

**Coronavirus**  
**Frequently Asked Questions for School Based Employees**  
**Number 7**

**Question 1:**

Should I expect all staff to be working in school?

**Answer:**

The following principles will apply:

1. Staff should not attend if they have symptoms of coronavirus – they should arrange to be tested and must not attend until it has been confirmed that they have tested negatively. If staff have symptoms or have tested positive for coronavirus they will usually need to self-isolate for at least 10 days. They will usually need to self-isolate for 14 days if:

- Someone they live with has **symptoms of coronavirus** or tested positive
- Someone in their support bubble has symptoms of coronavirus or tested positive
- They have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

If any member of the household/support bubble has been sent home from school/workplace as a precaution but are not displaying symptoms then the member of staff can continue attending school until that household member starts displaying symptoms.

2. If a member of staff is required to self-isolate, they will continue to receive full pay. (Staff are expected to work at home during periods of self-isolation wherever possible.)

3. If the member of staff is unable to attend work due to childcare responsibilities arising from school closure/closure of a bubble then initially schools should work with employees to consider flexible working arrangements, including working from home, adapting working patterns to care for children or dependants or taking time off to enable further support. Any time off would be classed as dependent leave and should be recorded as such.

4. Where schools apply the measures outlined in the DfE guidance for the full opening of schools the risks to all staff will be mitigated significantly, most staff including those who are clinically vulnerable and pregnant employees (including those in the third trimester), should be able to return to the workplace. It is advised that those in the most at risk categories take particular care.

5. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should have now returned to school in September 2020 provided their school has implemented the system of controls in line with the school's own workplace risk assessment. In all respects, the clinically extremely vulnerable should now follow the same guidance as the clinically vulnerable population, taking particular care to practise frequent, thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home and/or workspace.

6. A member of staff who lives with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable should have now returned to school in September 2020.

7. Some staff with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report, which looked at different factors including age and sex, where people live, deprivation, ethnicity, people's occupation and care home residence. These staff should have now returned to school in September as long as the system of controls set out in the schools risk assessment are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future. If people with significant risk factors are concerned, it is recommended that schools discuss their concerns and explain the measures the school is putting in place to reduce risks as part of an individual risk assessment. School leaders should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures where appropriate.

8. People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from COVID-19 should have now returned to school.

**Question 2:**

How do I support a member of staff who is pregnant?

**Answer:**

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category and should take particular care to follow the preventative measures. Schools are reminded that they must have a risk assessment in place for any pregnant women and this should consider any additional measures required because of COVID-19.

The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RCOG) has published occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women. [This document](#) includes advice for women from 28 weeks gestation with underlying health conditions who may be at greater risk. (N.B. This document also refers to specialist guidelines for each workplace for example DfE Guidance for Full Reopening of Schools September 2020.)

**Question 3:**

How do I support an employee who is required to self-isolate following contact from track and trace?

**Answer:**

Employees who have been asked to self-isolate by track and trace should not attend work. It is important that the school maintains regular contact with the individual during the self-isolation period. Where practical an employee will be expected to work from home to support the school's strategy on remote learning or any other activities that can be undertaken remotely.

**Question 4:**

How do I respond to a member of staff who says that they want to wear a face covering in school?

**Answer:**

The DfE published guidance confirmed that PHE do not recommend the use of face coverings/clear visors in schools in general. However, it has been clarified that, following appropriate risk assessment(s) and supportive discussions with staff, it may be appropriate in individual circumstances or situations to enable staff to use a face covering. Face coverings are not recommended but are not banned in any circumstances within schools and may be appropriate following risk assessment(s) and or careful consideration. Should any local restrictions be applied, then face coverings may be required in areas of congestion around a school. This is in line with current national guidance.

**Question 5:**

What impact does absence from COVID-19 have on the sickness absence procedures?

**Answer:**

Given the exceptional circumstances, schools may wish to suspend triggers in occupational sickness policies for any absences connected with coronavirus. Schools are advised to review the sickness absence procedures adopted by the school to exclude sickness absence due to COVID-19 when considering whether to commence action under the intermittent short-term absence procedures outlined in the policy. Schools are advised to contact the HR advisory team if they are proposing to commence steps within the sickness absence procedures and COVID-19 absence is involved.

**Question 6:**

How does sickness absence because of COVID-19 affect sick pay entitlement?

**Answer:**

Employees who are off work due to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 due to the symptoms displayed, and are unfit to work, should have their absence recorded as sickness under the sickness reason of COVID-19. Such absences will normally be reckonable for entitlement to Sick Pay. Schools should, however, take into account the provisions of the "Burgundy Book" as follows: *"if an approved medical practitioner attests that there is evidence to show a reasonable probability that an absence was due to an infectious or contagious illness contracted directly in the course of the teacher's employment full pay shall be allowed for such period of absence as may be authorised by the approved medical practitioner as being due to the illness, and such absence shall not be reckoned against the teacher's entitlement to [occupational] sick leave"*

**Question 7:**

How should we manage HR processes such as Disciplinary or Grievances/ sickness absence meetings?

**Answer:**

This should be considered on a case by case basis and in discussion with the members of staff involved. Schools will need to consider how best to conduct the process safely. It may be necessary to hold meetings remotely using available technology.

**Question 8:**

If staff have booked a holiday for the October or Christmas break and this means that they will have to quarantine for up to 14 days into term time will they be allowed to work from home on normal pay?

**Answer:**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) continues to advise against non-essential international travel, except to countries and territories exempt from advice against 'all but essential' international travel.

People returning to the UK must self-isolate for 14 days unless they're travelling from a country with a quarantine exemption. Employees who have arranged international travel may experience changes to travel restrictions within the UK which may result in the requirement for self-isolation.

Where self-isolation is required all opportunities to facilitate the employee to work from home during any quarantine period which falls during term-time should be considered. Failing that, great care should be taken to ensure that any requirement to take additional time off is exercised reasonably. Schools are advised to consider requests for absence to quarantine where working from home cannot be arranged in accordance with the leave of absence policy adopted by the school.

These arrangements should be clear, understood and agreed by both parties before the employee embarks on any leave that will require quarantine. Headteachers need to ensure that the school's policy is clear, applied fairly and is reasonable in relation to individual circumstances. Schools would determine this on a case by case basis – taking into account the specific circumstances for example, when the holiday was booked, the amount of time requested etc.

It is not unreasonable to advise employees that overseas travel should not be booked before an employee has agreed the approach with their line manager should they need to quarantine. This will ensure that they can comply with any applicable quarantine measures, including those countries considered exempt to ensure plans are in place should short notice changes be applied.

**Question 9:**

Is there anything to learn from the COVID-19 outbreaks in schools in terms of staffing arrangements?

**Answer:**

The guidance to keep staff consistently working with one bubble or group of pupils wherever possible is important in preventing or limiting the spread of infection. This applies to all groups of staff including teaching support roles and lunchtime supervision staff. Staggering start, finish, lunch and break times for groups and organising the school into zones should all help to limit contact across groups. Where staff do come into contact with more than one group of pupils then the contact time should be minimised and social distancing of 2 metres strictly maintained alongside handwashing and other hygiene measures.

**Question 10:**

What do I do if an individual in school tests positive for coronavirus?

**Answer:**

Schools need to contact the DfE helpline as described below and as soon as possible following this, email [ASCH.TestandTrace@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:ASCH.TestandTrace@derbyshire.gov.uk) and provide information as requested. Please see Test Trace Derbyshire EY Settings and Schools COVID-19 positive notification process document in your Perspective Lite September general folder (dated 21/09/2020) for further details.

The DfE has provided the following guidance:

'DfE's guidance for education and childcare settings sets out the process for managing confirmed positive cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) when the individual is known to have been in a school, college or early years setting. We recognise that there have been some difficulties getting through to the local public health protection teams for advice on action to take on a positive case in the setting. As from 17 September, there will be a new dedicated advice service available to advise nurseries, schools and colleges who have been informed of a confirmed case(s) of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting (i.e. a pupil or staff member testing positive). We are updating our guidance to reflect this change.

This means that instead of calling your local health protection team when there is a confirmed case in your education setting, we will now be asking you to call the DfE's helpline and you will then be directed to the dedicated NHS advice team for nurseries, schools and colleges with confirmed cases.

This new service can be reached by calling DfE's existing helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting the option for reporting a positive case. The line will be open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Please only select this option if you have a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) within your nursery, school or college.

You will be put through to a team of advisors who will inform you what action is needed based on the latest public health advice, and work through a risk assessment to identify close contacts.

This new process will free up capacity of the Public Health England's local health protection teams to deal with more complex cases, for example special schools and universities, or outbreaks where there is more than one confirmed case. Advisors will be responsible for escalating these cases as necessary following a triaging of your circumstances during the call.

The new advice service has been set up to advise the following education settings: early years settings including nurseries; schools including primary schools, infant or junior schools, middle schools, secondary schools, boarding schools, special schools; and further education providers.

The DfE helpline also remains available for all other queries about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to your education and childcare setting on 0800 046 8687. Please listen carefully to the available options and select the one most appropriate to your setting's current situation.'

If you have any queries in relation to this document please contact either [Ian.McKenzie@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.McKenzie@derbyshire.gov.uk) or [Charlotte.Webster-Topley@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:Charlotte.Webster-Topley@derbyshire.gov.uk) or [Carolyn.Lloyd@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.Lloyd@derbyshire.gov.uk)