

People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

County Buildings
Wellington Square
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Our Ref: DH/LD Your Ref:
Date: 30 October 2020



Dear Parent / Carer

Dealing with positive cases of Covid-19 in schools and early years centres

I am writing to you with an update on how we are dealing with positive cases of Covid-19 as they happen in schools. In recent weeks we have had a low number of positive cases among children and young people and among adults who work in schools and early years centres. Unfortunately, information is sometimes distorted or exaggerated through social media or the local press. For that reason, I thought it important to be clear with you about the process we go through.

As soon as we are aware of a child or adult who has been in school and who tests positive, we contact the Health Protection Team at Public Health. We then jointly go through a process of gathering all the information we have on when the child or adult was in school and who might have been a close contact. Head teachers already have information on seating plans in classrooms and groups in early years. In addition, the public health team and school staff go through a process of identifying any other possible close contacts at break time, lunch time, getting to and from school and outwith school.

If we are clear that there are no close contacts, for example if the person who tests positive has not actually been in school for a number of days, then in consultation with public health we may decide to take no further action. In general, where close contacts are identified, they are asked to self-isolate for 14 days. If your child is identified as a close contact, a letter will be sent to you informing you of this and that they require to self-isolate. The letter will include the date for them to return to school, assuming they do not develop symptoms. We also send a generic letter to all parents to let you know that there has been a positive case in the school. These letters are distributed by the school but come to us from colleagues in Public Health.

There may be times when we will tell pupils or staff to self-isolate before the letter from Public Health arrives. This is usually when there is significant pressure on the system and we need to act quickly to prevent further possible spread of the virus. On these occasions the letter will come later and will clarify the return date. If close contacts are identified at the start of a school day once pupils or children are in school, where possible you will be asked to collect your child. If this is not possible they may require to remain isolated within the school until collected or able to go home.

An outbreak in a school is defined as two or more related cases. So far we have had very limited occasions where there have been two or more related cases. The small number of positive cases are generally unrelated and due to transmission within the home rather than in school.

Schools are working very hard to make sure children, young people and staff are as safe as possible. I would very much appreciate if you could reinforce the importance of maintaining social distancing in the local shops, community, and on public transport as well as the importance of disposing of masks responsibly.

I am very grateful for your continued support and am constantly impressed by colleagues in schools and the way they are handling this pandemic. We continue to have high levels of pupil attendance and low levels of staff absence. Regardless of what happens, we will continue to make your children's health and educational progress our priority.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Hutchison'.

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People