



Guidance for staff in childcare and educational settings, including language schools about novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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This guidance will assist educational settings, including language schools, and childcare settings in providing advice for staff and host families on the following:

- the novel coronavirus, COVID-19,
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19,
- what advice to give to individuals who have travelled from countries where COVID-19 is circulating within the last 14 days
- what to do if someone confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 has been in a school or other educational setting, or is staying with a host family
- what advice to give to individuals who have travelled from countries with ongoing transmission within the last 14 days
- advice on how to clean /disinfect areas where there has been a case of COVID-19 in an educational or childcare setting

Information on COVID-19

There is an ongoing outbreak of a novel Coronavirus which began in China. Infections have been reported in several other countries. A list of countries where COVID-19 is circulating in the community can be found [here](#).

The HSE HPSC is monitoring the situation and updating its website www.hpsc.ie daily.

Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illnesses. Some of these illnesses are very mild, like the common cold, while others are more severe, like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).

Novel coronavirus COVID-19

A “novel coronavirus” means a new type of coronavirus that has never been seen in humans before. The coronavirus recently identified in China is one of these. The infection caused by this new coronavirus is being named COVID-19.



Symptoms of COVID-19

It can take up to 14 days from exposure to the virus for the symptoms of COVID-19 to appear. These symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Treatment of novel coronavirus COVID-19

There is no specific treatment for 2019-nCoV at present, but the symptoms of the virus can be treated.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 can spread from person to person, usually after close contact with a person infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 for example in a household, healthcare facility or workplace.

The virus can be spread either:

- directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (e.g. droplets from coughing or sneezing)
- or
- indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on and which are, therefore, contaminated with the virus. It is still not known how long the virus survives on surfaces, although current information suggests the virus may survive a few hours. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus.

How to protect yourself from novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV

- [Wash your hands often with soap and water](#) or use an alcohol based hand rub if hand washing is not available
- [If you are coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue](#). Throw the used tissue away into a closed bin, and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your flexed (bent) elbow.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who you know has cold or flu symptoms.
- Check the [travel advisories from the Department of Foreign Affairs](#) prior to arranging travel abroad.

HSE HPSC has a [suite of materials](#) that contains public health advice about how to help stop the spread of viruses, like those that cause COVID-19, by practicing good respiratory and hand hygiene.



Face masks for the general public, students, staff or host families are **not recommended** to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments.

Advice for students and staff who have travelled to Ireland from abroad

If the student or staff:

- have not been in any of [these countries](#) in the last 14 days
AND
- have not been in contact with a person with COVID-19
AND
- have not attended a healthcare facility where patients with novel coronavirus are being treated in another country

Then no specific measures are needed.

IF WITHIN THE LAST 14 DAYS;

- the student or staff have been [in any of these countries](#)
OR
- have been in contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
OR
- have attended a healthcare facility in another country where patients with COVID-19 are being treated

If the student or staff member is WELL (no fever, cough or shortness of breath), they should visit the [HSE website](#) and call the HSE helpline: Callsave 1850 24 1850, Phone 041 6850300 for further advice

If they are well and have been to any of [these countries](#) in the last 14 days:

- There is no need for quarantine (they do not need to be kept separate from others)
- They can attend college/university or work as normal
- They should watch out for symptoms of respiratory illness for 14 days. If they develop any respiratory symptoms they should phone their GP/student health service/Emergency Department for advice.
- They should tell the doctor their symptoms and where they have travelled

If they have been in contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 or attended a health care facility in another country where people were treated for COVID-19:

- They should contact the helpline above for further advice
- They should stay at home until they have received advice.



IF WITHIN THE LAST 14 DAYS;

- The student or staff member have been [any of these countries](#)
OR
- have been in contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
OR
- have attended a healthcare facility in another country where patients with COVID-19 are being treated

If THE STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER IS UNWELL (fever, cough, shortness of breath)

If a student or staff member develops symptoms of fever, cough, or shortness of breath they should:

- Self-isolate in a room with a phone by themselves.
- **Phone their GP or student health service (for students) or emergency department for medical advice, rather than turning up in person**
- Make sure that, when they phone, they mention that they have recently travelled to an affected region. The doctor will arrange to get medical help.
- While they wait for help, they should stay at home.
- Not go out to public places
- Not go to school, college/university or work

Make sure that children and students know to tell a member of staff if they feel unwell.

If a student or staff member is in school at the time that they feel unwell and develop symptoms:

- For children in your care, who develop symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath while in school, call their parent or guardian and ask them to contact their GP and explain that they may have had exposure to COVID-19
- If an older student or adult reports feeling unwell, ask them to contact their GP and explain that they may have been exposed to COVID-19
- In an emergency, call the ambulance, and explain that the student or staff member is unwell and may have had exposure to COVID-19



While you wait for the parent or guardian to arrive, or for further advice, or for the ambulance to arrive, try to find somewhere safe for the unwell person to sit. They should remain at least two metres away from other people.

- If possible, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a shut door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.
- They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the bin.
- If no bin is available, put the tissue in a bag or pocket for disposing in a bin later. If you don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. The room will need to be cleaned once they leave.
- If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

IF A CASE OF COVID-19 (PUPIL, STUDENT OR STAFF) IS SUSPECTED IN YOUR CHILDCARE OR EDUCATION SETTING

- For those who are in contact with a person suspected of having COVID-19 in a childcare or educational setting, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID-19 are awaited.
- There is no need to close the setting or to send other students or staff home. Until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that staff members need to take.
- People who test negative for COVID-19 will be advised individually about return to education or work.
- Your local Department of Public Health will contact you if any additional steps need to be taken
- Contact the contact HSELive on [1850 24 1850](tel:1850241850) for further advice if in doubt.



WHAT TO DO IF A CASE OF COVID-19 (PUPIL, STUDENT OR STAFF) IS CONFIRMED IN YOUR CHILDCARE OR EDUCATION SETTING

The school, childcare or educational setting will be contacted by local Public Health staff of the HSE to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

An assessment of each school, childcare or education setting will be undertaken by HSE public health staff.

Advice on the management of pupils or students and staff will be based on this assessment.

The HSE public health staff will also be in contact individually with anyone who has been in contact with the person with COVID-19 to provide them with appropriate advice.

Advice on cleaning of communal areas such as classrooms, changing rooms and toilets will be given by Public Health and is outlined later in this document.

Advice for Host Families

If a student has not been in [any of these countries](#) in the last 14 days

AND

- has not been in contact with a person with novel coronavirus

AND

- has not attended a healthcare facility where patients with novel coronavirus are being treated in another country

Then no specific measures are needed.

If a student **has been** in [any of these countries](#)

OR

- has been in contact with a person diagnosed with novel coronavirus

OR



- has attended a healthcare facility in another country where patients with novel coronavirus are being treated

If they develop symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath, they should:

- Self-isolate in a room with a phone by themselves.
- **Phone their GP or student health service (for students) or emergency department for medical advice, rather than turning up in person**
- Make sure that, when they phone, they mention that they have recently travelled to an affected region. The doctor will arrange to get medical help.
- While they wait for help, they should stay at home.
- Not go out to public places
- Not go to school, college/university or work

Your local Public Health Department will be in contact with you to advise you of any further steps that need to be taken while the person is being investigated for COVID-19

If they are WELL (no fever, cough or shortness of breath), they should visit the [HSE website](#) and call the HSE helpline: Callsave 1850 24 1850, Phone 041 6850300 for further advice

For those who are well and have been in [any of these countries](#) in the last 14 days:

- There is no need for quarantine (they do not need to be kept separate from others)
- They can attend college/university or work as normal
- They should watch out for symptoms of respiratory illness for 14 days. If they develop any respiratory symptoms they should phone their GP/student health service/Emergency Department for advice.
- They should tell their doctor their symptoms and where they have travelled

For those who are well and who have been in contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 or attended a health care facility in another country where people were treated for COVID-19:

- They should contact the helpline above for further advice
- They should stay at home until they have received advice.



ADVICE ON HOW TO CLEAN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT WHERE THERE WERE CHILDREN, STUDENTS OR STAFF WITH SUSPECTED COVID-19

Evidence to date suggests that transmission of Coronavirus from one person to another is more likely to occur when someone has close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. The risk increases the longer that person is in close contact with the infected individual.

The virus is most likely to pass to others when large respiratory droplets containing the virus are passed directly to the mouth, eyes or noses of people who are in close contact with an infected person who is actively coughing and sneezing.

It is also possible although it is probably a lesser risk that a person may become infected when they touch an object or surface that has been contaminated by respiratory secretions from an infected person and they then touch their own mouth, nose or eyes, for example when they touch a door handle and then rub their eyes or put something in their mouth.

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 72 hours.

Regular cleaning of frequently –touched hard surfaces and hands will therefore help to reduce the risk of infection.

There is little evidence that people who do not have any respiratory symptoms can transmit the virus to others.

Once a pupil with suspected COVID-19 is identified in a school or childcare setting all surfaces that the pupil has been in contact with should be cleaned and disinfected.

General tips for cleaning/disinfecting rooms that pupils with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 were isolated in.

- Keep the door to the room closed for at least one hour before cleaning. Do not use the room until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.
- The person assigned to clean the area should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household or disposable single use non-sterile nitrile gloves and a disposable plastic apron (if one is available).
- Open the window while you are cleaning.
- Clean the environment and the furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed or combined with Chlorine based product such as sodium hypochlorite



(often referred to as household bleach). Chlorine based products are available in different formats including wipes.

- If you are not familiar with chlorine based disinfectants then please refer to the HPSC Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/az/lifestages/schoolhealth/>
- Pay special attention to frequently touched flat surfaces, the backs of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces or items that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Place all waste that has been in contact with the pupil, including used tissues, and masks if used, in a plastic rubbish bag and tie when full. Remove your apron and gloves and discard into the waste bag and clean your hands. Place the plastic bag into a second bin bag and tie it, then clean your hands.
- Store the bag in a safe place until the result of the test is available. If the pupil tests negative, place the waste in the normal domestic waste bin. In the event the pupil tests positive, Public Health will advise what to do next.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be put back into use.
- There is no need to clean carpets (if present) unless there has been a spillage.

Cleaning of communal areas

- If a the pupil spent time in a communal area like a classroom, dormitory, play area or they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then these areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined above) as soon as is practicably possible, Pay special attention to frequently touched sites including door handles, backs of chairs, taps of washbasins, toilet handles. Once cleaning and disinfection have been completed and all surfaces are completely dry, the area can be put back into use.