

RE: Step-up Measures in response to education settings meeting DfE threshold for additional interventions (Short-term)

7 October 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

I would like to make you aware of additional interventions that may be considered by your child's education setting (step up measures) in response to meeting the DfE threshold for current cases of COVID-19 as outlined in the contingency framework. In outbreaks where the DfE threshold has been reached the following contingency measures may be introduced **short-term based on a local risk assessment**.

These measures will be considered as part of a local response in consultation with the local authority health protection team and this is supported by the DfE contingency framework.

Individual education settings all have a contingency plan in place for when they have met the DfE threshold for cases and they may include some or all the following measures:

PCR Testing

Household contacts of a confirmed case (PCR positive) should have a PCR test even if they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19. As part of the local response, household contacts **who are pupils** may be advised to remain at home unless they have a negative PCR result reported. This means that pupils who have a household contact who is a confirmed case (PCR positive) may be advised by the education setting to take a PCR test and not attend the setting while they are waiting on the result. If the PCR result is negative, then pupils would be recommended to have a further PCR test 4 or 5 days after the first PCR as a precaution. If their first PCR was negative, they would be advised to continue to attend the setting while they are waiting on their second PCR result unless they develop any of the **3 main symptoms of COVID-19**.

The **3 main symptoms** of COVID-19 are:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of taste / smell

Everyone who is a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (PCR positive) in the school setting is recommended to have a PCR test. If the pupil is not a household contact, they can continue to go about their routine activities when waiting on their PCR result and can continue to attend the education setting unless they have any of the 3 main symptoms of COVID-19.

It is also recommended that they have a further PCR 4 or 5 days after the first PCR. The PCR should not be repeated at more frequent intervals unless the close contact develops symptoms. Anyone who has had a positive PCR in the past 90 days should not be retested unless they have new symptoms of COVID-19.

Those infected with COVID-19 especially children, do not always show the typical COVID symptoms listed above. Anyone with any of the following **precautionary symptoms** associated with COVID-19 are recommended to have a PCR test but may continue to attend the setting while they are waiting on their results. Precautionary symptoms may include:

- Headaches
- Aches & pains
- Feeling tired without any good reason
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Tummy ache in children

These symptoms can be experienced by someone with a different illness other than COVID-19, and you should consider contacting 111 for medical advice if required.

Twice weekly LFD testing of all pupils from Year 7 upwards and staff in all education settings is recommended, unless the person has symptoms of COVID-19 / has tested PCR positive in the past 90 days. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should have a PCR test and **not an LFD test.**

What to expect if there is an outbreak in your child's education setting

Education settings are no longer required to identify close contacts of COVID-19 in their setting. If there is a confirmed case in the setting, they will send you a "warn and inform" letter to let you know that this is the case. Pupils who have mixed closely with the confirmed case e.g. same class / group of friends (if known) will be advised to have a PCR test if they have not already had one in the previous 4/5 days nor tested PCR positive in the previous 90 days. If there is a large outbreak the school will **not** be expected to notify you every time another confirmed case is reported. They will, however, provide general updates on the progress of the outbreak.

Temporary control measures that may be considered in your child's education setting when they have an outbreak and where continued transmission within the setting is likely to be happening (DfE threshold has been reached). These are referred to as step up measures and include the following actions:

- Reducing mixing between year groups / classes
- Introducing the use of face coverings in classrooms and communal areas for anyone age 11 and over, if appropriate
- Cancelling large school gatherings e.g., assemblies, open evenings, scheduled sports events, residential school trips and school staff meetings. This will be based on a risk assessment discussed with the local authority health protection cell.

- Moving to on-line learning if case numbers are high and / if there are staffing issues (again, following a discussion with the local authority).

In accordance with the DfE contingency framework Step up measures will be introduced for as short a period as possible to be effective and will be reviewed every 14 days to determine whether or not they are still required or can be stepped down.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Robinson".

Rachel Robinson
Director of Public Health Shropshire