

Guidance for Schools – COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Following the Government's announcement on 16th March 2020, updated guidance relating to COVID-19 in educational settings is available on Gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

The most common symptoms of the virus are a new, continuous cough or a high temperature. If anyone becomes unwell with either of these symptoms they should be sent home from school and advised to follow the relevant guidance in relation to staying at home, found [here](#).

In order to provide some clarity to schools, we have provided some guidance below relating to particular scenarios. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and where a query requires further advice or guidance, schools are encouraged to contact their HR Provider.

1. Where a member of staff is self isolating due to own illness/symptoms and is too unwell to work

This will be classed as sickness absence and recorded appropriately. The staff member's entitlement to sick pay will apply; as per the Government's decision statutory sick pay will be paid from day one and occupational sick pay will be paid as applicable in line with the employee's contract of employment. School should keep in regular contact with the member of staff as a duty of care and to ensure that their condition is being monitored under the schools absence management procedure.

2. Where a member of staff is self isolating due to own illness/symptoms but is working from home

Where staff are well enough to work from home and continue to do so, full pay should continue to be paid as normal. Staff will not be required to take annual leave and the absence will not be recorded as sickness absence. School should keep in regular contact with the member of staff as a duty of care and to ensure that their condition is being monitored. If their condition deteriorates, then they may need to be moved to the scenario identified as part of point 1 above.

3. Where a member of staff is self isolating due to the sickness of a member of their household

This will not be recorded as sickness absence and full pay will be paid for the 14 day isolation period. Staff should work from home wherever possible and discuss the appropriate arrangements and priorities with their line manager. School should keep in regular contact with the member of staff as a duty of care and to ensure that their condition is being monitored and work is being completed. If their condition deteriorates, then they may need to be moved to the scenario identified as part of point 1 above.

4. Where a member of staff is not in work due to the need to care for a dependant

Where a member of staff is not self-isolating and no members of the household have been exposed to the virus or are displaying symptoms, the school's leave of absence policy will apply in relation to 'time off for dependants'.

An employee's dependants can include:

- the employee's spouse or civil partner
- the employee's parent
- the employee's child
- a person who lives in the employee's household excluding tenants, lodgers and employees

There's no statutory right to pay for this time off; however, school policies have a range of contractual provisions that may be able to account for the time off, including:

- Annual Leave
- Time Off for Dependants
- Unpaid Leave

Managers should discuss with the employee all possibilities available with a view to reaching an agreement with the employee on how the lost time will be accounted for. A mixture of all the options available is permissible.

Should employees have no other practical option but to incur a deduction of pay through unpaid leave, then discussions should be held with the employee to agree a reasonable period over which the deductions can be spread in order to avoid any financial hardship.

5. Where a school is closed or partially closed, asking staff to come in to school to assist with cleaning etc.

It is recognised that during a school closure is a sensible time for a deep clean to be undertaken to ensure the sanitisation of the premises. However, schools should be mindful of the risks of having individuals on site in light of the reason for closure and ensure the welfare of all staff and students as much as is practicably possible.

6. What schools should do in relation to pregnant members of staff?

The Government is currently advising individuals who are particularly high risk and/or vulnerable to contracting the virus to stay at home, socially distancing themselves and reducing social contact as much as possible. The member of staff will be paid sick pay in line with their entitlement during this period; however, whilst this will be recorded as sickness absence this will not be counted towards any absence monitoring.

Where they are able to, staff should work from home and discuss the practicalities of this with their line manager.

Alternative Arrangements

- Working from Home

Schools are encouraged to explore all opportunities for staff who are self-isolating or social distancing to work from home in some capacity, where they are well enough to do so. It is

appreciated that for some roles the entirety of the job cannot be done from home; however, there will be tasks/duties that can be undertaken flexibly.

For example, teaching staff could plan for future lessons, create schemes of work, catch up on marking and CPD, collate relevant online resources for students to learn from home.

- Time off in Lieu/Flexitime

The 'paying back' of the lost time over an agreed future period can be agreed where the nature of the work allows for this. Employees who can accrue flexitime, lieu time or overtime can be allowed to pay back the additional time off over a reasonable future period up to a maximum of 12 months. Where hardship would be caused, the manager should seek further advice.

The school could consider staff owing time back to be worked later on in the year. For example, working during the summer holidays to pay back the time; planning for the new term, arranging classrooms, displays etc.

Managers should also consider offering employees additional work, where available, to help make up the lost time e.g. in circumstances where an additional shift may normally be offered to a casual worker.

All possibilities should be considered in order that employees do not have to incur a deduction of pay should that not be their preferred option, wherever this is possible. Any deductions in pay should be a last resort.

The agreed arrangements should also try to ensure that an employee's future holiday arrangements are not adversely affected.

Non-Essential Meetings

Schools should consider whether 'non-essential' meetings in school need to take place with either internal or external attendees. Consideration should be given as to whether these meetings could be conducted remotely or over the phone, rather than face to face.

Further Advice and Guidance

Schools are encouraged to regularly visit the [NHS](#), [PHE](#) and [Gov.uk](#) sites for up to date advice.