

Covid-19

Trust Autumn and Winter Plan 2021-22



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1. Introduction

Between March and July 2021, the Government's roadmap for England reopened the economy and lifted restrictions in four steps. As part of this process, the Trust reviewed its covid risk assessments and strategy plan (Phase Six Covid Response Strategy).

In August 2021, further announcements were made and the operational guidance for schools was updated.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance>

This Trust *Autumn and Winter Plan 2021-22* outlines the Trust's further review of its risk assessments and the continuing preventative actions it will take to keep pupils, staff, and parents as safe as possible. It reflects how the Trust, and its schools will do its best to maintain high levels of attendance, great learning experiences and safe environments for all pupils.

Over autumn and winter, the Trust and its schools will aim to sustain covid safe practices, as we believe this is the best way to support our communities and to ensure the National Health Service (NHS) does not come under unsustainable pressure.

We plan to achieve this by:

- Maintaining certain precautionary measures in and around school
- Continuing to support staff with LFD testing and encouragement to take up the vaccine
- Providing the offer of free flu vaccinations to all staff
- Advising pupils and parents on how to protect themselves and others: clear guidance and communications.
- Continuing to work closely with local public health teams and following all government guidance.

We will remain vigilant and continue to monitor the data across our schools closely, taking action quickly if the need arises.

2. Identifying and isolating positive cases to limit transmission

Although schools are no longer directly involved with The Test, Trace, and Isolate system, we recognise that it remains critical to the Government's plan for managing the virus over the autumn and winter. It helps to find positive cases and make sure they and their unvaccinated contacts self-isolate, breaking chains of transmission.

We will continue to support the system as and when we are requested to do so.

We will also continue to communicate the Government's central message to parents and carers i.e. the expectation that everyone with covid-19 symptoms must self-isolate and take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

For note: the legal requirement to self-isolate for 10 days if an individual tests positive for covid-19 remains in place in order to prevent those who are infected from mixing in school and the community and passing on the virus.

For note: over autumn and winter PCR testing for those with covid-19 symptoms will continue to be available free of charge.

For note: rapid asymptomatic testing is an important tool to help reduce the spread of the virus, while supporting people to manage their own risk and the risks to others. The Government will therefore continue to provide the public with access to free lateral flow tests in the coming months. The Trust continues to encourage all staff to carry out twice weekly LFD Testing at home to help the management of risk and keep pupils and colleagues as safe as possible.

For note: contact tracing will continue through the autumn and winter. This means NHS Test and Trace will continue to check with all positive cases whether they need support to self-isolate, find out who they may have passed the virus onto and alert those contacts, and ask all contacts to take a PCR test as soon as possible to help identify positive cases. Since 16 August, in England, under 18s and those who are fully vaccinated no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a contact. If they are identified as a contact, they are advised to take a PCR test and only need to self-isolate if positive. Where contacts are over 18 and not fully vaccinated, they will, as now, be legally required to self-isolate unless they are taking part in an approved daily contact testing scheme.

3. Clinically extremely vulnerable and shielding advice

At the start of the pandemic, staff identified as *Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)* were required to shield in order to protect themselves from the virus.

Since 19 July 2021, people who were previously identified as CEV have been advised to follow the same guidance and behaviours as the rest of the adult population. The proven effectiveness of the vaccine rollout across the entire population has reduced the risk of serious illness from covid-19.

The Trust will continue to follow all Government advice and will continue with individual risk assessments for the most vulnerable pupils and staff. Individuals should consider advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are right for them and these should be discussed as part of the risk assessment process.

4. Vaccines for influenza (flu)

The Government recommends as many people as possible receive a vaccination against flu this autumn and winter. This could help to reduce overall pressure on the NHS and is especially important this year given the possibility of a substantial resurgence in flu. The NHS has begun to roll out the annual campaign for the flu vaccination from August 2021. A free flu vaccination will be available for all previously eligible groups. This includes:

- Primary school children.
- 65-year-olds and over.
- Vulnerable groups.
- Pregnant women.

The Government has also extended eligibility for a free flu vaccination this year to include:

- Secondary school children.
- 50–64-year-olds.

To support staff, the Trust will provide free vouchers for any member of staff wishing to have a flu vaccination who does not sit in one of the highlighted groups above.

5. Advising pupils and families on how best to protect themselves and others

On 19 July, rules on social contact were replaced with advice to the public on the ways in which they could protect themselves and others. Since the risks from covid-19 have not disappeared, the Trust and its schools will continue to provide guidance on the behaviours and actions that help to reduce transmission and manage the risks.

For note: All Trust communications will reflect Government guidance and will be based on the latest scientific and epidemiological evidence.

6. Safe behaviours and actions to reduce spread

It remains important for everyone in the Trust and our school communities including those who are fully vaccinated, to follow behaviours and actions that reduce transmission and help to keep everyone safe. Following the recommended actions will also help limit the spread of seasonal illnesses, including flu and norovirus.

The evidence suggests covid-19 is spread in the following ways:

- airborne transmission
- close contact via droplets
- via surfaces

Developing evidence indicates that airborne transmission is a very significant way that the virus circulates. The behaviours and actions we intend to take across the Trust aim to mitigate all methods of transmission as far as this is reasonably possible.

What we know is that the risk of catching or passing on covid-19 can be higher in certain places and when doing certain activities. In general, the risk of catching or passing on covid-19 is higher in crowded spaces (where there are more people who might be infectious) and in enclosed indoor spaces (where there is limited fresh air).

The behaviours we will continue to keep in place to prevent the spread include:

- **Letting fresh air in** - being in a classroom with fresh air (and, for example, opening windows regularly for 10 minutes or a small amount continuously) can still reduce the airborne risk from covid-19 substantially compared to spaces with no fresh air. Some evidence suggests that under specific conditions high levels of ventilation could reduce airborne transmission risk by up to 70%.

For note: CO2 monitors will be introduced into class areas as soon as these are received from government.

- **Encouraging the wearing of face coverings** by adults in crowded and enclosed areas where they come into contact e.g. school gates, working with pupils 1:1, meetings with parents.
- **Getting tested and self-isolating** immediately if required. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and take a free PCR test as soon as possible. Anyone who tests positive must self-isolate. Anyone who is notified they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive should also take a free PCR test as soon as possible and self-isolate if required.
- **Keeping children at home if they are feeling unwell.**
- **Washing hands** with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
- **Maintaining enhanced cleaning regimes** in all classrooms e.g. around touch points.
- **Displaying an NHS QR code poster** in the entrance for visitors to schools to check in using the NHS COVID-19 app, so they are alerted if there's an outbreak and can take action to protect others.



The Trust's objective is to keep all our schools open and operating as close to normal over the Autumn/Winter period. To achieve this, we will maintain a close overview of all pupils, staff, school, and local community data. We will also amend our **Outbreak Management Plan** as and when required. For example, this may include communicating clearly and urgently to parents if local levels of risk increase, and with this, the need to behave more cautiously.

For note: Face coverings

Though there is no current legal requirement, the Government recommends that people continue to wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces where people come into contact with others they don't normally meet, for example on public transport. The Trust continues to encourage parents to wear face coverings at the school gates.

If further restrictions are required over the Autumn/Winter period, the Government will bring back the legal requirement to wear face coverings in some settings. The precise settings will be decided at the time.

For note: Face coverings – supporting evidence

Face coverings have low economic costs and can be effective in reducing transmission in public and community settings, by reducing the emission of virus-carrying particles when worn by an infected person and may also provide a small amount of protection to an uninfected wearer.

SAGE estimates that widespread application of face coverings is likely to have a small but significant impact on transmission, as face coverings mitigate most transmission routes. SAGE evidence also states that face coverings (if worn correctly and of suitable quality) are likely to be most effective (at least in the short to medium term) in reducing transmission indoors where other measures, such as social distancing and ventilation, are not feasible or are inadequate.

7. Local management of the virus

The Trust will continue to work closely with all local partners to reduce the spread and minimise the impact of covid-19. Local authorities have always played a critical role in public health protection, emergency response and infectious disease control. Covid-19 has been no different, with local authorities leading the response in their communities and we will continue to follow their advice.

The Education Contingency Framework provides guidance on the principles for managing local outbreaks of covid-19 in schools. This framework sets clear thresholds for managing covid-19 cases, when we should consider seeking public health advice, and provides advice on all types of measures that we should prepare for in the event they are needed. These are reflected in the Trust's *Outbreak Management Plan*.

8. Data and information sources

- 1.** Cases in England, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 2.** Cases in England, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 3.** UK summary, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 4.** Deaths in England, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 5.** UK Vaccinations Summary, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 6.** Academy of Medical Science, COVID-19: Preparing for the future, 15 July 2021 
- 7.** UK vaccinations summary, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 8.** UK Vaccinations Summary, coronavirus.data.gov.uk 
- 9.** Press release: NHS COVID-19 app updated to notify fewer contacts to isolate 
- 10.** Press release: New film shows importance of ventilation to reduce spread of COVID-19 
- 11.** Quantifying the impact of physical distance measures on the transmission of COVID-19 in the UK 
- 12.** Smith et. al (2021) Public health impact of mass sporting and cultural events in a rising COVID-19 prevalence in England 
- 13.** Social Distancing Review: Report, July 2021 
- 14.** SAGE EMG paper (January 2021) on material face coverings 