



# **School COVID19 Outbreak Contingency Plan**

**Highfield Middle School**

**December 2021**

## Introduction

All education and childcare settings are required to have an outbreak management plan (sometimes called a contingency plan) which **outlines how they would operate if any of the measures described in this document were recommended for their setting or area**. This includes how they would ensure every child, pupil or student receives the quantity and quality of education and care to which they are normally entitled.

The school leadership team (SLT) recognises the need to respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 quickly, effectively and proportionately, to ensure a safe school environment whilst minimising the effect of loss of face-to-face education by prioritising measures which ensure business continuity. In all circumstances, the potential benefit of measures to reduce transmission will be weighed against the potential impact on education and restrictions on attendance will only be considered as a last resort. The health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors remains our number one priority.

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the school records the key protective measures in place, including some measures which may need to be re-introduced as part of this plan.

## What is an Outbreak?

Where the number of positive cases substantially increases, this could indicate transmission is happening in the school. At this point, advice is sought from the NCC Public Health Team in the following circumstances:

- 5 pupils or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of pupils or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

Identifying a group that is likely to have mixed closely will be different for each setting. A group will rarely mean a whole setting or year group. For schools, this could include:

- a form group or subject class
- a friendship group mixing at breaktimes
- a sports team
- a group in an after-school activity

The school will also seek public health advice if a pupil, student, child or staff member is admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Hospitalisation could indicate increased severity of illness or a new variant of concern. Support in managing risk assessments and communicating with staff and parents may be offered.

## **Communication and Record Keeping**

This plan is kept under periodic review by Richard Oades (Headteacher) and will be reviewed following an outbreak to identify any aspects which worked well or areas for improvement.

The following arrangements will be put in place in the event of a case of COVID-19:

- Parents are asked to inform the school of any positive COVID-19 case as soon as possible via telephone (if in school hours) or email.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts. From 14<sup>th</sup> December, vaccinated staff and pupils aged 5-18 will no longer be required to self-isolate at home. They will be advised to take daily LFD tests for a week and take a PCR test.
- Details of the positive case will be kept so that any linked cases can be identified - including dates of symptoms/date of positive test/date last in school/details of class or social group.
- NCC Public Health Team are notified of the positive case(s) via the on-line notification form. If at a later date the school become aware that an individual has been hospitalised, the Public Health Team will be notified via the enquiry form. (forms are available via the [Covid management flowchart](#)).
- Staff are informed when there has been a case of COVID-19 within the school and to be vigilant of anyone displaying symptoms.
- Inform and advise communications are sent to parents of groups of pupils who may be possible contacts of the positive case. This will request them to be vigilant for symptoms, keep pupils off school if they become symptomatic, take daily LFD tests and go for a PCR test if they are identified as close contacts.

## **Activating the Plan - Collaboration**

The Local Authority, Director of Public Health for Northumberland, and Public Health England local health protection teams are responsible for managing localised outbreaks. They play an important role in providing support and advice to education and childcare settings. In all situations where this plan is implemented, the school will liaise and cooperate with the above to agree on the most appropriate protective measures which may need to be reintroduced to contain an outbreak, bearing in mind the priority of maintaining school attendance.

The plan will be activated in the following circumstances:

- to help manage a COVID-19 outbreak within the school
- if there is extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and other measures have failed to reduce transmission
- as part of a package of measures responding to a Variant of Concern (VoC)

The Headteacher will contact the NCC Public Health Team if they consider there may be an outbreak within the school due to illness reported. The NCC Public Health Team

will contact the Headteacher from the school if they become aware of a possible outbreak within the school/area from PHE data they receive.

### **Step A – a single case or cases below the threshold of an Outbreak of COVID-19 in setting**

- Parents notify school of a positive case or the school is notified by the NCC Public Health Team.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and advise close contacts to arrange a PCR test. The school is not expected to follow up the results of PCR tests.
- School should note details of the case so that any linked cases within school can be identified.
- Notify the Public Health Team of the positive case(s) via the on-line notification form.
- The actions in the **Communication and Record Keeping section** are implemented.
- Covid risk assessment/existing protective measures are reviewed to identify any areas for improvement. As a very minimum, enhanced cleaning, ongoing hand and respiratory hygiene and good ventilation are already in place.
- Staff/pupils are reminded of the importance of following the protective measures in place within the setting.

### **Step 2 - An outbreak of COVID-19 in setting**

When the school becomes aware of a possible outbreak, the Headteacher will contact the NCC Public Health Team via their enquiry line:

[https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/covid19\\_education\\_eng](https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/covid19_education_eng)

#### **The NCC Public Health Team will:**

- work with the school to identify the cohort the cases belong to and undertake an assessment including number of cases, spread within the school and evidence of on-going transmission.
- work with the school to determine appropriate public health action in the event of an outbreak
- Hold an Outbreak Control Team meeting if required (informed by the public health team's risk assessment)
- Variant of Concern (VOC) cases – may be managed differently. Additional actions / investigations may be undertaken if a new variant is detected and that this will be led by the Health Protection Team in Public Health England (PHE).

#### **The school will:**

- Implement the Outbreak Management Plan.
- Follow protocol as in **Step A for a single case.**

- Review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures they already have in place.
- Consider whether any activities could take place outdoors, including exercise, assemblies, or classes
- Consider ways to improve ventilation indoors, where this would not significantly impact thermal comfort
- Arrange a one-off enhanced cleaning focussing on touch points and any shared equipment
- Follow the advice of the NCC Public Health Team/Outbreak Control Team to implement recommended additional protective measures.
- Follow the actions in the **Communication and Record Keeping section** .

## **Possible Protective Measures – Arrangements**

The following may be considered as additional protective measures to be reintroduced in school in the event of an outbreak.

### **Reintroduction of “bubbles”/Limits on mixing of pupils**

The DfE advise that any recommendation for the reintroduction of ‘bubbles’ is not taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education.

### **Testing – in Year 7 and 8**

The reintroduction of asymptomatic testing sites (ATS) at school or an increase in the use of home testing by staff and pupils.

These measures may be advised:

- for an individual setting or a small cluster of settings only, (in most cases a ‘cluster’ will be no more than 3 or 4 settings linked in the same outbreak), or
- for settings across areas that have been offered an enhanced response package

The NCC Public Health Team will work with the school to agree what testing should be undertaken and identify appropriate resources. The school has pre-planned how on-site testing could be implemented in a way that does not negatively impact on school teaching and learning by:

- Defining testing cohorts – A pragmatic approach is needed based on arrangements within the risk assessment to allow the smallest possible testing cohort to be identified. Whilst the concept of adopting the smallest possible bubble groups has been removed, it may be sensible and practical to avoid the mixing of larger groups based on building, site

layouts and natural bubbles as a control within the current school covid risk assessment.

- Warn and inform parents of cases in group - get tested, symptoms, infection control advice
- If further cases are detected in the initial cohort then wider testing may be considered, however, this will depend on setting / degree of mixing / age of children etc

The school is not expected to keep a record of test results, but may choose to do so.

### **Face coverings (staff, visitors and pupils in Year 7 and above)**

The reintroduction of face coverings is one of the least disruptive protective measures and can be quickly and easily activated. Where this is recommended the school will:

- Agree with NCC Public Health Team if these will be worn in communal areas and/or classrooms, school transport (although these are likely to be already being worn). Where reintroducing these back into the classroom the impact on learning balanced against the risk of transmission will be considered.
- Review and update the school COVID-19 risk assessment/separate face coverings risk assessment.
- Implement the control measures detailed in the risk assessment e.g. reminders on donning and doffing safely, ensure sufficient bins for disposal, ensure there is a supply of disposable face coverings
- letter/messages home to parents informing them of the change in practice.

### **Restricting Attendance**

Due to the number of days of missed on-site education, restricting attendance of pupils at school will only be considered if absolutely necessary and on the advice from the DfE/Government/Public Health Team/Director of Public Health for Northumberland. Where restrictions are put in place across a geographical area, the government will issue detailed operational guidance.

- Where restricted attendance is in place, the school will reactivate its arrangements to enable high quality remote learning via Google Classroom. We will also reintroduce our pastoral support and safeguarding protocols for pupils at home. Pupils entitled to Free School Meals will be provided with a packed lunch or food vouchers where appropriate. IT equipment will be loaned to pupils who need it to access their education.
- Priority for on-site attendance is given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Different measures may be implemented for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils.

## Shielding

Shielding for those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 is currently paused. In the event of a major outbreak or variant of concern that poses a significant risk to individuals on the shielded patient list (SPL), ministers can agree to reintroduce shielding. Shielding would be considered in addition to other measures to address the residual risk to people on the SPL, once the wider interventions are taken into account.

Shielding can only be reintroduced by national government. If this were to happen the school will:

- Reactivate remote learning/support for pupils of the shielding list (see description in previous section).
- Review individual risk assessments for relevant staff. Make arrangements to support working from home.
- Additional resources may be needed – agency staff, staff redeployment.

## Other measures

It may be necessary to cancel, postpone or review arrangements for out of school visits, after school activities or large scale gatherings/events. This will include:

- Educational visits (including residential visits) - Any attendance restrictions should be reflected in the visits risk assessment and setting leaders should consider carefully if the educational visit is still appropriate and safe. Only children who are attending the setting should go on an educational visit. Education settings should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits.
- open days
- transition or taster days
- parental attendance in settings
- performances in settings

## Resources:

[COVID-19 management flowchart](#) – including link to notification/enquiry form.

## **Government Guidance:**

[Operational Guidance for Schools](#)

[“Contingency framework: education and childcare settings”](#)

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