

COVID-19 and Schools: Information for Parents

Background

Currently coronavirus is not circulating widely in the community in the Isle of Man. However we continue to recommend that everyone should follow respiratory and hand hygiene guidance which will help to prevent the spread of all viruses that are transmitted from person to person – including respiratory viruses (colds, flu and flu-like illnesses) and norovirus.

All schools are open and working normally with no arrangements for social distancing currently. Additional cleaning arrangements will remain and schools will continue to promote good hand hygiene practice to students of all ages and to staff on a regular basis. Staff and students will still be able to wear face coverings should they wish, with increased ventilation being encouraged at all school sites.

Although we currently don't have COVID-19 spreading widely here, rates of infection continue to be present in neighbouring countries and we remain at risk from cases infected abroad, including the UK and Ireland. The 'Borders Framework' continues to mitigate this risk by restricting the numbers of people coming onto the Island and by having requirements for self-isolation and/or testing in place based on the appropriate Covid-19 response level actions. We have and will continue to identify individual cases of COVID-19 through these self-isolation and testing arrangements. We aim to contain these through vigorous testing and contact tracing to mitigate the risk of community transmission here. This means that identification of sporadic individual travel related cases does not need to lead to any restrictions for the rest of the population. We must however acknowledge that community transmission could return here at some point and we have an Island-wide COVID-19 Outbreak Response Plan in place should this happen.

We have put together some questions and answers that should help you with the current situation and will outline what will happen should further cases be confirmed.

1. If we don't have COVID-19 here and we haven't travelled recently, do I need to be concerned about possible COVID-19 symptoms?

Yes – we are still at risk of cases here and these may not have an obvious link to travel. Everyone should be aware of the symptoms of possible COVID-19:

- a temperature of more than 37.8C (100F)
- OR, a new and persistent cough - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- OR, anosmia – this is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell. It can also affect your sense of taste as the two are closely linked
- OR, a new shortness of breath

If you or your child develop any of these symptoms, you should complete the COVID-19 on line self-assessment tool (<https://services.gov.im/covid-19>) and contact COVID-111 for clinical assessment if advised to do so. They will advise if a test is required

Anyone (adult or child) with symptoms of possible COVID-19 should self-isolate at home until advised by COVID-111 that they no longer need to do so.

Your child must not attend school if they have symptoms of possible COVID-19.

If the parent or other carer has symptoms of possible COVID-19, they should isolate at home, away from other members of the family. They should not come to the school to drop off or collect the child.

Further information on how to self-isolate is available here: <https://covid19.gov.im/general-information/self-isolation/>

2. If the test is positive, what happens next?

COVID-111 will explain what happens next, including guidance on self-isolation for the person with COVID-19 and other household members. COVID-111 will pass the details to the government's Contact Tracing Service who will contact the case (or the parents if it is a child) to identify where they have been and who they have been in contact with. In some cases, but not all, testing for close contacts may be recommended.

3. Q - I have / my family have / my children have – returned to the island can the children return to school?

A - It's important that you and your family follow the current border and travel guidance in place at the time with regards to both isolation and testing regimes. Please follow the advice given to you by the COVID-19 111 Team

4. When do I need to keep my child off school?

If your child is unwell, they should stay at home just as they would at any time until they feel better. If they have diarrhoea and vomiting, you should follow the usual guidance to keep them at home until they have been clear of symptoms for 48 hours.

There is considerable overlap between symptoms of common colds, flu and flu like illness and COVID-19. However, if the main symptoms are runny nose, sneezing, sore throat etc, there is no continuous cough or change in sense of taste/smell and the temperature is normal, it is unlikely to be COVID-19. If you are in any doubt, complete the on-line self-assessment tool and contact COVID-111.

Cold and flu symptoms are similar, but flu tends to be more severe.

Cold	Flu	Coronavirus / COVID-19
Appears gradually	Appears quickly within a few hours	A high temperature, or
Affects mainly your nose and throat	Affects more than just your nose and throat	A new, continuous cough, or

Makes you feel unwell, but you're OK to carry on as normal (for example, go to work)	Makes you feel exhausted and too unwell to carry on as normal	A loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste
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There is guidance on symptoms of colds, flu and COVID-19 here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>

5. My child was sent home from school but they seem fine now. Who decides when to send a child home?

Head teachers have the ability to request that any child who becomes unwell is taken home to protect other pupils and staff. Please respect their decision but speak with them if you have any concerns or if your child's condition changes.

6. What will happen if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed in a school pupil/student or staff member?

When a case of COVID-19 is confirmed, the person's details are passed to the Contact Tracing Service (CTS). The CTS will contact the person (or parent/guardian for a child) to find out their details and identify where they have been and who they have been in contact with in the 48 hours before they developed symptoms (or 48 hours before the test was done for anyone who was asymptomatic). The CTS will then get in touch with contacts to advise on appropriate action.

As soon as the CTS identifies a case that is linked to a school (pupil/student, staff or parent), they will inform the Public Health, Health Protection Team. The school head teacher will be contacted and the Public Health and Health Protection Team will work closely with the school to agree a response plan for the school and school community that is appropriate to the circumstances around the case and for the particular school. The plan will be communicated to all parents and staff as soon as practicable.