



Public Health
England

*PHE London
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG*

17 September 2020

Dear Local Authority Directors of Public Health, Directors of Children's Services and communications leads,

Important information - seeking advice on confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in educational settings for nurseries, schools and colleges

A new advice service will be open from 08.00am on 17 September to provide the above educational settings with advice on managing single confirmed cases of COVID-19. Please note the changes outlined in this letter and use your local communications platforms to ensure that relevant education settings are aware of the change. DfE have communicated the change to schools and other settings.

We recognise that schools have had some difficulties getting through to PHE's local Health Protection Teams for advice on managing single positive cases in educational settings. To resolve this problem we have been working with DfE and the NHS Business Services Authority to introduce a new service. From Thursday 17 September, there will be a new advice line available to nurseries, schools and colleges who have been informed of a **confirmed case(s) of coronavirus in their setting (i.e. a pupil or staff member testing positive)**. The Department for Education's [guidance for full opening: schools](#) will be updated to reflect the change.

This new advice service has been set up to advise the following education settings: early years including nurseries, schools including primary, infant and junior schools, middle schools, secondary schools and further education colleges.

Instead of calling local health protection teams when there is a confirmed case, the education settings above are now asked to call the DfE's helpline on 0800 046 8687 and select the option for advice following confirmation of a positive case. The line will be open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm, and 10.00am to 4.00pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Callers will be put through to a team of advisors who will work through a risk assessment to identify close contacts and advise the setting what actions are required. The script has been developed by PHE so fully reflects our guidance and advice. Usually, full closure of the setting will not be necessary, but some individuals may need to self-isolate if they have had close contact with the confirmed case. This new process will free up capacity of PHE's local health protection teams to deal with more complex cases such as special and boarding schools or outbreaks. Advisors will be responsible for escalating these cases as necessary following a triaging of each school's circumstances during the call.

The DfE helpline also remains available for all other queries about coronavirus on 0800 046 8687.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin A. Fenton'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'F'.

Professor Kevin Fenton MD PhD FFPH

Regional Director, PHE London & Regional Director of Public Health, NHSE London