



Nexus Education Schools Trust

COVID-19: Outbreak Management Plan

Approved by: NEST Central Team **Date:** March 2022

Last reviewed on: March 3rd 2022

Next review due by: Following changes to Government Guidance

1. Introduction

The Government has made it a national priority that education and childcare settings should continue to operate as normally as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the protections the country has built through vaccinations and new treatments, England is now able to move into a new phase of managing COVID-19. This means that from 24 February 2022 the legal requirement to self-isolate has been removed. From 21 February the Government are no longer advising regular asymptomatic testing in most education settings, and COVID-19 will be increasingly managed in line with other infectious diseases through public health guidance.

NEST will continue to have an **Outbreak Management Plan** which details how measures would be temporarily reintroduced to manage risk and minimise disruption to face-to-face education and childcare from any rise in Covid infections.

This plan is based on the [contingency framework for managing local outbreaks](#) of COVID-19 and the [schools operational guidance from step 4](#), provided by the Department for Education (DfE).

The [operational guidance](#) sets out the measures that all education settings should have in place to manage COVID-19 risk day-to-day. Schools will consider taking extra action if they face severe operational disruption to face-to-face education.

Local authorities, DsPH (Directors of Public Health) and HPTs (Health Protection Teams) are responsible for managing localised outbreaks. They play an important role in providing support and advice to education and childcare settings.

The thresholds, detailed below, will be used as an indication for when to seek public health advice.

- a higher than previously experienced and/or rapidly increasing number of staff or pupil absences due to COVID-19 infection
- evidence of severe disease due to COVID-19, for example if a pupil, student, child or staff member is admitted to hospital due to COVID-19
- a cluster of cases where there are concerns about the health needs of vulnerable staff or students within the affected group

In addition, for pupils and staff in Additional Provision:

- 2 pupils and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period and/or there are concerns about the health needs of vulnerable individuals within the affected group

Identifying a group that is likely to have mixed closely will be different for each setting. Examples are given below for each section, but a group will rarely mean a whole setting or year group.

For early years, this could include:

- a nursery class
- a friendship group who often play together
- staff and children taking part in the same activity session together

For schools, this could include:

- a class group
- a friendship group mixing at breaktimes
- a sports team
- a group in a before or after-school activity

2. Seeking public health advice

When one of the thresholds above is met, we will review the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures already in place (see NEST Covid risk assessment March 2022). We will consider:

- Increasing the number of activities that take place outside, if possible.
- One-off extended enhanced cleaning focusing on touch points and any shared equipment will be put in place.

We will also seek public health advice from a director of public health or health protection team. The Headteacher will be responsible for seeking this advice and will do so by telephoning the DfE helpline (0800 046 8687, option 1).

NEST central team will also contact the Local Authority on the school's behalf. Please contact Lisa Bromley lbromley@nestschools.org

A director of public health, their team, or a HPT may give settings advice on whether to take extra action, reflecting the local situation. If they judge that additional action should be taken, they might advise the setting to take some or all of the other measures described in this document.

Other measures

Parents, carers, pupils and staff will be informed promptly about the introduction of control measures. This will be done via email/letters sent home with pupils once a decision has been made.

If recommended, we will limit:

- Residential educational visits – we have considered the financial impact of limiting a residential visit and the protection needed for this.
- Open days – we will move to remote open days for potential parents and carers.
- Transition or taster days
- Parents and carers coming into school - we will use remote parent/carer consultations
- Live performances

If recommended, we will reintroduce:

- Bubbles, to reduce mixing between groups. Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' will not be taken lightly and will take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education.
- Face coverings in communal areas and classrooms for staff and visitors (unless exempt) may temporarily, and exceptionally, be advised by DsPH for an individual setting, as part of their responsibilities in outbreak management.
- Testing, if recommended.

3. Attendance restrictions

High quality face-to-face education remains a government priority. Attendance restrictions will only be considered as a short-term measure and as a last resort:

- for individual settings, on public health advice in extreme cases of operational disruption to staffing or where other recommended measures have not mitigated against risks to face-to-face education
- across an area, on government advice to suppress or manage a dangerous variant and to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS.

In all circumstances, priority will continue to be given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers to attend to their normal timetables. Where measures include attendance restrictions, the DfE may advise on any other groups that should be prioritised. High-quality remote learning will be provided for all other pupils.

4. Safeguarding

We will review the NEST Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to make sure it reflects the local restrictions and remains effective.

We will aim to have a trained Dedicated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy DSL on site wherever possible. We will ensure remote access to a DSL if needed.

On occasions where there is no DSL or deputy on site, a senior leader will take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site and work with the NEST Central Team.

DSLs and Deputy DSLs are named on each school's website and can be contacted through the school office.

When vulnerable pupils are absent, we will:

- Speak to parents/carers and, where applicable, social workers and the local authority, to work out the reason for absence
- Encourage attendance
- Make sure vulnerable pupils can access appropriate education and support while at home
- Maintain contact and check regularly that the pupil is able to access remote education provision.