



**NCEAT COVID19 Outbreak Contingency Plan for all trust schools  
2021-2022**

**Version 1. Effective from 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

## 1. About the NCEAT Outbreak Contingency Plan

Please note the following:

- This plan has been devised to support NCEAT schools and should be used in the event of an **outbreak** (see section 3 below for definition) of COVID-19. It is based on the content of the [Operational Guidance for Schools](#), the "[Contingency framework: education and childcare settings](#)" document and advice from the Northumberland Health Protection Team.
- This plan applies to all NCEAT schools. **In addition, each school may also record any further specific arrangements relating to their school. This should be added as Appendix 2 to this plan.**
- Section 6 is designed to highlight how a school may manage a Covid-19 outbreak; the exact recommendations and arrangements for each school type may be different. Schools should record how they would operate if additional measures were introduced and this may also be included Appendix 2.

## 2. Introduction

All education and childcare settings are required to have an outbreak management plan (sometimes called a contingency plan) which **outlines how they would operate if any of the measures described in this document were recommended for their school or area**. This includes how they would ensure every child, pupil or student receives the quantity and quality of education and care to which they are normally entitled.

Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust recognises the need to respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 quickly, effectively and proportionately, to ensure a safe school environment whilst minimising the effect of loss of face-to-face education by prioritising measures which ensure business continuity. In all circumstances, the potential benefit of measures to reduce transmission will be weighed against the potential impact on education and restrictions on attendance will only be considered as a last resort. The health and safety of NCEAT staff, pupils and visitors remains our number one priority.

The NCEAT COVID-19 risk assessment Version 10 (September 2021) records the key protective measures in place, including some measures which may need to be re-introduced as part of this plan.

## 3. What is an Outbreak?

Where the number of positive cases substantially increases, this could indicate transmission is happening in the school. At this point, advice is sought from the Northumberland Public Health Team in the following circumstances:

- 5 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

For Castle School, as a special school, guidance determines that advice should be sought if:

- 2 children, pupils, students and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

Identifying a group that is likely to have mixed closely will be different for each setting. A group will rarely mean a whole setting or year group. For schools, this could include:

- a form group or subject class
- a friendship group mixing at breaktimes
- a sports team
- a group in an after-school activity

For early years close mixing examples can be found in the "[Contingency framework: education and childcare settings](#)" document]

The school will also seek public health advice if a pupil, student, child or staff member is admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Hospitalisation could indicate increased severity of illness or a new variant of concern. Support in managing risk assessments and communicating with staff and parents may be offered.

#### **4. Communication and Record Keeping**

This plan is kept under periodic review by the CEO and will be reviewed following an outbreak to identify any aspects which worked well or areas for improvement. The following arrangements are in place in the event of a case(s) of COVID-19:

- Parents/carers are asked to inform the school of any positive COVID-19 case as soon as possible, as per normal arrangements for reporting sickness absence.
- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and provide advice to close contacts. From 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 those under 18 are no longer be required to self-isolate at home but they will be advised to take a PCR test. *Note: staff are instructed not to share contact details of individuals with anyone other than Test and Trace/Public Health Team (staff should not share contact details of close contacts with other parents/carers)*
- Details of the positive case will be kept so that any linked cases can be identified - including dates of symptoms/date of positive test/date last in school/details of class or social group.
- Northumberland Public Health Team are notified of the positive case(s) via the on-line notification form. If at a later date the school become aware that an individual has been hospitalised, the Public Health Team will be notified via the enquiry form.
- Staff are informed when there has been a case of COVID-19 within the school and to be vigilant of anyone displaying symptoms.
- Inform and advise communications are sent to parents of groups of pupils who may be possible contacts of the positive case. This will request them to be vigilant for symptoms, keep pupils off school if they become symptomatic, and go for a PCR test if they are identified as close contacts by Test and Trace.

#### **5. Activating the Plan - Collaboration**

Northumberland County Council, Director of Public Health for Northumberland, and Public Health England local health protection teams are responsible for managing localised outbreaks. They play an important role in providing support and advice to education and childcare settings. In all situations where this plan is implemented, the school will liaise and cooperate with the above and agree on the most appropriate protective measures which may need to be reintroduced to contain an outbreak, bearing in mind the priority of maintaining school attendance.

The plan will be activated in the following circumstances:

- to help manage a COVID-19 outbreak within the school
- if there is extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and other measures have failed to reduce transmission
- as part of a package of measures responding to a Variant of Concern (VoC)

The Headteacher or Principal will contact the NCC Public Health Team if they consider there may be an outbreak within the school due to illness reported. The CEO should also be notified. The Northumberland Public Health Team will contact the Headteacher / Principal from the school if they become aware of a possible outbreak within the school/area from PHE data they receive.

#### **Step A – a single case or cases below the threshold of an Outbreak of COVID-19 in setting**

- Parents notify school of a positive case or the school is notified by the NCC Public Health Team.

- NHS Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing and advise close contacts to arrange a PCR test. The school is not expected to follow up the results of PCR tests.
- School should note details of the case so that any linked cases within school can be identified.
- Notify the Public Health Team of the positive case(s) via the on-line notification form.
- The actions in the **Communication and Record Keeping section** are implemented.
- Covid risk assessment/existing protective measures are reviewed to identify any areas for improvement [enhanced cleaning, ongoing hand and respiratory hygiene and good ventilation are already in place].
- Staff/pupils are reminded of the importance of following the protective measures in place within the setting.

***Please refer to Appendix 1 for further guidance.***

### **Step B - An outbreak of COVID-19 in setting**

When the school becomes aware of a possible outbreak the Headteacher / Principal will contact the Northumberland Public Health Team via their enquiry line:

[https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/covid19\\_education\\_eng](https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/covid19_education_eng)

#### **The Northumberland Public Health Team will:**

- work with the school to identify the cohort the cases belong to and undertake an assessment including number of cases, spread within the school and evidence of ongoing transmission.
- work with the school to determine appropriate public health action in the event of an outbreak
- Hold an Outbreak Control Team meeting if required (informed by the public health team's risk assessment)
- Variant of Concern (VOC) cases – may be managed differently. Additional actions / investigations may be undertaken if a new variant is detected and that this will be led by the Health Protection Team in Public Health England (PHE).

#### **The school will:**

- Implement the Outbreak Management Plan.
- Follow protocol as in **Step A for a single case**.
- Review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures they already have in place.
- Consider whether any activities could take place outdoors, including exercise, assemblies, or classes
- Consider ways to improve ventilation indoors, where this would not significantly impact thermal comfort
- Arrange a one-off deep clean, focussing on touch points and any shared equipment
- Follow the advice of the Northumberland Public Health Team/Outbreak Control Team to implement recommended additional protective measures.
- Ensure good communications and record keeping.

## **6. Possible Additional Protective Measures**

The following may be considered as additional protective measures to be reintroduced in schools in the event of an outbreak.

### **6a. Reintroduction of “bubbles”/Limits on mixing of pupils**

The DfE advise that any recommendation for the reintroduction of ‘bubbles’ is not taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education. However, in EYFS and primary schools it's likely that this can be done without too much impact on education. EYFS and primary schools should already consider natural groupings as part of their COVID-19 risk assessment.

School transport seating plans are reintroduced (if not already in place).

## **6b. Testing – Duke’s School**

**The reintroduction of asymptomatic testing sites (ATS) at school or an increase in the use of home testing by staff, pupils and students in Duke’s School.**

These measures may be advised:

- for an individual setting or a small cluster of schools only, (in most cases a ‘cluster’ will be no more than 3 or 4 schools linked in the same outbreak), or
- for schools across areas that have been offered an enhanced response package

The Northumberland Public Health Team will work with the school to agree what testing should be undertaken and identify appropriate resources. Duke’s School has pre-planned how on-site testing could be implemented in a way that does not negatively impact on school teaching and learning by:

- Defining testing cohorts – A pragmatic approach is needed based on arrangements within the risk assessment to allow the smallest possible testing cohort to be identified. Whilst the concept of adopting the smallest possible bubble groups has been removed, it may be sensible and practical to avoid the mixing of larger groups based on building, site layouts and natural bubbles as a control within the current school covid risk assessment.
- Warn and inform letters/messages advising parents of cases in group - get tested, symptoms, infection control advice
- If further cases are detected in the initial cohort then wider testing may be considered, however, this will depend on setting / degree of mixing / age of children etc.

## **6c. Face coverings (staff, visitors and pupils in Year 7 and above)**

The reintroduction of face coverings is one of the least disruptive protective measure and can be quickly and easily activated. Where this is recommended the school will:

- Agree with the CEO and Northumberland Public Health Team if these will be worn in communal areas and/or classrooms, school transport (although these are likely to be already being worn). Where reintroducing these back into the classroom the impact on learning balanced against the risk of transmission will be considered.
- Review and update the Trust COVID-19 risk assessment/separate face coverings risk assessment.
- Implement the control measures detailed in the risk assessment e.g. reminders on donning and doffing safely, ensure sufficient bins for disposal, ensure there is a supply of disposable face coverings
- Send letter/messages home to parents informing them of the change in practice.

## **6d. Restricting Attendance**

Due to the number of days of missed on-site education, restricting attendance of pupils at school will only be considered if absolutely necessary and on the advice from the DfE/Government/Public Health Team/Director of Public Health for Northumberland. Where restrictions are put in place across a geographical area, the government will issue detailed operational guidance.

- Where restricted attendance is in place, the school will reactivate its arrangements to enable high quality remote learning as per the Remote Learning Policy.
- Priority for on-site attendance is given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers.
- EYFS – all vulnerable children and children of critical workers are still able to attend.
- NCEAT Primary Schools - all vulnerable children, children of critical workers, children in reception, year 1 and year 2 are allowed to attend. If attendance is restricted further, vulnerable children and children of critical workers should still be allowed to attend.
- Duke’s School - If some attendance restrictions are needed, all vulnerable children and young people, children of critical workers, pupils in years 10, 11, 12 and 13, and other pupils who were due to take external exams this academic year should still be allowed to attend. If attendance is restricted further, vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers should still be allowed to attend.
- Castle School - DfE’s attendance expectations in special schools will remain in line with the equivalent age groups in mainstream schools. Strong preference is that all vulnerable children and young people

and children of critical workers are still allowed to attend full-time where the parent or carer wishes for their child to be able to attend

#### **6e. Shielding**

Shielding for those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 is currently paused. In the event of a major outbreak or variant of concern that poses a significant risk to individuals on the shielded patient list (SPL), ministers can agree to reintroduce shielding. Shielding would be considered in addition to other measures to address the residual risk to people on the SPL, once the wider interventions are taken into account.

Shielding can only be reintroduced by national government. If this were to happen the school will:

- Reactivate remote learning/support for pupils of the shielding list
- Review individual risk assessments for relevant staff. Make arrangements to support working from home.
- Additional resources may be needed – agency staff, staff redeployment.

#### **6f. Other measures**

It may be necessary to cancel, postpone or review arrangements for out of school visits, after school activities or large scale gatherings/events. This will include:

- Residential educational visits. Any attendance restrictions should be reflected in the visits risk assessment and Headteachers / Principals should consider carefully if the educational visit is still appropriate and safe. Only children who are attending the setting should go on an educational visit. Education settings should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits.
- Open days
- Transition or taster days
- Parental attendance on school sites
- Performances

#### **6g. Returning to school after full or partial closure**

The Headteacher / Principal will work with the Northumberland Public Health Team and CEO to ensure pupils only return to school when it is safe for them to do so. Prior to the return of more pupils and staff, all relevant risk assessments will be reviewed.

Where advised to do so by a Director of Public Health and/or the local HPT, the school may encourage staff, and pupils in Year 7 and above, to undertake LFD tests at home prior to their return to school and/or for a period of time following their return. The school will continue to recognise that testing is voluntary.

The Headteacher / Principal will inform staff, pupils and parents, prior to the return to school, whether any further restrictions, such as the use of bubbles and face coverings, have been resumed.

After a period of self-isolation, or the relaxation of restrictions, the Headteacher / Principal will inform parents when their child will return to school.

The Headteacher / Principal will listen to all concerns that parents may have about their child returning to school and will advise them of the measures in place to ensure the safety of their child.

### **7. Safeguarding**

Ensuring safeguarding arrangements remain effective during periods of restricted attendance is a key priority. Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy includes provisions for keeping pupils safe during the Covid-19 pandemic, both at home and in school. We will continue to follow these procedures for pupils who remain at home, where appropriate, until all pupils are able to return to school.

We will continue to ensure that:

- The best interests of pupils always come first.
- If anyone in the school has a safeguarding concern about a pupil, they act immediately.
- A DSL or deputy DSL is always available.
- Unsuitable individuals are not permitted to work with pupils or come into contact with pupils whilst on site.
- Pupils who remain at home are protected when they are online.

A trained DSL or deputy will remain on-site where possible. Where this is not possible, e.g. they are required to self-isolate, the school will ensure that the DSL or deputy, or a DSL or deputy from another trust school, are available to contact at all times. In addition, the Headteacher / Principal will take responsibility for coordinating safeguarding on-site during this time.

## **8. School Meals**

We will provide meal options for all pupils who are attending school. We will provide FSM or food parcels to eligible pupils who are not attending school, where they:

- Are self-isolating.
- Have had symptoms or have tested positive.
- Are not attending due to the implementation of local restrictions advised by the government.

The school catering teams will work with our food providers to prepare meals or food parcels, for collection or delivery, to eligible children during their time at home.

## **9. Exams and assessments**

Schools will remain open for any exams and assessments planned in line with current government guidance. Wherever necessary, the school will implement additional mitigations to ensure the safe delivery of exams and assessments, which may include:

- Wearing face coverings in communal areas, where directed.
- Two-metre spacing between all desks, where directed.
- Additional controls for candidates who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. This may include measures such as seating them in a separate room to other candidates or, in exceptional circumstances, at the candidate's home.

## **10. Communications**

Each NCEAT school will communicate its plan for addressing any imposed restrictions with parents, including in relation to:

- Opening arrangements.
- Access for specific targeted groups where applicable, such as certain year groups, vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers.
- Any reviews of the school's protective measures as part of our risk assessments.
- The arrangements for remote working.

All relevant stakeholders will be kept up-to-date with the circumstances of any imposed restrictions and how these affect the school as the situation develops. All usual methods of communication will be used.

## **11. Monitoring and review**

This plan will be reviewed continually, by the CEO, in line with guidance from the government and Public Health England (PHE).

Any changes to the plan will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders as soon as possible.

## **12. Resources:**

NCEAT COVID-19 management flowchart – see Appendix 1

*Government Guidance:*

[Operational Guidance for Schools](#)

[“Contingency framework: education and childcare settings”](#)

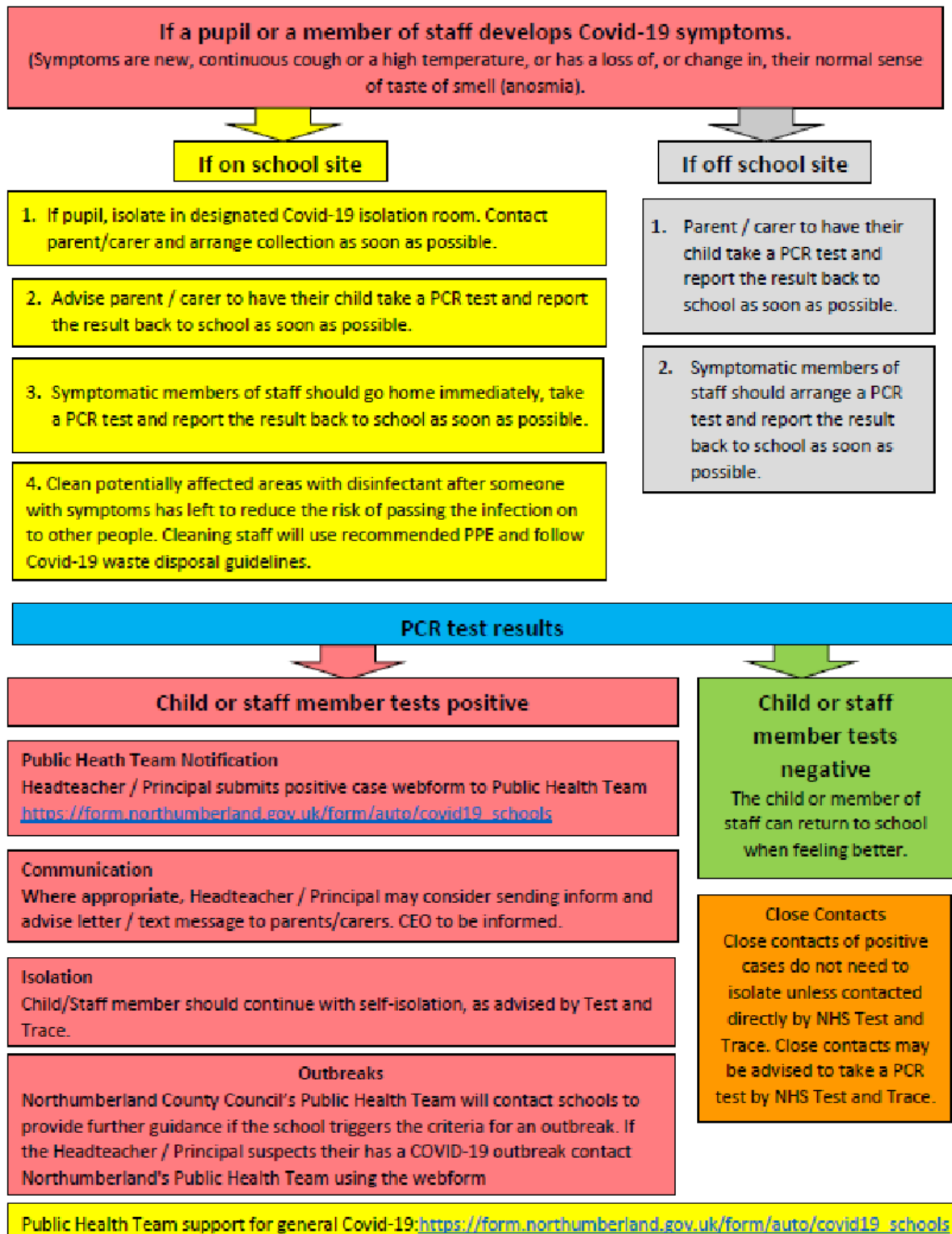


Appendix 1: NCEAT COVID-19 management flowchart



Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust

Procedures for managing Covid-19 symptoms in NCEAT Schools from 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021



**Appendix 2: Additional School Specific Arrangements**