



Northumberland
County Council

**Model School COVID19 Outbreak
Contingency Plan**

Hillcrest School

Updated: 1 February 2022

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 management team (SMT) 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 [Covid Risk Assessment](#) 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 may need to be sought from the NCC Public Health Team in the following circumstances:

- 5 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of children, pupils, students 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 the School Business Manager and will be reviewed following an outbreak to identify any aspects which worked well or areas for improvement.

The following arrangements are in place/will be put in place in the event of a case(s) of COVID-19:

- Parents are asked to inform the school of any positive COVID-19 case as soon as possible, as per normal arrangements for reporting sickness absence. Regular contact with parents through letters home, daily phone calls etc is maintained to ensure they are aware of requirement to report Covid-19 as soon as possible. Also a link to a reporting page on the school website is available.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts. *Note: staff are instructed not to share contact details of individuals with anyone other than Test and Trace/Public Health Team (staff should not share contact details of close contacts with other parents/carers)*
- 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.
- 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 and advice letters issued to parents of pupils who may be possible contacts of the positive case. Close contact letters issued to class and/or transport.
- All staff cases of COVID-19 [where NCC is the employer] are recorded on ANVIL to determine if a case is reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR.

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 or School Business Manager will contact the NCC Public Health Team if they consider there may be an outbreak within the school due to illness

reported ([via web enquiry form](#)). The NCC Public Health Team will contact a nominated person/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.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts in line with [national guidance](#). 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.
- 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 should already be in place].
- Staff/pupils are reminded of the importance of following the protective measures in place within the setting.

Step B - An outbreak of COVID-19 in setting

When the school becomes aware of a possible outbreak **Hillcrest School** will contact the NCC Public Health Team via their enquiry form:

[NCC Public Health Team Enquiry Form](#)

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 ongoing 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/setting will:

- Implement the Outbreak Management Plan (and go through the **Public Health Outbreak Checklist**).
- 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 clean 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. However, in certain settings (e.g. early years/first/primary schools) it’s likely that this can be done without too much impact on education. [these settings should already consider natural groupings as part of their COVID-19 risk assessment]

School transport seating plans are reintroduced (if not already in place).

Hillcrest school teach all lessons to form class (as per primary model) with small class sizes. Lunch and assemblies are held in classrooms minimising movement in school. Mixing of students is within timetable groups at break times only and outdoors (exception of small nurture group) to further reduce risk of transmission. Where a positive case is identified and the student is in school we quickly isolate the student and request a parent/carer to collect the student. For any reports of a positive case we immediately send home a letter to close contacts to enable daily testing to be completed.

Testing

[All settings should ensure their contingency plans reflect the possibility of increased use of rapid lateral flow device (LFD) testing by staff and, where they are already being offered testing, for pupils and students.] Hillcrest School routinely order LFD test kits for issue to staff and students so that testing can be completed at home twice weekly or daily in the event of a close contact. Stocks of LFD tests held in reserve for if increased testing required for close contacts.

Close contacts of positive cases of COVID-19 are already advised to carry out daily LFD testing for 7 days.

In addition, the reintroduction of asymptomatic testing sites (ATS) at school or an increase in the use of home testing by staff, pupils and students in secondary schools may be recommended.

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.
- Inform and advise letters/messages advising 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, however, if schools want to collect this information that is fine] **Hillcrest School have an online link from the website for staff and students test results to be recorded.**

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) and how long these temporary arrangements will remain in force. 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.

Hillcrest School have chosen to continue using face coverings in communal areas to protect our community. Staff and students are used to wearing these and it is less confusing for all if the use of face coverings for all is not constantly changing based on changing government guidance. Within the classroom, it is staff and students personal choice on whether they wish to wear their face covering.

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 restricted attendance is in place, the school will reactivate its arrangements to enable high quality remote learning. Hillcrest have a remote learning policy in place, laptops available for home learning, online learning (Seesaw) as well as postal packs. Daily contact home from the class team to support learning is maintained. Where classes may have to close, as it is impossible to safely operate suitable staffing levels, this will be for the minimum length of time possible through moving staff to keep classes open.
- Priority for on-site attendance is given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

Shielding

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, those previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) will not be advised to shield again. Individuals previously identified as CEV are advised to continue to follow the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (and follow the protective measures in place in their individual risk assessment or care plan, which will incorporate any specific advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are required).

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: [individual settings to record alternative arrangements]

- residential educational 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

At Hillcrest, where parental visits are requested for prospective students, parents are directed to virtual tours instead of physically attending. A virtual meeting with parents and SLT is held for parents to ask questions.

School hold a list of visitors able to access site to reduce footfall.

Resources

[COVID-19 management flowchart and Advice letters for close contacts](#) – including link to Public Health enquiry form. *(updated Jan 2022)*

[Outbreak Checklist for Schools](#) - checklist to review current arrangements and additional measures that could be implemented *(updated Jan 2022)*

[Advise and Inform - Model letter to all parents](#)

[Advise and Inform - Model Text message](#)

Government Guidance:

[Operational Guidance for Schools](#)

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

Document History:

Item	Nature of change	Date of Update
Communication and Record Keeping	Removal of the need to inform NCC public health of a positive case. Change in testing requirements for close contacts. Reminder to record all positive staff cases on ANVIL (for schools where NCC is the employer) - this is not required for pupil cases.	01/02/2022
Step A	Removal of the need to notify NCC public health of positive cases. Updated text to remove need for close contacts to take a PCR test.	01/02/2022
Step B	Addition of NCC public health outbreak checklist.	01/02/2022
Testing	All settings to consider arrangements if increased testing is recommended. Addition of increased use of LFD testing and requirement for close contacts to test for 7 days.	01/02/2022
Restricting Attendance	Removal of specific advice for school tiers.	01/02/2022
Shielding	Removal of shielding advice.	01/02/2022
Resources	Updated links	01/02/2022
<i>First Issue</i>	N/A	27/08/2021