



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref: AK/jc.3

Enquiries to: Audrey Kingham

Email: Audrey.Kingham@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: (01670) 622742

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Dear Headteacher

Additional COVID-19 control measures in schools

Thank you for your support throughout the pandemic. We know that this has continued to be a very challenging time and appreciate all your efforts in maintaining high quality education for your pupils whilst also supporting the vaccination programme and managing COVID-19 cases in school.

As you will be aware COVID-19 cases in Northumberland continue to increase, particularly in school-age children which is affecting students and staff. We appreciate the challenges that schools have faced since September and the huge amount of work that has been done to avoid disruption to education, but we believe that additional measures are now required to mitigate the COVID-19 risk.

An increasing number of schools are reaching the outbreak thresholds described in the Contingency Framework. Given the high case rates in school-aged children and the wider community in Northumberland we feel that it is necessary to recommend that schools implement additional measures to help reduce the spread of infection, control the number of cases in children and minimise the risk of further disruption to education.

Consequently, we recommend that schools introduce the following measures:

1. Testing for household contacts of COVID-19

Encourage pupils who are **household close contacts** of a case of COVID-19 and do not have symptoms (i.e. those who are exempt from isolation and may continue to attend school) to arrange a PCR test. In addition, staff and secondary school age pupils who are household contacts should be advised to undertake daily lateral flow testing at home until they have received a negative PCR result.

Note: People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days should not be encouraged to test unless they develop new symptoms

2. Face coverings

Recommend that adults and secondary school age pupils wear face coverings in communal areas

3. Reduce mixing between year groups and classes

Reduce mixing as far as possible to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19



Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
T: 0345 600 6400 E: contactcentre@northumberland.gov.uk
www.northumberland.gov.uk



4.Restrict large school events and limit non-essential visits to the school

This includes suspending whole-school or year group events wherever possible. Revert to the use of online format for large staff meetings and governors' meetings. Move events where parents / carers visit school, such as parents evening and open days to online meetings and assess whether non-essential visits to the school can be postponed.

5.Consider whether educational trips and residential visits should go ahead

This is important because being on transport together for long periods and sharing overnight accommodation increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. Ensure any visits out of school are subject to full and thorough risk assessment taking into account public health advice. Where there is an outbreak, visits out of school should be postponed, unless there are robust measures in place to mitigate the risk of transmission.

6.Ventilation in classrooms

Ensure that classrooms are well-ventilated as far as practically possible.

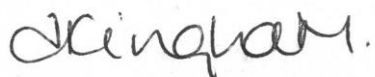
We recommend that these measures are introduced from Monday 1st November or as soon as practicable when pupils return to school after the half term break. We have identified those measures which are likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 whilst having the least effect on education and we understand that some schools may already have implemented some of these.

These measures are not compulsory. We appreciate that head teachers are best placed to understand what will work for their school and you may decide that some measures are not appropriate. We recognise that implementing additional measures is associated with additional work at a very busy time. However, we feel that prompt action is required to avoid further disruption to schools.

Our Public Health and Education teams continue to work closely together, monitoring COVID-19 cases and the impact on schools. We will inform you as soon as there are any changes to these recommendations.

In the event of an outbreak please refer to your outbreak control plan. Further advice and support can be obtained by completing a [webform](#). All Health and Safety COVID-19 documentation and risk assessments can be found on the Northumberland Education [webpage](#). Previous versions of the template risk assessment are also available on the Health and Safety Team [portal](#), which you may wish to refer to when reintroducing controls.

Yours sincerely



Audrey Kingham
Director of Education and Skills



Liz Morgan
Interim Executive Director Public Health
and Community Services