

Guidance for educational settings – COVID-19

November 2021

Objective:

The overarching objective is to ensure our educational settings are as safe as possible for all staff and students, and maximise the number of children and young people in face-to face education or childcare to minimise any disruption, in a way that best manages the COVID-19 risk. This document provides guidance and reminders of the proportionate, protective measures for educational settings. This is a live document and as such, any revisions made in the future will be logged in the version control table at the end of the document.

Who is this guidance for?

Educational settings including:

- Primary schools (including reception classes)
- Secondary schools (including school sixth forms)
- Specialist Provision Units
- Special post-16 providers
- Other educational settings such as the Pre-school Assessment Centre & the Educational Support Centre
- University College Isle of Man.

As we learn to live with the persistent threat of the COVID-19 virus, it is important that educational settings are well-planned and clear about the options they should adopt in the event of suspected or confirmed cases in their community. It is important, from the outset, to state that – despite detailed planning – educational settings’ responses often need to be dynamic and modifiable in light of specific advice offered by Public Health and the prevailing circumstances at the time.

There cannot be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. School leaders have shown they are best placed to understand the needs of their settings and communities and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk.

There are a range of precautions which should be maintained to keep all those who attend or work in educational settings as safe as possible.

High Level Government mitigations include:

- Encouraging students (secondary and UCM) and all staff (primary, secondary and UCM) to test at least twice a week using free LFD test kits and to ‘know before you go’ to protect themselves and others. If they receive a positive test result they are advised that they should isolate immediately and book a PCR test either online or by calling 111 which is in line with Public Health advice.
- Staff (within primary, secondary & UCM), students (within secondary & UCM) and all visitors (within primary, secondary & UCM) are expected to wear face coverings particularly when gathering in communal areas moving around school premises (indoors).

- It is mandatory for all staff, students and volunteers (within secondary & UCM) to wear a face covering when using public transport, this includes travelling on school transport (school buses and any educational setting mini bus).

Range of mitigations which educational settings should be undertaking:

- Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive do not attend the educational setting.
- Increased consistent messaging around “hands, face, space, and fresh air”.
- All students and staff are encouraged to wash their hands regularly, and extra handwashing and sanitation facilities are available in all educational settings.
- Committed to deploying monitors in educational settings to measure the air quality which will give an indication on effectiveness of ventilation, in order to be proactive if levels do become a concern and ensure all educational settings are as ventilated as possible.
- Emphasise communication that if any staff or students feel unwell or develop any of the identified symptoms they should remain at home and follow Public Health advice.
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.
- Maintain a good cleaning regime in shared areas.
- In the event of a pupil or member of staff becoming unwell whilst at school follow a clear protocol to isolate them and arrange for collection.

DESC continue to monitor and review all measures in place, and will align to any change to Government Policy or Public Health advice as it arises.

The following are additional mitigations which educational settings may choose to implement, following consultation with DESC and Public Health, should there be a substantial number of cases in an individual setting:

- Mass gatherings and mixing of schools will be limited where possible, and where gatherings or mixing of schools do take place further mitigations measures will be considered.
- The number of staff members in a communal area at any one time should be kept to a minimum.
- No shared equipment where possible - any equipment used may be cleaned after use.
- Indoor activities (assemblies, music, sports etc.) may be kept to small groups/year groups, increased ventilation in room or held outside where possible.
- May consider classes and year groups not mixing where possible.
- Classrooms may be wiped down for use by a different set of students (desks, chairs, door handles etc.).
- Specific lunchtimes may be set for specific year groups where possible.
- All surfaces may be wiped down after lunch.
- One at a time in toilets with the exception of shared household occupants (family members) may be considered.
- May limit visits on site including parents - collection of child outside may be considered.
- May limit interaction with other schools for a set period of time and review once confirmed with DESC.
- May alter uniform requirements to enable staff and students to dress warmly within ventilated environments.

- May stagger lesson change times to reduce numbers of students on open corridors at any one time.

The Isle of Man Government has published advice on managing the impact of the virus including what to do if you, or someone you know, develops symptoms this is supported by a high-level COVID-19 Response Levels document which summarises the different levels of response that may be adopted;

<https://covid19.gov.im/general-guidance/>

Educational settings also have access to this guidance document and their individual risk assessments.

Managing confirmed cases

School leaders should inform DESC of any known confirmed cases within their setting by emailing [Details supplied] and [Details supplied]

Settings may wish to seek additional public health advice if they are concerned about transmission in the setting.

Educational visits

Educational visits can continue to take place, with mitigations in place, and with appropriate risk assessments as required by school visits policies. If mitigations cannot be put in place then the school leadership will review whether or not the visit should go ahead.

Attendance

It is vital for all pupils to attend their educational setting to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education. Attendance is therefore mandatory and as such the standard rules on attendance will apply.

Educational setting closures

Educational settings will only be closed as a last resort either under regulation 31 of the Public Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 when the Council of Ministers give a direction requiring individual premises to close, or via a Ministerial decision when staff shortages mean that DESC cannot substitute and safely open schools with the numbers of staff available.

If settings have to temporarily stop onsite provision on public health advice, they should discuss alternative arrangements for vulnerable children and young people with DESC and relevant agencies.

Home education

Work that can be undertaken at home should be provided for all students if:

- they have tested positive for COVID-19 but are well enough to learn from home; or
- attendance at their setting has been temporarily restricted.

Clinically vulnerable students

Shielding ceased on 11th April 2021. It is DESC policy to maintain the balance of mitigations through which we hope to lower the risk to vulnerable students testing positive for COVID-19 and the overall wellbeing of that child.

The following groups have been identified by the UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) at higher risk of COVID-19 and will be identified as vulnerable students within our schools:

- Severe neurodisability (which could include conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism or epilepsy)
- Down's syndrome
- A severely weakened immune system, including some children with cancer
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties

Along with any others that have received written confirmation by a medical professional.

Until such time as the Isle of Man Government complete the vaccination programme to the above vulnerable groups, DESC will put in place measures within both Specialist Provision Units and mainstream settings that are attended by students identified as vulnerable.

Settings will follow their normal procedures for clinically vulnerable students when there are infectious diseases that may poses a risk to that student.

As such all educational settings should have a register of clinically vulnerable students in order that if there is a positive COVID-19 case confirmed in their setting and the setting has been made aware, they are able to inform the parents and carers of those clinically vulnerable.

Settings should be in regular contact with parents/carers of such student and seek to find out their child's vaccination status (this is voluntary).

Mainstream settings

Each student with an individual health care plan within mainstream will have COVID-19 risks and mitigations reflected in the plan.

Schools will discuss health care plans and any risk assessments with parents and decisions made will be based ultimately upon parents' wishes/consent.

Specialist provision units

Setting specific risk assessments will be undertaken and if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs within a specialist unit, parents and staff within the unit will be notified should the setting become aware.

Additional precautions including restricted visiting will be based on the vulnerability of individual students and vaccine status:

- Staff are expected to wear face coverings, and strongly advised to wear PPE which may include visors, gloves and aprons all of which will be supplied by the relevant setting in line with Public Health advice.
- All visits to the Specialist Provision Unit (with the exception of parents/carers/escorts at drop-off and pick-up) must be arranged in advance with the Unit Manager.
- All visitors will be expected to wear a face covering.
- All visitors are required to sanitise their hands on entry and exit to the Specialist Provision Unit.
- A Visitor Registration Form must be completed by all visitors entering the Specialist Unit.
- Activities and outings must be risk assessed and mitigations put in place based on vulnerability of students.
- Mixing within mainstream must be risk assessed based on vulnerability of students and will be agreed in discussion with parents, unit manager and Headteacher. The approach will be reviewed after half term.

Clinically vulnerable Staff

Shielding ceased on 11th April 2021. However, any staff members that are identified as clinically vulnerable, are otherwise well, but at risk of severe illness if they contract COVID-19 will be dealt with on a case by case basis. OHR and Occupational Health guidance will be applied and the final arrangement will be authorised by a Director level manager. A comprehensive risk assessment will be carried out to identify any reasonable adjustments that can be made to consider options for working in an existing role, homeworking or re-deployment, where social distancing and any other measures identified in a risk assessment can be maintained in accordance with latest advice.

Education workforce

Cross-government policies (e.g. off-Island travel, caring, vulnerable persons etc.) which apply to DESC staff should be followed and, where needed, guidance sought from the HR team.

<https://hr.gov.im/policies-procedures-codes-guidance-and-forms/>

Document Version Control Table

Date	Revision history	Revision class (Minor/Major)	Action no. (ref)	Comments on changes made
1.11.21	V2.0	Minor		Minor typographical and formatting changes and additional bullet points under additional mitigations section to include reference to uniform requirements & stagger lesson change times. Amendment to the wording under Home Education. 'Strongly advised' added to mask wearing high level Government mitigation section.
29.11.21	V3.0	Major		Amendments made to reflect change in Government policy which will come into effect at 04:00 on Tuesday 30 November 2021.

Current Educational Contingency Planning

Current Mitigations



Hands

All students and staff are encouraged to wash their hands regularly. Extra handwashing and sanitisation facilities are in place in all educational settings.



Face

All Secondary and UCM students are expected to wear a face covering. All school and UCM staff are expected to wear a face covering.



Space

COVID-19 is at higher risk of transmission in confined and crowded spaces – so students should follow their own school's mitigations.



Fresh Air

Educational settings will be as ventilated as possible.

Contingency



Staffing Pressures

Request support from supply list and former teachers.

Where possible condense classes with a shared teacher within a larger space than a class room, where reasonable distance can be achieved. Failing that, send year group(s) home with the provision of online learning being made available within two days – vulnerable children should remain in school.

Students with examinations to remain onsite with mitigations.



High Infection rates

Activities, both between schools and extra curricular, are suspended e.g. swimming, interschool sports, collaboration etc.

Internal school gatherings are suspended e.g. whole school assemblies.

Stagger movement around school.

Contingency – School Closure



All Schools

Full closure – Everyone at home and learning delivered online. Hub provision at NSC for DHSC key workers only.

Partial closure - Everyone at home and learning delivered online, however, vulnerable children, including those in Specialist Provision Centres and children of on-Island essential workers are in their own schools to access online learning. Meals will be provided.

Those eligible for free school meals and not in schools will receive meal vouchers.



Examinations

Students needing to complete external examinations that are still running, will attend their educational setting to complete examinations with mitigations in place.