourself and others in [living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19). There is no need to isolate.

Adults who are high risk close contacts should take steps to limit close contact with others during the period that they may be infectious before developing symptoms as outlined in the above guidance.

Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal. There is no need to isolate.

**3. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health, safety & wellbeing webpage**

Our NCC Health and Safety team have worked tirelessly throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to support all Norfolk settings. Although we all still face challenges from the pandemic, it is now entering a new phase, one where we are all vastly more experienced in dealing with the virus and are learning to live alongside it.

At the start of the pandemic NCC made Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health & Safety guidance available for all settings in Norfolk, regardless of whether they subscribed to our services. This was done via the via the [Coronavirus - Health, safety & wellbeing webpage](https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/health-safety-and-wellbeing). With the shift in strategy nationally to one of living with the virus, the response to dealing with COVID-19 is being merged into standard sickness policies and general health and safety arrangements.

In light of these changes, we have reviewed the content of our [Coronavirus - Health, safety & wellbeing webpage](https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/health-safety-and-wellbeing) . We have committed to continuing provision of some core guidance on managing respiratory infections including COVID-19 which reflects all of the changes highlighted in this briefing. However, these will be phased out over the next year when any updates will only be available to LA maintained and subscribing schools via infospace. If you don’t subscribe to the full service but would like to please email [healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk) for more information

**4. Expectations relating to COVID-19 testing**

Free testing for the general public ended on 1st April. The government has retained the ability to enable a rapid testing response should it be needed, such as the emergence of a new variant of concern.

Asymptomatic testing

LFD Asymptomatic test kits will no longer be freely available, and so for the majority of people there will not be an expectation to test. [It is not recommended that children and young people are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a healthcare professional](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#Children).

Regular asymptomatic testing ceased in most mainstream settings in February and from 1st April is no longer recommended in any education or childcare settings, including in SEND, alternative provision and children’s social care settings. Therefore, settings will no longer be able to order test kits

Residential SEND settings may be advised by their local health protection team to re-introduce some time-limited asymptomatic testing. This would be an exceptional measure, for targeted groups of staff and pupils or students (secondary age or above) in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak. These settings were scheduled to receive an automatic delivery of contingency supply test kits during the week commencing Monday 28 March

The DfE and UKHSA have asked you please **do not** distribute any test kits to staff, pupils, or students unless advised by your local health protection team, local authority or director of public health. UKHSA will issue further communications in due course about how to manage any excess stock of test kits.

Symptomatic testing

PCR Symptomatic test kits will no longer be freely available to all, these will chiefly be used in medical settings where a diagnosis is required to inform treatment.

People over 12 years old [whose immune system means they are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk#treatments) should have test kits ready for home use if they develop symptoms and if positive may be offered antibody and antiviral [treatments](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk#treatment) by the NHS. If you are eligible but have not been sent test kits, please order them via the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests) website or by dialling 119.

**5. Other guidance changes**

Most of the specific COVID-19 guidance for education and childcare settings was withdrawn from GOV.UK on Friday 1 April. All content and guidance on the Schools and Colleges Google Document Sharing Platforms has now been removed.

Education and childcare settings should consult UKHSA’s updated ‘[health protection in schools and other childcare facilities’ guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities) for advice on managing specific infectious diseases, **including COVID-19**.

In addition, settings should consult the [DfE’s Emergency Planning and Response (EPR) guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings) to ensure their emergency plans cover the possibility of future public health incidents, including COVID-19.

You may also find the following education specific guidance useful;

* [Good estate management for schools](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/health-and-safety) This includes updated guidance on ventilation
* [Responsibilities and duties for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools/responsibilities-and-duties-for-schools)
* [NCC Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Health, safety & wellbeing](https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/health-safety-and-wellbeing) which will be updated shortly to reflect all of the updated guidance

The following respiratory illness and COVID-19 specific guidance may also be useful;

* [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#children-and-young-people-aged-18-years-and-under-who-have-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19)
* [Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19)
* [Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus/ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19#ventilation-in-the-workplace-and-non-domestic-settings)
* [Reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, in the workplace](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-the-spread-of-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19-in-the-workplace?utm_source=07%20April%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)

You may also find the DfE [Living with Covid - Next Steps for Education and Childcare Settings Webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7WKDcUd71g) useful to understand the new approach.

All of these guidance documents are reflected in our new guidance available on the [Norfolk Schools pages](https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/health-safety-and-wellbeing)

**6. Contacting the Norfolk Outbreak Management Centre**

Norfolk Outbreak Management Centre (NOMC) will be scaling back their operations in the light of the cessation of contact tracing, the removal of expectations to test for COVID-19, and the shift to living along the virus.

We are pleased to report that NOMC have however confirmed that they will continue to remain operational to support Norfolk educational (and other) settings for the remainder of the current academic year and through the summer.

Settings can continue to contact NOMC via the [online form](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fforms.office.com%2Fpages%2Fresponsepage.aspx%3Fid%3DfhcZFOBXD0-v8P1htUnRDrJsB4R3_JxCgO08TugXK59UQTBWNVpYVUZLRUVVTEFPMUIzVFFWQzhPRiQlQCN0PWcu&data=04%7C01%7Candrew.ridgway%40norfolk.gov.uk%7C1050ecc3dd8b4054d79408d9cf6b6dc1%7C1419177e57e04f0faff0fd61b549d10e%7C0%7C0%7C637768882567318362%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=0TqYMK%2BArc4OieXeBQPrScYAw7Kw0qISMn74JImSv%2Fw%3D&reserved=0) if they are concerned about an outbreak and require further support. You do not need to report outbreaks to NOMC unless you require advice or support.

Please note that the NOMC operates weekdays Monday - Friday 08:00-17:00.

**7. Vaccination**

The in-school COVID-19 vaccination programme for 12 to 15 year olds ended on Friday 1st April. 12 to 15 year olds will still be able to access the vaccine outside of school, at a vaccination centre, pharmacy or walk-in centre.

Healthy 5 to 11 year olds will be offered the COVID-19 vaccine from the beginning of April. Vaccinations will take place outside of school, in vaccination centres, pharmacies, GP surgeries and walk-in centres. Parents of 5 to 11 year olds will receive a letter from the NHS with further information on the vaccine.

For 5 to 11 year old and 12 to 15 year old vaccinations, please signpost parents to where they can [book COVID-19 vaccination appointments online](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/?utm_source=29%20March%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19), at a vaccination centre or pharmacy, or [find a walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/?utm_source=29%20March%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) without needing an appointment.

**8. Contingency planning**

Please ensure you are familiar with the new [Emergency planning and response for](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1065829/DfE_Emergency_Guidance.pdf)

[education, childcare, and children’s social care settings](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1065829/DfE_Emergency_Guidance.pdf) guidance and plan appropriately.

The priority will remain for schools to deliver high-quality face-to-face education to all pupils. Remote education should only ever be considered as a short-term measure and as a last resort where in person attendance is not possible. The recently published [Providing remote education: guidance for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providing-remote-education-guidance-for-schools/providing-remote-education-guidance-for-schools) expands on this further and provides some useful guidance.

**9. School attendance guidance**

[School attendance: guidance for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=eb951fac-8f1e-48c0-8468-0d7b761677d0&utm_content=daily) has an updated ‘Addendum’ to show that schools are no longer advised to record pupils who are not attending school for reasons related to coronavirus using Code X (not attending in circumstances related coronavirus).