



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Public health advice for schools: coronavirus

How schools and other providers can make their sites safe for staff and learners.

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Audience

This advice is for leaders and staff in maintained nursery settings, primary schools, secondary schools (including sixth forms), special schools, special post-16 providers, infant, junior and middle schools, PRUs, boarding schools and independent schools.

Context

'**Together for a Safer Future**' sets out the long-term transition from pandemic to endemic in Wales. The plan explains how we will move away from an emergency phase to a more sustainable set of arrangements that can serve us over the longer term.

However, as recognised within the plan, COVID-19 has not gone away and will remain with us globally. For this reason, it remains important for schools and settings to consider what they can do to reduce the spread of the virus, and protect their learners and staff, including any additional protections for those who are more vulnerable, including the immunosuppressed or those who live with someone who is vulnerable. By continuing to implement public health control measures, schools and settings will help keep the spread of the virus low, improve public and staff confidence and minimise the potential of further disruption.

With increasing numbers of people vaccinated and everyone's continued efforts, coronavirus specific legal requirements no longer apply. The risks from coronavirus should now be considered in the same context as other communicable diseases risks (for example flu and norovirus).

Purpose

This 'Public health advice for schools and settings' supplements and should be read in conjunction with the **Public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations: Coronavirus**, which advises how organisations (including schools and settings) can mitigate public health risks through various familiar public health control measures. When deciding which public health control measures to apply, consider if this is (a) proportionate, and (b) reasonably practicable to implement. This advice replaces the 'Local COVID-19 infection control decision framework for schools'.

In addition, the following guidance should also be considered:

- **All Wales Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Education Settings**
- **Public Health Wales Health Protection Team Infection Prevention and Control Quality Improvement (Audit) Tool For Childcare and Education Settings in Wales**
- **Workforce Risk Assessment Tool**

This public health advice does not replace school statutory responsibilities and it is important that schools continue to comply with legal obligations relating to the '**Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974**', '**Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992**', '**Equality Act 2010**' and any other relevant regulations.

School and education setting specific advice

The public health context will change over time and may vary regionally and locally. Schools and settings should continue to work closely with their public

health advisors and local authorities to ensure that the measures in place for their school remain appropriate and proportionate at all times. Specific consideration should be given to the balance of harms i.e. do the harms of introducing any measures outweigh the public health benefits.

Schools and settings should continue to tailor interventions to reflect local risks and circumstances, working with their local authorities and public health advisors and building on the principles established within the 'Local COVID-19 infection control decision framework for schools'. The escalation of any measures should be proportionate and aligned with what is happening in wider society. Prior to the introduction of additional measures, schools and settings, supported by their local authorities and public health advisors, should agree criteria to be used to determine under which conditions they will be removed. Schools and settings should consider arrangements for everyone using the school or setting site. This includes staff, learners and visitors.

A checklist has been provided to help identify the measures that could be considered. This checklist can also be adapted to suit your own specific setting and activities. In particular, the following core measures should be in place to protect learners and staff:

- All staff and learners should be reminded to follow the [guidance for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19](#), which includes specific guidance for learners sitting exams.
- Regular handwashing and respiratory etiquette (Catch it, Bin it, Kill it) are key interventions to prevent spread and manage cases, incidents & outbreaks.
- Adequate ventilation by opening windows or adjusting ventilation systems is also important. Carbon dioxide monitors have been made available to all schools and [a 'how to use' guide for these devices](#) as an aid to monitor ventilation in education settings is available.

Public Health Wales' [Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales](#) sets

out arrangements for managing all outbreaks of communicable disease in Wales. Schools and settings should already have contingency plans (sometimes called outbreak management plans) outlining what they would do if learners or staff test positive for COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, or how they would operate if they are advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission.

In summary, those responsible for schools and settings should continue to comply with health and safety legal requirements. In addition, they should consider the public health measures set out in this advice and the related documents referenced and implement where reasonably practicable to do so. This will help minimise exposure to and spread of communicable diseases (including flu, coronavirus and norovirus) in schools.

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