Department for Education

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Updated guidance for education settings on coronavirus (COVID-19)

Today, the Department for Education and Public Health England have issued updated guidance for education settings on COVID-19. This guidance will assist staff in addressing COVID-19 in educational settings. This includes childcare, schools, further and higher educational institutions.

What you need to know:

- staff, young people and children should stay at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature to avoid spreading infection to others. Otherwise they should attend education or work as normal
- if staff, young people or children become unwell on site with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they should be sent home
- clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual using your standard cleaning products
- supervise young children to ensure they wash their hands for 20 seconds more often than usual with soap and water or hand sanitiser and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues

The updated guidance can be found here:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19#contents

Current advice remains in place: no education or children's social care setting should close in response to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case unless advised to do so by Public Health England.

The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the impact of closing schools on both children's education and on the workforce would be substantial, but the benefit to public health may not be. Decisions on future advice to education or children's social care settings will be taken based on the latest and best scientific evidence, which at this stage suggests children are a lower risk group.

Recording school pupil absences

Where a pupil is in self-isolation, in accordance with latest information and advice from Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England, the pupil should be recorded as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances in the attendance register. Code Y (Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) should be used in this instance.

If a pupil does not attend school, despite the school operating as usual and the pupil is not self-isolating, they should be marked as absent. It is for headteachers to determine whether or not the absence is authorised depending on the individual circumstances.

Where a pupil cannot attend school due to illness, as normally would happen, the pupil should be recorded as absent in the attendance register and the school will authorise the absence. Code I (Illness) should be used in this instance.

Handwashing advice

The most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves is to wash their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Public Health England recommends that in addition to handwashing before eating, and after coughing and sneezing, everyone should also wash hands after using toilets and travelling on public transport.

Watch this short NHS film for guidance:

- https://youtu.be/bQCP7waTRWU

Department for Education coronavirus helpline

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday), 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday)

Please note, we are currently experiencing high volumes of calls. We appreciate your patience at this time and apologise for any wait that you may experience. To ensure that we answer your calls as quickly as possible we have now extended our opening hours to cover weekends.

If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.

Where to find the latest information

Updates on COVID-19:

- https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Guidance for educational settings:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19

Guidance for social or community care and residential settings:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings-on-covid-19

Travel advice for those travelling and living overseas:

- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus

Educational resources:

- https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-coronavirus-/resources
- https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools

Latest Department for Education information:

- https://twitter.com/educationgovuk
- https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/

Please keep your GIAS school contacts up to date

If you work in a school, please take this opportunity to review your contact information in Get Information About Schools (GIAS).

To update your record, please go to the GIAS home page, "Sign in" using your "DfE Sign-in" credentials and select GIAS from your available services here:

- https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/