

COVID-19 and Schools: Information for Parents

Background

Currently the Isle of Man is COVID-19 free and the coronavirus is not circulating in the community here. This means that we have been able to remove all restrictions (social distancing, restrictions on hospitality and other venues, gatherings, etc.) that were designed to reduce person to person contact and control spread of the virus. 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.

At present, all our schools are open and working normally with no arrangements for social distancing.

Although we don't have COVID-19 spreading here, rates of infection are rising in neighbouring countries and we remain at risk from cases infected abroad, including the UK and Ireland. The 'Borders Framework' mitigates this risk by restricting the numbers of people coming onto the Island and by having requirements for self-isolation and/or testing in place. 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 so that they will not lead to a return to 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 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 (no community COVID-19 transmission) 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:

- Temperature of 37.8 C or above, and/or
- New continuous cough, and/or
- Loss of or change in sense of taste and/or smell

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. I travelled back on Island but my child did not travel and has not left the Island, but is having to self-isolate with me. Can my child go to childcare?

No, if your child is now back living with you, they should not attend their childcare setting until you have completed the 14 day period since your return. You should also not go to a childcare setting or school for any reason (including drop off or pick up) during this time.

4. I travelled back on Island and am now self-isolating at home away from other household members. None of the others left the Island. Can my child go to school while I am self-isolating?

So long as you are fully observing your self-isolation away from the rest of your household and you have not had any direct contact with any of the others, including your child, then your child can go to school while you self-isolate. Another adult who has not travelled (and has had no direct contact with you) can take them to/pick them up from school.

5. We are coming into winter when coughs, colds and respiratory illnesses are very common. 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

There is guidance on symptoms of colds, flu and COVID-19 here:

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

6. 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.

7. 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.