

Date: 10/09/2020

For parents and carers of children

Risk of COVID-19 to children and its transmission

Dear parent/carer,

At the start of this new academic year, we have dealt with a case of transmission of COVID-19 within a school setting in Suffolk. A rapid response made sure all necessary action took place to contain further spread of the virus. This was coordinated by the Suffolk COVID-19 Co-ordination Centre, working with the school and Public Health England. This ensured that those with positive cases and their known contacts were self-isolating at home; contacts were tested and the school was deep cleaned.

We want to reassure you that the risk of COVID-19 to children and transmission of it between children and staff is low. This is based on information from published scientific evidence.

Unlike many other viral respiratory infections such as influenza, children appear less likely to be infected with the virus than adults. Children and young people account for only 1-3% of covid-19 cases, with only 5% of those tested developing severe or critical disease¹.

A recent study² found very little transmission between the students which is in line with literature for preschool and primary school students. The same study showed that siblings did not seed the infection into different bubbles. Also, transmission was low between staff and students. This was despite the difficulties in maintaining social distancing with younger children and those attending SEND schools.

The evidence also suggests that students mostly acquired the virus infection at home. Most children showed no symptoms and were only identified as part of contact tracing after their parent developed COVID-19.

Schools have robust risk assessments in place and have actions to mitigate the risks and to keep their pupils and staff safe. They have ways to minimise infection and outbreaks amongst staff members. This is through continued emphasis on the education about safe working practices and how to control infection at work in the school and at other times. Staff have controls over social distancing in staff rooms

¹ Bhopal S, Bagaria J, Bhopal R. Children's mortality from COVID-19 compared with all-deaths and other relevant causes of death: epidemiological information for decision-making by parents, teachers, clinicians and policymakers. Public Health 2020;185:19-20.

² SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission in educational settings: cross-sectional analysis of clusters and outbreaks in England. Sharif A Ismail, Vanessa Saliba, Jamie Lopez Bernal, Mary E Ramsay, Shamez N Ladhani, published 12 August 2020.

and meetings as well as rules about working with bubbles. The school risk assessments will cover this and provide clear instructions for all adults to follow.

Early detection and isolation of staff and pupils can prevent progression to an outbreak in most cases. This highlights the importance of the 'Test, Track and Trace' approach.

We are closely monitoring the current Covid-19 cases in Suffolk as well as in the East of England and taking preventive actions. This will help us understand how potential outbreaks can be managed and reduce the incidence of the virus.

There is much in the published evidence about the importance of children continuing their education and being with their peers in schools and settings. The evidence shows that a long period of lock down and not attending schools or settings has slowed children's learning; development and mental wellbeing. We want to change this so that children once again learn well, enjoy their learning and the social environment of school. School leaders have worked hard to plan for this, and you can help by making sure you know what your school expects everyone to do to keep safe in and around the building.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

Be sure that you and all children in your care follow the guidance that the school has produced through their risk assessment process so that you know how to be safe in the school environment.

Be sure that you and all children in your care follow the guidance that the school has produced through their risk assessment process so that you know how to be safe in the school environment. For a list of symptoms that you need to be aware of, please see the latest information provided by the NHS in the link below.
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further Information

Further information is available at
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Yours sincerely



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