

To: Headteachers and Chair of Governors of Schools

Date: Friday, 18 September 2020

Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire

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Dear colleague

COVID-19: ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS/CARERS ON SYMPTOMS, ACCESSING TESTS ETC.

On behalf of GP practices, we wish to offer our thanks and support for your fantastic efforts to get children safely back into school this term during the pandemic response.

As you will be aware, there is a rising incidence of people testing positive for coronavirus across the country and this includes in our local area.

We are also aware that the start of the school term and the move into autumn heralds the arrival of the usual respiratory viral illnesses we experience every year. This year however we will all have to manage this in the context of the overlap of symptoms with covid-19.

Over the past week, local practices have all reported receiving calls from parents of children with acute upper respiratory symptoms who are requesting testing for coronavirus, or for letters from the GP confirming the illness is non-covid related. Some of the parents claim to have been told by the child's school they must obtain this confirmation before a child can return to lessons.

We therefore felt it important to reiterate a few principles so we can work together to support children and families in a clear and consistent way and keep all our services operating safely and efficiently under these pressures.

If a child has any of the following symptoms then they should be considered a possible covid-19 case:

- fever measuring 37.8C or above
- a new persistent cough
- a change or loss of sense of smell or taste

In such circumstances they should be advised to self-isolate (not attend school) for 10 days, or until a negative swab test result is received. Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days.

Please note that these tests are provided through the NHS Test and Trace service and can be accessed either:

- online at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/
- or by calling 119.

Local testing capacity is being increased in recognition of the increase in possible cases locally and nationally.

Please note that GP practices have not been provided with any swab tests and are unable to access coronavirus testing other than by directing patients to the service described above. It is also not possible to clinically distinguish reliably or safely the symptoms of covid-19 from other viral respiratory illnesses. For these reasons, please do not direct parents or children to their GP to undertake tests or for letters stating if the illness is or is not covid-19. Children only need to be assessed by a GP if their clinical condition is severe enough to warrant it (eg shortness of breath, dehydration, altered level of consciousness).

It should be remembered that in the overwhelming majority of children, covid-19 is a mild self-limiting illness lasting only a few days (like most seasonal viral respiratory illnesses) which requires no treatment itself but actions are instead focussed on limiting the spread to the illness to people who may be a greater clinical risk.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to keep our local children, families and wider community safe and well.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Carlton
Corporate Director - Children and
Young People's Service



Dr Lincoln Sargeant
Director of Public Health

Covid-19 related pupil absence

A reference guide for parents and school / setting staff (as of 16th September 2020)

What to do if...	Action Needed	Return to school when....
<p>... my child has developed one or more Covid-19 symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new continuous cough • a high temperature • a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school or setting → Contact school or setting to inform us → Child to get a test via nhs.uk online or by calling 119 → Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days. See Stay at Home guidance → Inform the school or setting immediately about the test results → If after 10 days, your child still has a temperature they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice 	<p>...the test comes back negative or a period of 10 days has passed since the symptoms started, the child feels well and does not have a temperature.</p>
<p>... my child tests positive for Covid -19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school or setting → Contact school or setting to inform us → Agree the earliest date for the possible return (minimum 10 days) → Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days. See Stay at Home guidance 	<p>...10 days have passed since symptoms began, even if they still have a cough or loss of taste/smell (these symptoms can last for several weeks) AND the child feels well</p>
<p>... my child tests negative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contact school or setting to inform us → Discuss when your child can come back (same day/ next day) → Subject to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone they live with who has symptoms tests negative • everyone in their support bubble who has symptoms tests negative • they are not a contact of a confirmed case • they are well – if they feel unwell, stay at home until feeling better 	<p>...the test comes back negative</p>
<p>... my child is ill with symptoms not linked to Covid-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contact school or setting to inform us → Ring on each day of illness 	<p>...after 48 hours following the last bout of sickness or diarrhoea (as per the attendance policy).</p>
<p>...someone in my household has Covid-19 symptoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school or setting → Contact school or setting to inform us → Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days. See Stay at Home guidance → Household member to get a test via nhs.uk online or by calling 119 → Inform the school or setting immediately about the test results 	<p>...the test comes back negative</p>
<p>... someone in my household tests positive for Covid-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school or setting → Contact school or setting to inform us → Agree the earliest date for the possible return (minimum 14 days) → Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days. See Stay at Home guidance 	<p>...my child has completed 14 days of self-isolation.</p>

... NHS test and trace has identified my child as a close contact of a confirmed positive case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school → Contact school to inform us → Agree the earliest date for the possible return (minimum 14 days) 	...my child has completed 14 days of self-isolation.
... NHS test and trace has identified a household member (not my child) as a close contact of a confirmed positive case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The household member must self-isolate for 14 days → Child can continue to attend school 	...child(ren) can continue to attend school.
...my child has been identified as a close contact of a confirmed positive case within school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → You will receive a letter of notification from school → Child must not come to school → Support your child at home with any remote education provided by your school. → Your child will need to self-isolate for 14 days. → Other siblings may continue to attend school 	...my child has completed 14 days of self-isolation.
... my child's sibling at another school has been sent home to self-isolate due to being a contact of a confirmed positive case in their school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The sibling must self-isolate for 14 days → Child(ren) at this school can continue to attend. 	...child(ren) can continue to attend school.
... my child has travelled abroad from a country or territory that is NOT one of the exempt list of countries. (i.e. they need to self-isolate after returning from this country).	<p>If returning from a destination where quarantine IS needed please see full travel guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Minimum of 14 days self-isolation for all those who travelled. → Contact school to inform us you are back in the country and we will agree an earliest date for possible return to school 	... the quarantine period of 14 days has been completed.
... my child has travelled abroad from a country or territory that IS one of the exempt list of countries. (i.e. they do NOT need to self-isolate after returning from this country).	<p>If returning from a destination where quarantine is NOT needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Check the current Exempt Countries and Territories list to confirm the country you have travelled from or through is on the exempt list. → Ring school to inform us you have returned to the UK and agree a return date to school. 	...you have informed the school or setting office of your return (they may ask you a few questions about your travel).
...I have travelled from a country that requires us to quarantine (but my child didn't travel).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → As long as you do not have/ have not had symptoms in the last 14 days, your child can continue to attend school. → The person who has travelled MUST NOT leave the house, including to do pick-ups and drop offs 	...child(ren) can continue to attend school.
...we have received medical advice that my child must resume shielding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not come to school. → Contact school to inform us. → Shield until you are informed that restrictions are lifted and shielding is paused again. 	<p>... school inform you that restrictions have been lifted and your child can return to school again</p> <p>...you receive medical advice that your child may return to school.</p>
...I am unable to get a test for someone in the household who has symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If you are unable to get a test, your child and anyone they live with must continue to self-isolate for 14 days. Anyone in your support bubble must also stay at home. 	... the child has completed 14 days of isolation.