

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Teachers, Staff, Parents and Guardians v1.0**

**August 2020**

### **Preventing the spread of COVID-19**

#### **1. How can I protect myself and others from catching COVID-19 at school?**

- Schools across Scotland are following Scottish Government guidance to ensure that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is as low as possible. However, for these measures to be effective, it requires everyone to take responsibility for their own actions.
- As well as following the guidance set out in schools, it is important that outwith this setting you continue to follow FACTS, in order to reduce the risk of you introducing the virus into the school:

**Face coverings** – these should be clean and either replaced or laundered regularly

**Avoid crowded places**

**Clean your hands regularly** - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available

**Two metre distance**

**Self-isolate and book a test if you have symptoms**

- It's also important to remind children and young people how they can reduce the risk of themselves or their families getting ill with COVID-19. In particular teenagers can be reminded to:
  - wear a face covering when within 2 metres of anyone not in their group/class
  - regularly wash hands and remember to catch any coughs and sneezes in a tissue or their elbows
  - stay off school and isolate if they have any symptoms, if they are a contact of a case (or if a household member has symptoms), and if they have travelled to any countries where there are quarantine restrictions in place
  - avoid house parties and other large gatherings
  - wear face coverings and maintain physical distancing in shops and other public places
  - avoid sharing food and drink, and other products like cigarettes
  - consider how kissing and sexual activity might put themselves and any partners at risk.

## 2. My child has symptoms that could be COVID-19. What should I do?

- If your child has any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 [a fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater), a new continuous cough and/or a loss or changed sense of normal smell or taste] then you should not send them to school. Your child and all household members should isolate at home. Contact 111 for advice, or look at the guidance on NHS Inform ([www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)) and if required, arrange a test via the Government Portal.
- If a test is required, the whole household must isolate until you know the result.
- If the result is positive, then you will be provided with further advice from NHS Grampian's contact tracing team, who work with the Health Protection Team.
- If the result is negative and no one else in the household has symptoms the child can return to school once they are well enough and they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours. The rest of the household no longer need to isolate, and siblings can return to school.
- If the result is negative but someone else in the household also has symptoms, the whole household needs to continue to isolate at home until all test results come back negative.

## 3. What are the rules around self-isolation?

There are several reasons for needing to self-isolate, which we have outlined below:

- **Symptomatic isolation**  
If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (persistent cough, fever (37.8C or greater) or loss of smell/taste): *Isolate until test result received. If positive – see below.*
- **Confirmed case isolation**  
If you have tested positive for COVID-19: *Isolate for at least 10 days from day of symptom onset. Only come out of isolation if recovered and not had a fever for 48 hours.*
- **Household isolation**  
If someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19: *Isolate until they have received their test result. If positive, remain in isolation for 14 days from the day your household member's symptoms started. Only come out of isolation after 14 days if you remain free of any symptoms.*
- **Return traveller isolation**

If you have returned from a country that is not on the exempt list for quarantine regulations: *Isolate for 14 days from the date you returned from abroad. Only come out of isolation after 14 days if you remain free of any symptoms.*

- **Close contact isolation**

If you have been advised by the Test and Protect team to isolate as you are a contact: *Isolate as per the advice given to you by the Test and Protect team.*

**You do not need to self-isolate:**

- If you are a contact of someone who is symptomatic, but has not tested positive for COVID-19 yet (unless advised to self-isolate by the Health Protection team or Test and Protect team).
- If you are a contact of someone who is a contact of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

**If someone has symptoms of COVID-19**

**4. What exactly do you mean by a ‘new continuous’ cough?**

A new continuous cough means coughing for longer than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours. If the person usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual.

**5. If someone at school has a new continuous cough, fever or change in sense of smell/taste, is there anything the school needs to do?**

- The person with symptoms should be isolated in a designated room until they can be safely collected. If they are a member of staff they should go home immediately.
- Ensure all surfaces in the immediate area (e.g. desk) are cleaned as per the school’s agreed cleaning procedure, and waste appropriately handled.
- The person and all household members should isolate at home. Contact 111 for advice, or look at the guidance on NHS Inform ([www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)) and if required, arrange a test via the Government Portal.
- A lot of other infections have similar symptoms, e.g. seasonal Flu or the common cold. If the person is confirmed to have COVID-19, Test and Protect will be in touch with anyone who is a close contact of that person to give advice on what to do.

**6. If someone goes off sick due to a new continuous cough, fever or change in sense of smell/taste, should anyone who was at school with them get tested or isolate?**

- No. They do not need to isolate or be tested unless the test of the symptomatic person returns positive and the Test and Protect team advise this or the contact develops symptoms. The only exception would be a household member, e.g. a sibling who may go to the same school.
- Whilst the symptomatic person is awaiting their test result, all members of the household are advised to self-isolate until the symptomatic person receives their results.
- Any contacts including school contacts should continue to follow good hand and respiratory hygiene practices, and monitor for any symptoms.
- If the symptomatic person is confirmed to have COVID-19, Test and Protect will provide further advice.

**7. If someone goes off sick due to a new continuous cough, fever or change in sense of smell/taste, should staff and pupils with underlying health conditions go home?**

- This is not required, no further action above and beyond what you are doing is necessary. There are protective measures in place at school and 'vulnerable' individuals such as those with underlying health conditions should already have had an individual risk assessment and any appropriate enhanced measures adopted to reduce the risk of infection.
- If staff wish to discuss this further, please speak to your line manager.

**8. Must parents/carers inform schools if children or young people have COVID-19 symptoms?**

- Yes. Parents/carers should let schools know if their children are not attending school and why. If the pupil has COVID-19 symptoms, the household are required to self-isolate and call 111 for advice.
- It is important for schools to be able to record any COVID-19 symptoms among the school community, as this can help detect a possible cluster of cases of COVID-19 at an early stage, and involve the Health Protection Team promptly if needed.

**9. What is the advice for someone who has symptoms other than new continuous cough, fever or change in sense of smell/taste?**

- They are not required to self-isolate or to be tested.

- If someone is experiencing other symptoms suggestive of a cold e.g. runny nose, sore throat, headache, **but not** including any of the 'classic' COVID-related symptoms, they need only to stay off school until they feel well.
- As always, if they have diarrhoea or vomiting, they must be 48 hours free of symptoms before returning.
- If they/ their parent/guardian is concerned or they are not improving, they should call 111 who can signpost to information and make a clinical assessment if needed.

### **If test results are negative for COVID-19**

#### **10. What does a negative test result mean?**

- A negative test result means that you most likely did not have COVID-19 at the time your sample was collected.
- In some cases, you might test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during your illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and get infected then. Therefore, you need to still act in a way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. physical distancing, washing your hands regularly, etc) even after a negative test result.
- If you develop symptoms later, you might need another test to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. You should isolate again until the test result is known and further advice is given.

#### **11. Can a staff member or pupil return to school if their result is negative?**

- Although they are unlikely to have COVID-19, they may have another virus or infection causing their illness and so should stay off school until they feel well and without a fever for 48 hours.
- If other members of their household also have symptoms, they should remain off until the household members have received negative test results.
- If they remain concerned about COVID-19, or are more unwell, they should contact NHS 24 (111) for further advice, and a clinical assessment if needed. If there are urgent concerns they should contact 999 in an emergency as usual.

#### **12. Can a pupil who has had a negative result return to school if their sibling has COVID -19 symptoms?**

- No. A pupil whose sibling has a fever, new continuous cough, or loss/change in sense of smell/taste, should not return to school until the sibling receives a

negative test result. This is the case even if the pupil has received a negative result themselves.

- If the sibling's test results are positive for COVID-19, they must remain isolated for 10 days from the start of their symptoms and the rest of their household including the pupil should isolate for 14 days.

**13. Can a pupil who has had a negative result return to school if their sibling has other symptoms such as a runny nose or sore throat?**

Yes. If the sibling is only showing other symptoms, such as a runny nose or sore throat, the pupil can return to school.

**If test results are positive for COVID-19**

**14. Could a positive result mean the person had COVID-19 in the past?**

The routine test for COVID-19 requires a nose and throat swab. It is not effective at identifying whether someone had the virus previously. In a symptomatic person a positive result shows that the virus is present at the time of testing.

**15. What happens if someone in the class/school tests positive?**

- All schools will have a COVID-19 risk assessment in place, and will have support from the local authority and Health Protection Team. This will outline the appropriate steps and infection prevention and control measures to be taken in the event someone within the school tests positive for COVID-19.
- The Test and Protect process will ensure that anyone who is identified as a close contact of a confirmed case will be notified and advised accordingly.

**16. Will all parents/carers and children/young people be notified if someone in the school/class tests positive for COVID-19?**

- Those who have been identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by the Test and Protect service and advised to self-isolate to protect others from further spread of the virus.
- For others including teachers, parents, guardians and carers, appropriate communication will be provided via the school, including a letter to outline the situation. It is important to remind them that if they are not contacted by Test and Protect, they have not been assessed as a close contact, and that they should not get tested unless they develop symptoms.

- Confidentiality is essential: it is important to note that no names will be shared with parents/carers, children and young people, and staff of any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the school who do not need to know. The standard Test and Protect processes will identify any close contacts and make any necessary phone calls, without disclosing the name of the person who has tested positive.
- All parties should be discouraged from speculating and encouraged to maintain an open, safe culture where there is no fear or stigma associating with developing symptoms or testing positive.

**17.If a positive case of COVID-19 is identified in the school, do those previously shielding need to go back into self-isolation?**

- No. If there is a positive case in the school of COVID-19, there will be a risk assessment to determine the possible spread of infection and risk to others. This will include whether shielded or vulnerable staff or children have come into contact with the case.
- The Health Protection Team will advise the school if any shielded or vulnerable people need to stay off school. Similarly, if there is an outbreak in the school, the Health Protection Team will review the situation and assess if it is still safe for shielded/vulnerable staff or children to stay at school.

**18.If a child or young person's parent/carer tests positive (or has COVID symptoms) must the child stay off school for 14 days?**

- Yes, all household members including children and young people must self-isolate for 14 days if anyone in their household tests positive for COVID-19.

**19.If someone is isolating with COVID-19, do they need to get a negative test before they can return to school?**

- No. The test picks up traces of virus in the nose and throat, and in some cases those traces will remain once a person has recovered and is no longer infectious. So **a repeat test, following a positive result, is not helpful** and should be avoided.
- The important thing is to stay isolated for at least 10 days from the start of symptoms (14 days for any household members) and only come out of isolation once symptoms have improved and there has been no fever for at least 48 hours.



- It has been shown that cough and change in sense of smell/taste can persist for weeks, beyond the time that they are infectious. As long as they have isolated for 10 days and have had no fever for 48 hours, the individual can return to school even if cough or change in sense of smell/taste remain.

**20. What should we do if a pupil/staff member tests positive for COVID-19 or is advised to self-isolate but still comes to school?**

- They should immediately be isolated in a designated room until they can be safely returned home.
- The incident should be reported to the Health Protection Team whether or not they agree or still refuse to adhere to the self-isolation advice.

**In the event of an outbreak**

**21. What happens if there is an outbreak?**

- If schools have two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 within 14 days, or an increase in background rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, they may have an outbreak and should inform the Health Protection Team.
- If an outbreak is confirmed the Health Protection Team will undertake a risk assessment and work with the school and local authority to plan next steps. This may involve the formation of an Incident Management Team (IMT) to lead the response to the situation. The school will be supported throughout this process to help ensure the infection is effectively controlled.
- If there is an outbreak at school parents/carers and children/young people will be given the necessary information as soon as appropriate steps are agreed with the school, the local authority and public health.

**22. Will the school be closed in an outbreak?**

- Any decisions about closing a school will be taken in partnership between the school, the local authority and the Health Protection Team following a risk assessment based on the number and distribution of cases.
- Such decisions will not be taken lightly, and only where it is deemed necessary to keep people safe and help stop the spread of COVID-19.



**Summary of what to do if someone has symptoms**

Who has symptoms	What symptoms	Actions	If result negative	If result positive
Adults or children	Fever ( $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), new continuous cough, and/or a loss of taste/smell	<p>Symptomatic person to seek COVID-19 testing and to enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result</p> <p>Household member(s) enter 14 days isolation while awaiting result</p>	<p>Stay off work or school until better including no fever for 48 hours</p> <p>Household isolation lifted</p>	<p>Complete 10 days isolation and await call from contact tracer</p> <p>Complete 14 days household isolation</p>
	Chills, sore throat, headache, runny nose, shortness of breath, general weakness, muscle pain, diarrhoea	<p>Symptomatic person to stay off work or school until better including no diarrhoea for 48 hours.</p> <p>No COVID-19 testing.</p> <p>No household isolation.</p>		
<p><a href="https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection">https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection</a></p>				



### **Further Information**

Further information is available at:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: staying safe and protecting others  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/pages/staying-at-home/>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Test and Protect  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect-summary/>
- NHS Inform Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Scottish Government Coronavirus in Scotland  
<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>