reducing the risks of covid-19 in educational establishments advice and guidance

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**Introduction**

Public Health and the Scottish Government are continuing to take a very cautious approach towards the new Omicron variant and we are asking schools and establishments to take a cautious approach in their daily activities to reflect this. From January 2022, schools and establishments should ensure readiness for different scenarios, in view of the uncertainty around the path of the virus:

Scenario 1 – Removal or reintroduction of mitigations – schools remain open

Scenario 2 – Partial attendance – school buildings remain open: self-isolation of large numbers of staff/pupils

Scenario 3 – Partial attendance – school buildings remain open: partial attendance to re-introduce physical distancing

Scenario 4 – Full remote learning – school buildings closed

Ensuring our digital offering is ready to be deployed for the scenarios above will be crucial.

North Lanarkshire guidance is based on the most up to date guidance from the Scottish Government and [Health Protection Scotland](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/). This changes regularly as the pandemic evolves, therefore please ensure you keep up to date with any new publications related to education (the latest version can be accessed [here).](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/)

Where the guidance states you ‘should’ do something, there is an expectation that it should be done; where is states you ‘may’ or ‘may wish’ to do something, HTs/HOCs should use their autonomy to make decisions at a local level.

Any health and safety enquiries relating to establishments should be directed in the first instance to healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

This is very much a live document, therefore, please check the version control with each new version as this will signpost you to what updates have been added to each new version.

Please be mindful that the guidance reflects the current position, but the future landscape is still unstable due to the ongoing pandemic. HTs/HOCs should have contingency planning firmly in place and be ready to stand up any contingency plans at short notice. It is worth noting that community transmission rates in Lanarkshire are high at the moment, therefore it is vital that all staff remain vigilant and follow all advice and guidance.

Further advice and support for Head Teachers and Heads of Centre is also available from [myNL](https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/coronavirus-guidance-for-managers/) and HTs/HOCs should also signpost staff to this. For general enquiries please contact the ESC People Helpdesk on 01698 403 151 or email: ESC-HelpdeskTeam@northlan.gov.uk

Kind regards

Derek Brown

Executive Director

**Beyond Level 0 – Guidance for Schools**

The table below summarises the approach for key mitigations beyond Level 0.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Mitigation** | **Approach** | **Timings** |
| Risk assessments | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Encouragement of vaccination | Retain as before (updated eligibility following JCVI guidance) | Ongoing |
| Environmental cleaning | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Hand and respiratory hygiene | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| PPE in specific circumstances | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Face coverings in communal areas | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Face coverings in secondary classrooms | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Physical distancing for adults | Retain (now at least 1m, but 2m expected to remain for logistical reasons) | Ongoing |
| One-way systems | Retain | Ongoing |
| Drop-off and pick-up | Remove | Remove |
| Staggered start and stoop times/breaks/lunches | Remove | Remove |
| Restrictions on assemblies | Retain  | Ongoing |
| Virtual Staff Meetings | Retain as before | Ongoing |
| Support for high risk groups/pregnant staff | Retain  | Ongoing |
| Twice weekly at home asymptomatic testing | Retain (updated guidance/ materials to support) | Ongoing |
| Outbreak management |  | Ongoing |
| Self-isolation, contact tracing and testing for adults 18+ | Update in line with latest advice | Align with updated approach in wider society ASAP |
| Groupings/Bubbles | Remove | Remove |
| Ventilation | Strengthened | Ongoing |
| Restrictions on Drama, Music, PE and Dance | Remove | Up to 6 weeks, then reviewed |
| Restrictions on school visitors | Remove (but with some ongoing requirements)  | Remove |
| School transport | Retain | Ongoing |
| School trips | Remove (but with some ongoing requirements)  | Remove |
| Readiness and assurance (Business Contingency Planning) | Retain (updated guidance) - strengthen | Ongoing |

**Risk Assessments**

School risk assessments should be reviewed at the start of each new term and dated to reflect this. Trade Union reps should be included in the review and ALL School staff should be briefed on the content.

Individual Risk Assessments and Maternity Risk Assessments should be reviewed as appropriate.

**Vaccinations**

Schools should encourage staff who have not received both doses of the vaccine to seek vaccination as soon as possible, following the recommended gap between doses. Information on booking an appointment can be found [here](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/invitations-and-appointments/registering-for-a-coronavirus-vaccine). All adults aged 18+ are eligible for a booster vaccine.

All 16–17-year-olds are eligible for two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, plus a booster dose no sooner than 3 months after completion of their primary course.

All 12–15-year-olds are eligible for two doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

12–15-year-olds who are in a clinical risk group, or a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed should be offered a booster dose no sooner than 3 months after completion of their primary course.

12-15 year olds who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose, should also be offered a booster dose no sooner than 3 months after completion of their primary course.

5–11-year-olds who are in a clinical risk group, or who are household contacts of someone who is immunosuppressed, should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of Pfizer with an interval of 8 weeks.

Third primary doses are also being offered to Individuals aged 5+ who at the time of their first or second dose are considered to be severely immunosuppressed. A third primary dose is different from a booster dose. Those who have received a third primary dose will also receive a booster vaccination, if there are eligible as per the above.

12 to 17 year olds are now eligible to attend drop on clinics offering the Pfizer vaccine. Information regarding drop in clinics across mainland health boards can be found at: https://www.nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics.

Those without online access can call the National Helpline on 0800 030 8013.

Those age 5 to 11 who are eligible for vaccination will receive an invite over the coming weeks. Eligibility includes:

* At higher risk from coronavirus due to underlying health conditions
* [share living accommodation, on most days, with someone who has a weakened immune system](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/invitations-and-appointments/who-will-be-offered-the-coronavirus-vaccine#immuno)

Public Health Scotland has produced an information leaflet for 16-17 year-olds and materials for 12-15 year-olds are also available. A range of communications activity aimed at young people – and their parents and carers – has also been undertaken by the Scottish Government and partners, including Health Boards.

**Groupings/Bubbles**

Bubbles and groupings are no longer required in a school setting.

**Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing between adults, and between adults and children and young people, should remain in place at 2m in line with North Lanarkshire’s decision to ensure we take a cautious and protective approach.

The Council took the decision in July to extend the mitigating measure of 2m social distancing across all services (there are some exemptions within some services where other mitigating measures are in place) to protect the safety of employees. For secondary pupils, further mitigations that should be considered are:

* Discourage physical social contact
* Utilise all space available to promote physical distancing
* Seat young people side by side and facing forwards
* Where movement in classrooms are required, this should be carefully planned and controlled

**Staff Meetings**

Staff meetings should remain virtual for the time being.

**School Visitors**

In recognition of the positive impact on the wellbeing of children and young people, supply staff and other professional visitors can continue to visit schools. Visiting staff can move between schools where necessary to support children and young people, or to support the running of the school.

Visiting staff includes visiting teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers, youth workers, outdoor learning specialists, Higher Education Institution (HEI) tutors, SQA staff and appointees (e.g., visiting assessors and visiting verifiers), Education Scotland staff (including HMIE) and those providing therapeutic support.

NL’s Safety and Wellbeing Team have produced detailed [guidance](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/CC05%20COVID-19%20Supporting%20test%20and%20protect%20%20guidance%20on%20the%20collection%20of%20personal%20information.docx?d=w89272de94c1a4b4d9648ee90260f3dbe&csf=1&web=1&e=6BO61s) on the collection of personal information for the Scottish Government’s Test and Protect requirements, which Head Teachers should be familiar with. Visitors should look to reduce the number of schools visited and to limit their contact time with children and young people.

**Parents/Parents’ Evenings**

Parents/carers should continue to be discouraged from visiting school premises. Where it is considered beneficial, parents/carers may attend school premises for individual parental visits related to the wellbeing, progress and behaviour of children. All such visits should be risk assessed and agreed in advance by schools as being a necessary and proportionate measure.

Parents’ evenings should continue to remain virtual for the time being.

**Parent Council Organised Events**

Where it is considered necessary for the smooth functioning of these activities, Parent Councils and Parent Teacher Associations may again meet on school premises. Such meetings should be risk assessed in advance and attendees should comply with the physical distancing and safety requirements within the school. Where virtual arrangements for these engagements are already in place and working well, the default should be that these should continue to be used

**School Transport**

School transport guidance is aligned with public transport and only young people aged 12 and over are now required to wear face coverings. Physical distancing between children and young people on school transport is not required, however a 1m distance should remain between the driver and children and young people. Existing arrangements for ventilation and hygiene should remain as before.

**Expressive Arts**

There are currently no restrictions in relation to drama, music, PE and dance.

**Practical Subjects**

Practical activities and investigations are important parts of specific curriculum areas. Full guidance can be found [here](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/covid-19-education-recovery/covid-19-return-to-educational-establishments/).

**Ventilation**

Term 1 and Term 2 of CO2 monitoring is now complete in all teaching areas in NL establishments.

Repairs to windows, where required, will continue and schools and centres can request repairs using this [proforma](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Ax%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/Window%20Ventilation%20Issues.ods?d=w3da1fea562a246ed9e72339f5df43148&csf=1&web=1&e=LyIxR3) and sending to Corporaterepairsandmaintenance@northlan.gov.uk and we will arrange for a contractor to fix these if possible/practicable.  A full [ventilation guidance document](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/Education%20establishments%20guidance%20on%20ventilation%20%28draft%204%29.docx?d=w9665a834769c4d76b06b39ceeb8ed72b&csf=1&web=1&e=b4PRLD) has been created for managers to refer to.

As natural ventilation helps minimise the risk of transmission of the virus, where possible, doors and windows to classrooms/playrooms should be kept open.  The exception to this would be internal fire doors which should never be propped open.

The Council’s Energy Management Team have confirmed that temperature settings during the Autumn/Winter Seasons have been adjusted to maintain the optimum temperature of 21°C.

Updated guidance from the Scottish Government will come into effect during term 3 and further information will be provided in V14.

**Asymptomatic Testing Programme**

All schools and settings should continue to promote twice weekly at home LFD testing by staff and secondary pupils and encourage results to be recorded.

A revised Standard Operating Procedure, test kit log template, legal agreement, privacy notice and new information poster is available on Objective Connect to support the aforementioned changes. Templates letters for parent, pupils and staff should also be distributed to reinforce the twice-weekly message.

A short, **step-by-step guide** to implementing these new arrangements will be placed on Objective Connect.

Proactive distribution of test kits to staff and secondary pupils will be particularly important to support the most recent updates to self-isolation guidance, which involve greater use of LFD test kits for index cases and close contacts. Schools should ensure they order and distribute sufficient kits to support staff and secondary pupils to undertake both regular testing and testing when identified as high risk close contacts (see the updated self-isolation section later in this guidance). Primary schools are requested to make parents/carers aware of the universal testing offer, for use particularly in the event that their primary school-aged children are identified as high risk close contacts.

If you have any questions about these arrangements, please don’t hesitate to contact schoolscovidtesting@gov.scot.

**Orders and deliveries**

The link to reorder test kits, with schools/settings requiring their 8-digit Unique Organisation Number (UON), is here:- [Apply for coronavirus test kits - GOV.UK (test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk)](https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/).

If settings run out of test kits and do not expect a delivery to be made in time, or do not know their UON which is required for ordering, they should contact NSS colleagues who will try to arrange a delivery from our contingency stock or provide the UON. Schools/settings can continue to contact the NSS Helpline 0800 008 6587 or email nss.Covid19TestingSupport@nhs.scot.

**People in the Highest Risk Group**

The Chief Medical Officer’s advice is that people at highest risk can continue to follow the same advice as the rest of the population, unless a GP or clinician has advised otherwise.

Children and young people in the highest risk group can follow the same advice as for the rest of the population, including those in education and childcare.

Household members of people in the highest risk group can follow the same advice as for the rest of the population.

It is now recommended that [pregnant women have the vaccine](https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2021-02-24-combined-info-sheet-and-decision-aid.pdf). Individual risk assessments should be in place to inform any necessary reasonable adjustments.

**Pregnant Women**

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have advised that pregnant women appear no more or less likely to contract Covid19 than the general population, and more than two-thirds of identified pregnant women have no symptoms. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 in pregnant women are cough and fever. However, there is growing evidence that pregnant women may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant women, particularly in the third trimester.

Pregnant employees are asked to follow the latest government guidance which can be found here [Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees) and should avoid anyone who has symptoms suggestive of coronavirus.

On 22 November 2021, the Scottish Government revised the guidance for all pregnant employees and their employers to the following:

1. Employees who are pregnant at any gestation must have a workplace risk assessment with their Manager and should only continue to work if the risk assessment advises it is safe to do so. The Maternity Risk Assessment can be found here [Pregnant Women – My NL](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/pregnant-women/).
2. Managers should continue to factor in workplace risks and control measures that can be put in place to protect staff as well as the local prevalence of the virus.
3. Employees who are pregnant with significant congenital or acquired heart disease continue to be on the Scottish Government’s Highest Risk List. Further information is available on the Scottish Government website. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-highest-risk/>
4. Pregnant women **who are unvaccinated at any gestation** should take a more precautionary approach in light of the increased risk.

**Vaccinated Pregnant Employees**

A manager must carry out a Maternity Risk Assessment with all pregnant employees, so that any risks can be identified, and control measures put in place. The Maternity Risk Assessment will now ask if an employee has been vaccinated to allow a full assessment of the risks to be carried out.

Where an employee is fully vaccinated and the risk assessment allows for them to work safely with the appropriate control measures in place, the employee can continue to work for as long as they feel able to do so.

If however, the outcome of the risk assessment does not provide for a safe working environment, the manager must consider ways to ensure the employees safety. Measures may include, alternative duties, working from another office or location, working from home or redeployment to an alternative post. If there are no control measures that will ensure the employee’s safety, then they should be placed on paid Special Leave until their maternity leave commences.

**Non-Vaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Employees**

Whilst [vaccinations are recommended for pregnant employees](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-women-of-childbearing-age-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding), not all pregnant employees will be fully vaccinated. The Scottish Government advises that pregnant employees who are unvaccinated at any gestation should take a more precautionary approach in light of the increased risk of serious illness and of pre-term birth from Covid19.

Where pregnant employees have not been fully vaccinated, managers should undertake a Maternity Risk Assessment as set out above, and where appropriate consider both how to redeploy and how to maximise the potential for homeworking, wherever possible.

If there are no measures that will ensure the employee’s safety, then they should be placed on paid Special Leave until their maternity leave commences.

If you need further advice on how to support pregnant employees, please contact a member of the ER team.

**Key advice for pregnant women during the pandemic:**

* Follow the [guidance on staying alert and safe (social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july)) and [staying safe outside the home](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home) including appropriate [use of face coverings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own).
* Keep mobile and hydrated to [reduce the risk of blood clots in pregnancy](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/dvt-blood-clot-pregnant/)
* [Stay active with regular exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pregnancy-exercise/), a healthy balanced [diet, and folic acid and vitamin D supplementation](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/vitamins-minerals-supplements-pregnant/) to help support a healthy pregnancy
* Attend all pregnancy scans and antenatal appointments unless advised not to
* Contact your maternity team if you have concerns about the wellbeing of yourself or your unborn baby.

**Long Covid**

Please note that with immediate effect HT’s/Education Managers will be required to record suspected/confirmed/long covid as Special Leave not sickness absence. New drop downs in iTrent have been created for this.

The guidance on myNL has been updated to reflect this change (link below) and HT’s/Education Managers are asked to familiarise themselves with this.

[COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – Absence – My NL](https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/covid-19-coronavirus-absence/)

HT’s/Managers will receive workflow emails at 3 stages of a COVID absence prompting them to take the appropriate action in regards to iTrent/absence arrangements:

1. Suspected COVID – email on Day 7
2. Confirmed COVID – email on Day 21 (3 weeks) of confirmed COVID absence
3. Long COVID – email on Day 63 (9 weeks) of Long COVID absence ( a new Long COVID guidance is available [here](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Csimpsontr%5CDownloads%5CLong-COVID-Guidance-for-Managers%20%287%29.pdf))

With regards those employees that are already recorded under sickness absence for the above reasons HT’s/Managers should not make any changes to iTrent. This will be done by Employee Relations. There are 2 key dates:

From 30 September – anyone recorded under sickness absence from this date will have their absence changed by Employee Relations to special leave up to 12 weeks excluding initial period of Suspected COVID.

Between 12 July and 29 September – will remain recorded as sickness absence but pay will be reviewed to ensure that they have received full pay for up to 12 weeks excluding initial period of Suspected COVID.

**School Visits and Trips**

Updated guidance on school visits and trips can be viewed [here](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-school-visits-and-trips/). Please read this carefully prior to planning any trips and ensure appropriate and adequate insurance is in place in the event having to be postponed or cancelled. Please also ensure any school visits or trips are risk assessed and all mitigating factors are in place.

There is no longer a requirement to maintain groupings during school visits and trips. Pre-visit testing for staff and pupils is still strongly recommended.

Pupils can attend multiple education settings, either in other educational establishments or the wider community, with an appropriate risk assessment conducted. If sporadic or linked cases have occurred in one school, temporary suspension or reduction of attendance at other facilities should be part of this risk assessment, led by the local Health Protection Team.

**Early Learning and Childcare**

Updated [guidance for ELC settings](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-learning-and-childcare-services/) has also been published. Most mitigating factors are closely aligned with updated schools’ guidance.

 ‘Virtual’ visits should be the norm for meetings with parents. However, where it may be in the best interests of children for a parent or carer to attend in person, this should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Visits for specialist staff will continue to be allowed but staff should follow the guidance on testing and ensure that they follow all the infection prevention and control measures set out in this guidance.

Please refer to the [updated guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-learning-and-childcare-services/) for all updates for early years’ settings and note the [ELC Provider notice](https://teams.microsoft.com/_#/school/tab::aa54fb28-d2de-4d42-9834-40ba566b4474/General?threadId=19:acff090cef9d4fb499f3bde2e19fa2f9@thread.tacv2&ctx=channel) from the Scottish Government dated 11th January 2022.

Please review [notification document](https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/Adult_to_child_ratios_and_new_notification_during_Omicron_2022.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) issued by the care inspectorate on the 11th January referring to adaptations of adult to child rations during Omicron.

**Personal Hygiene**

Key personal hygiene measures that should continue to be promoted are:

* Frequent hand washing/sanitising, particularly when entering/leaving and before/after eating and using the toilet
* Avoid touching faces
* Using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze

**Enhanced Environmental Cleaning**

Enhanced cleaning routines will continue with additional day cleans using Toucan. Classrooms/playrooms should have minimal clutter to facilitate cleaning surfaces and touch points.  It may be necessary for day cleaners to enter classrooms/ playrooms whilst being used, to clean door handles/light switches etc.  Pupils should be encouraged to take responsibility for keeping their workstations clean and tidy, including underneath their desks. Further advice on cleaning can be found in the [Health Protection Scotland Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings.](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/)  Enhanced cleaning routines have been extended until June 2022, when this will be reviewed.

If you have any enquiries on the above matters, please contact your Area Manager.

**Cleaning after a Confirmed Positive Case**

In all cases Facility Support Services are following the [latest guidance](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/) for cleans after positive COVID cases.  **It is extremely important in the first instance that Head Teachers must notify the Janitor/Cleaning Supervisor for the establishment to speed up the process in ensuring the areas affected are sanitised and the procedures enclosed in the link below are followed.** Staff within FSS are aware of these procedures and are currently following them. There are also hard copy procedures available in all schools.  The Toucan product is now being used widely and we also have a number of fogging machines within each area that can also be used.  For information Environmental Health have advised that surfaces should always be physically cleaned after an outbreak and that fogging alone is not sufficient.

The points of contact for FSS Area Management Team there are any issues are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Area Manager** | **Janitorial** | **Catering** |
| Kilsyth & Cumbernauld | Martin Hanlon 07939 280146 | Josephine McGleish   07973 661320 | Elaine Medway             07939 284888 |
| Coatbridge & Chryston | Brenda Mulholland 07939 284887         | Austin Heath07973 661304 | Contact Area Manager          |
| Airdrie, Brannock & Taylor | Anne Elliot 07939 280251 | Vacant  | Janet Fleming07583 668421 |
| Bellshill, Dalziel & Braidhurst | Tracey Halavage   07739 654631 | Phyllis McNeil  07939 284678 | Contact Area Manager |
| OLHS Motherwell, Wishaw & Shotts | Sharon Leslie07939284886 | Naseem Shakoor07583668427  | Lisa Carty07939 284885 |

Anne Hanlon, Business Manager FSS 07939 280199

**Movement around Schools**

Movement of children, young people and staff between classrooms should be minimised where possible. Where it is not possible, appropriate cleaning supplies should be made available to enable wiping down of desk/chairs/surfaces before leaving an area.

**Resources**

Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment to ensure safe use. Children should be discouraged from bringing toys from home to school, however if a child brings in a bag/book/device that only they use, this should not increase the risk of indirect spread of the virus. Bags should continue to be left on the floor. Books and other school resources can go home with pupils, however unnecessary sharing of textbooks etc. should be discouraged. There is no longer a requirement for 72 hours quarantine for any such resources, including homework jotters and reading books. Sand, playdough etc. should be risk assessed appropriately.

**Staffrooms**

Staffrooms can be used with physical distancing measures in place. Staff should use their own crockery/cutlery and wipe down touch points after use (i.e., kettles, light switches etc.)

**NCCT**

Movement between classes and across settings should continue be minimised wherever possible. Staff should continue to maintain at least 2m distancing from learners and other staff, as well as wearing face coverings as appropriate.

**Persons Returning from Abroad**

The most up to date guidance relating to persons returning to Scotland from abroad can be found [here](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/overview/). This changes regularly, so please ensure you are aware of the most up to date guidelines.

**PPE**

The ordering process for PPE remains in operation, should your establishment have ongoing requirements please indicate these through the online form.  **PLEASE CLICK** [**HERE**](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oyzTzM4Wj0KVQTctawUZKevvwncsVahEgOkxEm6MNYpUMFRTQ0pVNjlLWVAwMVJSV0lIME00UEtFMi4u). We would ask that you continue to indicate monthly requirements, please note these will be scaled up to cover larger periods. We would request that orders are submitted by the 15th of each month. We will endeavour to process deliveries by the end of each month.

**Face Coverings in Schools**

Anyone wishing to wear a face covering should be permitted to do so, however some individuals are [exempt](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-use-of-face-coverings/pages/overview/) from wearing face coverings.

Face coverings should be worn in the following circumstances:

* When moving around buildings and in communal areas in all establishments
* At all times for staff and learners in secondary schools (except when eating or drinking)
* On school transport, if aged 12 or over
* By visitors to school sites
* By support staff who routinely have to work closely with different pupils

**Work Experience**

Work experience placements can take place with careful planning and risk assessments in place.

**First Aid**

A [first aid update](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/first-aid-2/) has been added to MyNL. School/nursery staff should not carry out temperature checks of pupils.

**Breaks/Lunch Times**

Restrictions no longer required. Head teachers can opt to retain staggered breaks/lunches at a local level if these are working well.

**Drop Off/Pick Up**

Restrictions no longer required. Head teachers can opt to retain staggered drop off/pick up at a local level if these are working well.

**Out of School Hours Learning**

Activities or clubs outside of the usual school timetable are important for wider health and wellbeing of children and can be conducted subject to appropriate risk assessment and mitigating factors. Consideration for cleaning when scheduling activities should be given. ~~Indoor lets can be restarted from term two.~~

**Outdoor Learning**

Outdoor learning should continue to be promoted as much as possible as the risk of transmission of the virus is reduced outdoors. The [Outdoor Learning Directory](https://outdoorlearningdirectory.com/) provides links to various resources in different subject areas and curriculum levels.

**Swimming**

Swimming can be reviewed and restart with careful planning and risk assessments in place.

**School Photographers**

School photographers are able to attend establishments subject to careful planning and risk assessment.

**Prelims**

Prelims can take place subject to careful planning and risk assessment. The Health and Safety Team have prepared a [generic risk assessment](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/Coronavirus%20generic%20risk%20assessment%2022%20-%205th%206th%20Year%20Prelims.docx?d=wdd8a805e254c4ad18c1b73617068c586&csf=1&web=1&e=nkBqKv) for arrangements for Prelims. Please personalise this to suit your own context.

**ASN**

For pupils with ASN, individual risk assessments should be in place to reflect the particular needs of each pupil. Staff should wear appropriate PPE if they work in close proximity with ASN pupils and handwashing before and after contact is very important. A number of our children require assistance with administration of medication, i.e. insulin etc. In these instances, individual risk assessments must be in place specifying what PPE is required. Specific guidance on supporting ASN pupils can be found [here](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-continuity-in-learning/pages/additional-support-for-learning/).

**Business Continuity Planning**

Establishments should continue to have an up-to-date business continuity in plan in place in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak in their establishments.

Further support with business continuity planning can be given by the following personnel:

* Education – StarrsKevi@northlan.gov.uk or henryal@northlan.gov.uk
* Psychological Service – FergusonN@northlan.gov.uk
* Early Years – SmithLou@northlan.gov.uk
* ASN – henryal@northlan.gov.uk

**Assemblies**

Schools should avoid assemblies and other types of large group gatherings. Where it is necessary to bring groups together, alternative mitigating actions should be put in place, such as physical distancing, ventilation, face coverings, meeting outside and limiting the time spent together.

When undertaking fire test drills or procedures where the whole school is evacuated, schools should prioritise fire safety, but may consider muster points and whether these need to be altered to ensure a greater degree of separation, given the understanding that there remains an associated risk of gathering together in large groups.

**Guidance on Faith Celebrations for Denominational Schools**

We know that celebrating together as a community of faith is a hugely important part of our Catholic schools. The updated guidance coming into effect from January 2022 should be considered when planning any school or class Masses.

If you are planning to celebrate Mass in schools, then school specific guidance should be followed which states that we should not host assemblies or bring large groups of pupils or staff together.  Try to be as creative as possible in your planning, for example, ask your Priest to celebrate Mass in one classroom, with other classes joining via Teams.

If you are planning to celebrate Mass in your local parish, then again stagger this over a few days or weeks so that large groups of pupils and staff are not together at the same time, in line with current schools’ guidance.

**Attendance**

Please continue to record all Covid-related absences with the appropriate [SEEMiS codes](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/SEEMiS/SEEMiS%20COVID-19%20Codes%20V5.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=k1TDXj). This information is extracted weekly to monitor the number of staff and pupils absent or isolating at any given time.

**Outbreak Management and Self-Isolation**

**New Isolation Guidelines effective from 6th January 2021:**

There is no longer a requirement for a follow up confirmatory PCR for **asymptomatic** individuals who test positive via LFD; they should isolate as a positive case as per the advice below. Individuals with symptoms should seek a PCR test. Further detail on the approach to self-isolation and testing for those with symptoms, or those who test positive, is available at NHS Inform.

**Positive Cases**

Positive cases must isolate for 10 days. However, if the person tests negative on day 6 and day 7 LFD tests (taken at least 24 hours apart, with the first test no earlier than day 6) they may leave isolation if they have no fever after their day 7 test.

**Close Contacts** **- Fully Vaccinated** (definition is 2 doses **plus** booster, AND all contacts aged under 18 years and 4 month)

Close contacts under the above definition should:

* Take 7 daily LFD tests and report results instead of isolating (provided they are negative and have no symptoms); there is no requirement for a PCR
* Children aged under 5 are encouraged, but not required, to take LFD tests

**Close Contacts - Unvaccinated/Partially Vaccinated Adult** (definition includes adults with only 0-2 doses)

Close contacts under the above definition must take a PCR and isolate for 10 days, regardless of test outcome.

**Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings:** School and nursery contacts have returned to low-risk settings guidelines.  Risk Assessments are NOT required as a general rule and should only identify close contacts in particular circumstances where there is concern around very close, prolonged contact.

**ASN and LCSC Units:** These settings *may be* deemed higher risk, and this will be determined via risk assessment. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the duty officer and public health.

For positive staff members, HTs/HOCs should continue to complete a CIRIS report. For positive early years staff and pupils, EY settings should also continue to notify the Care Inspectorate.

Staff, children or young people who develop symptoms of Covid-19 should seek a PCR test and should [isolate](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19) if the test result is positive. Staff, children and young people are strongly encouraged to inform their schools of positive test results.

For all confirmed positive cases of pupils and staff, HTs/HOCs should complete the updated ‘confirmed positive case’ [template](https://teams.microsoft.com/_#/school/tab::aa54fb28-d2de-4d42-9834-40ba566b4474/General?threadId=19:acff090cef9d4fb499f3bde2e19fa2f9@thread.tacv2&ctx=channel) and email to the CovidEnquiries@northlan.gov.uk mailbox. Please note, this now requires the SCN number if it’s a positive pupil.

To ensure isolating pupils and families are appropriately supported, please highlight any positive pupils who are open to North Lanarkshire Social Work in amber, and any Child Protection cases in red. The Covid team will then ensure these families are highlighted to colleagues in social work on a daily basis. Please ensure all staff involved in reporting positive cases are aware of this change. Please also ensure you notify social work services out with North Lanarkshire directly if they have involvement with any isolating pupils in your establishment.

You are no longer required to forward details to the Community Assistance mailbox. This will now be done centrally by the Covid-19 project team. Families with children requiring to self-isolate may qualify for the Self-Isolation Support Grant, and a member of the Community Assistance Team may contact schools to verify information.  Please note, a follow-up confirmed positive PCR is required to apply for the grant.

However, it should be noted that if Public Health deem there to be a cluster or outbreak at an establishment then HTs/HOCs may be asked to complete risk assessments for presentation at Sifts, PAGs or RAMS.

**Close Contacts/ Communications**

Confirmed case letters should be issued if there is a concern of an outbreak or cluster of cases, or if there is concern around transmission within an establishment. This should be in agreement with the Covid Team.

These letters have been updated from 2nd February 2022 by NHS Lanarkshire and there are 4 versions of these: primary pupils, secondary pupils, staff and nursery. Updated [letters](https://teams.microsoft.com/_#/school/files/General?threadId=19:acff090cef9d4fb499f3bde2e19fa2f9@thread.tacv2&ctx=channel&rootfolder=%252Fsites%252FNLCHeadsofEstablishment%252FShared%2520Documents%252FUpdated%2520Low%2520Risk%2520Letters%252FLow%2520Risk%2520Letters%2520-%2520February%25202022) can be found in the SharePoint and should be signposted to parents as appropriate. A [flowchart](https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/r/sites/NLCHeadsofEstablishment/Shared%20Documents/Recovery%20Documents/Isolation%20Protocols%20in%20School%20Settings.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=nEnDAC) to assist with identifying high and low risk contacts has been created. It has been agreed with the pan-Lanarkshire NHS tactical group that the letters should NOT be issued for every confirmed positive case.

**Isolation and Free Meals Entitlement**

Where a child or young person receives school meals (note, only those entitled through Revenue and Benefits), arrangements can be made to issue vouchers to these families. Email names of entitled pupils and year group with Start/End date of isolation to FME@northlan.gov.uk mailbox.

**Exemptions from self-isolation related to Critical National Infrastructure**

The exemption process is no longer applicable due to the change in guidance for close contacts.

**HR Guidance**

**Recording of Covid19 Absences**

All Covid19 absences, including periods of self-isolation, must be recorded on iTrent at the earliest possible point. If you have any concerns about how to record an absence, please contact the Employee Service Centre for guidance and support. **Staff Absences (Covid Related)**

A number of enquiries have been received regarding recording of staff absences. It may be useful to revisit the recording matrix on itrent : [Absence Category Matrix for COVID related absences on iTrent – My NL](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/absence-category-matrix-for-covid-related-absences-on-itrent/#SicknessAbsenceCategories)

In light of the increasing numbers of people being affected by the new Omicron variant of Covid19, it is important that all staff absences are recorded appropriately and in a timely manner on iTrent to ensure that any statistical information provided is accurate and reflective of the current position.  Detailed below is a summary of where Covid-19 absences should be recorded on iTrent during the various stages:

All of the undernoted categories can be found under ‘Other Absence’ within iTrent and the drop down description is provided in column 2 of the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **myTeam  Absence Type** | **Maximum Duration for this Category of Absence** |
| **Suspected Coronavirus (non - work related)**Unfit for work due to suspected Coronavirus | Other Absence – Suspected COVID | 7 calendar days (this is to allow time for employee to get PCR test and results if required)  |
| **Confirmed Coronavirus (non - work related)**Unfit for work due to confirmed Coronavirus (either LFD or PCR)  | Other Absence – Confirmed COVID | 3 weeks (21 calendar days) - this takes account of the self-isolation period and an additional week for recovery from symptoms if required.      |
| **Long or Post-viral COVID related sickness absence**Reason for absence is Long COVID or post-viral COVID as defined by a fit note. | Other Absence – Long COVID | 9 weeks (63 calendar days) – this ensures that along with the 3 weeks for Confirmed COVID the employee receives a maximum of 12 weeks paid leave.  Please note however that the absence should still be managed in accordance with the appropriate attendance policy, taking in to account the [Long-COVID-Guidance-for-Managers](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Csimpsontr%5CDownloads%5CLong-COVID-Guidance-for-Managers%20%289%29.pdf)   |
| **Household – Self Isolation(unable to work from home)** Required to self-isolate due to a member of their household exhibiting symptoms or having a positive COVID-19 test. | Other absence – Self isolation (Household) | 10 calendar days (depending on vaccination status and LFD/PCR results)Further Information on the changes to the Self-Isolation rules including Household and Close Contacts which took effect from 6 January can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/if-a-member-of-staff-with-symptoms-of-covid-19-lives-in-a-household-with-other-people/) |
| **Close Contact -Self-Isolation (non work related)**Asked to self-isolate having been identified as a non-work related close contact through test and protect. | Other Absence – Self Isolating (Test and Protect Request) | 10 calendar days (depending on vaccination status and LFD/PCR results)Further Information on the changes to the Self-Isolation rules including Household and Close Contacts which took effect from 6 January can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/if-a-member-of-staff-with-symptoms-of-covid-19-lives-in-a-household-with-other-people/) |

Further information on COVID-19 related absences including how to record absences on iTrent can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/covid-19-coronavirus-absence/)

**Self-Isolation and Compensatory Annual Leave**

**Teachers and Music Instructors:**

If a teacher or music instructor is required to self-isolate due to contact with Covid-19, and this has severely limited the ability to socialize and for recreation, the employee will accrue compensatory leave as follows:

* For every 5 days of annual leave within the self-isolation period the employee will accrue 2 days of compensatory leave. This is subject to a maximum credit of 8 such days accruing in any one leave year.
* In agreement with the council, this compensatory leave shall be taken by the employee following his/her return to work. The timing of this leave is subject to the overriding needs of the service.
* This provision comes into effect from 11 August 2020. Employees can make a claim for compensatory days accrued retrospectively

**All other employees:**

If an employee is required to self-isolate prior to taking annual leave and the period of self-isolation overlaps with the annual leave period, the employee will be able to cancel all or part of their annual leave through iTrent with the prior authorisation of their line manager. The employee should rearrange their annual leave to be taken at a future date that meets with the exigencies of the service and managers are encouraged to accommodate periods of annual leave wherever possible.

If an employee is required to self-isolate whilst they are on annual leave and they can evidence that Test and Protect have told them to self-isolate, the employee can claim back the period of annual leave that they were required to self-isolate.

The above information does not apply to employees who choose to travel abroad and are required to self-isolate or quarantine on return.

**Temporary change to fit notes**

No Longer valid as of 26th January 2022.

**Policy/Procedure Guidance**

Please ensure all policies and procedures reflect the current Tier level that North Lanarkshire fall under and are revisited regularly.

**Concerning Emails**

We have been made aware of covid-related emails circulating schools; one such letter is by a group calling themselves “Lawyers for Liberty” stating that it is a “Notice of potential liability” in relation to the administration of the Covid 19 vaccination to children within schools. The letter has been passed to the Council’s legal services who have advised that it should simply be ignored and no response given.  Lawyers for Liberty are not a law firm and the letter has no legal standing. In any event the statutory provisions referred to in the letter apply only to England.  The Council will continue to follow guidelines issued by the Scottish Government and NHS Public Health Lanarkshire.  If you receive any concerning emails or letters, please forward them to the Covid mailbox so that the team can monitor the situation.