



COVID 19 Attendance Protocol



Section 1: General advice for staff, students and families

The government has produced several guidance documents to support the reopening of schools in September.

- [Actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools](#)
- [Covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](#)
- [Addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year](#)
- [Coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings](#)

Our *COVID 19 attendance protocol* is grounded in the expectations, advice and procedures in this national guidance as well as our knowledge of how best to support attendance in our school and similar contexts. At Blatch we have steadily improved attendance over recent years, supporting students with individual needs and ensuring students and families in general understand the value of regular attendance to capitalise of the great education on offer at our school. This has resulted in Blatch having one of the lowest rates of absence for secondary schools in the local area and attendance that is above the national average for secondary schools¹. Our success in attendance combined with our careful planning for the restart puts us in a good position to encourage and manage attendance this academic year, supporting our families through any attendance challenges they face.

In terms of national guidance there are now clear positions that have been taken by the government that all schools are expected to adopt. Firstly, **individuals must self isolate immediately for 10 days if they display any symptoms of COVID 19 and for 14 days if a household member has symptoms**. They should also get a COVID 19 test. Only once a student/staff member is well again (i.e. no longer has a fever or severe symptoms) can they end isolation and return to normal routines, including attending school. In terms of isolating if someone in your household is unwell, individuals are expected to complete the 14 days isolation. The details on expectation around self isolation can be found here: [Covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](#).

Generally the government has set out its plan:

“that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term... [because] returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children’s future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later.”

They have gone on to explain some of their rationale behind this decision:

“Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)... As a result, we can plan for all children to return ...an important move back towards normal life for many children and families... We are, therefore, asking schools to prepare to welcome all children back this autumn. While coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, this means making judgments at a school level about how to balance minimising any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19)”²

Expectations around attendance have shifted too from the position last year when no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child’s non-attendance to the firm position now that:

“School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- *parents’ duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school...*
- *schools’ responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence*
- *the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities’ codes of conduct³*

So from September at Blatchington Mill School attendance is mandatory for all students and staff unless they are:

- (a) **Displaying the symptoms of COVID 19:** in particular a continuous cough, high temperature 37.8°C (a fever), loss of smell/taste or shortness of breath. In addition fatigue, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, chest pain, vomiting and diarrhoea, skin rashes are documented symptoms⁴. Students with these symptoms should be self-isolating and getting a test or self isolating because they have a positive test result;

¹ www.compare-school-performance.gov.uk

² [Actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak](#)

³ [As above](#)

⁴ nice.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/diagnosis/diagnosis/ & www.nice.org.uk/guidance/1-Communicating-with-patients-and-minimising-risk

- (b) Self isolating because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) or if anyone in their household develops symptoms of coronavirus.
- (c) One of a very small number of young people who have been instructed to continue to isolate by specialist health professionals and have been in discussion with school about this

We anticipate these exceptions will affect a small number and we will continue to review our approach in light of national and local developments.

How should absence be reported?

We know children get unwell and that is perhaps more likely in the coming year. If they are too unwell to be in school they should not be, especially if they have any symptoms of COVID 19. We want to be clear with families so they know what to do in a challenging time.

Our normal attendance procedures are in place from September, meaning that parents/carers just need to follow the home school agreement that states that they will:

“ensure that my son/daughter comes to school regularly, on time, in full school uniform and properly equipped and will notify the school when this is not possible”⁵

So if a student is unwell with COVID (even mild symptoms) or for non-covid related illness or medical reasons parents/carers must report the absence to school via Studybugs (studybugs.com/about/parents). Studybugs is the quickest and easiest way to inform school and track absence and it assists school in understanding possible local patterns in illness and offer information to parents/carers. If for any reason Studybugs cannot be used then parents/carers can report absence by telephoning 01273 206874 or by sending a text message to 07860 055 853.

Any requests for planned absence should be emailed to the Attendance Officer aglynethomas@blatchingtonmill.org.uk in advance of the proposed absence in the normal way. This includes for medical/dental appointments or other absence.

What should students and staff do if they have symptoms of COVID 19 or are contacts of individuals with symptoms?

This information in this section corresponds with the guidance [here](#) and is outlined briefly for students in our [Behaviour Policy Covid 19 addendum](#)

Students and staff must not attend school if they have symptoms of Covid 19 or if anyone in their household has symptoms. In both cases they must not attend school and should self isolate at home.

These are defined by the *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)*, which states that the main symptoms are **a continuous cough, high temperature 37.8°C (a fever), loss of smell/taste, shortness of breath**. However individuals may also have fatigue, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, chest pain, vomiting and diarrhoea or skin rashes⁶.

- If a student or staff member develops symptoms they must return home, [book a test](#) and self isolate for 10 days from the day the symptoms commenced. Whilst awaiting the test results self isolation and household isolation must continue.
- If they are not experiencing symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19 students and staff must also self-isolate for at least 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken. If they develop symptoms during this isolation period, they must restart the 10-day isolation. After 10 days, if a student or staff members still have a temperature they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice.
- Similarly, if an individual lives with someone who tests positive for COVID 19 they must complete a full 14 days isolation even if they have no symptoms. This is because the virus can take time to incubate and develop. If the person they live with returns a negative test and the student or staff member has no symptoms they can contact school to discuss a return.
- If symptoms have gone for 48 hours during the self-isolation period and a negative test has been returned or if only a mild cough or loss of sense of smell or taste persists after 10 days (these symptoms can last for several weeks) then they **can contact school to arrange a return**.

⁵ <https://www.blatchingtonmill.org.uk/assets/Uploads/Home-School-Agreement-Feb-2020.pdf> & <https://www.blatchingtonmill.org.uk/our-policies-and-processes/attendance/>

⁶[nice.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/diagnosis/diagnosis/](https://www.nice.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/diagnosis/diagnosis/) & www.nice.org.uk/guidance/1-Communicating-with-patients-and-minimising-risk

What to do after a COVID 19 test?

No student will return to school without a test result.

Once any test results are returned parents/carers must inform school straight away by contacting the Attendance Office (aglynethomas@blatchingtonmill.org.uk) and relevant Year Office. Students/staff MUST NOT return to school before being contacted by school staff to arrange the return. Students returning without school being informed of test results and having had the discussion with relevant staff will be placed in medical isolation, awaiting collection.

What if the test result is POSITIVE for COVID 19?

In the case of positive test results, students and staff members need to engage with NHS track and trace and follow the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). This includes self isolating for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms and contacting school to discuss reentry to school at the end of that period.

Positive test results will also trigger a series of responses from school to ensure the school site is safe and any individuals potentially affected are informed about what they need to do next. In some cases this may involve shutting down specific teaching bubbles and students deemed contacts being directed to go home.

If you live with others who display symptoms, all other household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days from the day when the first person in the household became ill or if they do not have symptoms, from the day their test was taken. **If you live with someone who has tested positive for COVID 19 all household members must complete the 14 days isolation** because symptoms of COVID 19 can be incubating for a number of days.

If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they must stay at home for at least 10 days from when their symptoms appear, regardless of what day they are on in their original 14-day isolation period. This is challenging but school will support with a full online learning provision.

What if the test result is NEGATIVE for COVID 19?

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or a positive test you must remain at home for at least 10 days after the onset of your symptoms. This will reduce the risk of you infecting others.

If a student or staff member tests negative, they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19) then they can contact school to arrange their return. They must not return without contacting school to discuss return. This includes if the individual had symptoms themselves or was tested as part of a household with an individual with symptoms.

The school will guide the student's parent/carer or staff member about the appropriate return date as soon as possible. The school will work with the individual to ensure a safe and appropriate return, in doing this some of the following will be considered:

- Has the individual had a second test that was negative? It is the case that tests conducted too early can return false negatives⁷. As a school we strongly advise students and staff members who have an initial negative result to have a second test that confirms the negative result in order to return to school quickly.
- Are there any symptoms remaining? If a student feels well, has no symptoms or at least only a mild cough or loss of taste and smell a return can be more speedy. If a student still has a temperature, is generally unwell (e.g. with other symptoms like headache or sore throat) or has a significant cough we will be cautious and advise that they must continue to isolate.
- If the student or staff member was isolating as part of household isolation and the household member returned a negative test as well as the student or staff member we can be more confident that a return is appropriate.

When can an individual return to school after isolating or being unwell with COVID 19 symptoms?

In general, if a student is unwell they should not be in school. Students will be permitted back to school once a discussion has been had with their parent/carer and relevant school staff to ensure their return is appropriate. In each case the return will be discussed by the Attendance Officer and appropriate member of the schools Senior Leadership Team. Parents/carers can expect a quick decision and regular communication throughout. **The final decision to readmit a child to school sits with the school and the Headteacher (or as directed the Senior Leadership Team).**

We expect all pupils to observe rules around self isolation at home including the duration of isolation if they or a household member has symptoms. All school work will be provided on Google Classroom and contact made by school staff to ensure high quality learning can continue for isolating students. **In the event that a pupil is present at school with symptoms or has not observed the appropriate length of self-isolation (after the onset of symptoms in themselves or household members) then they will be placed in a medical isolation room on their own at school, their parents/carers will be called for the student to be collected.**

It is vital for our school community to be able to operate as normally as possible that parents/carers do not send their children in if they or members of the household have symptoms. As young people who carry the virus are more likely to not be symptomatic it is so important that the instruction on relation to household members is followed. **We will have more vulnerable staff and students in school from September so we have to be able**

⁷ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/06/200610094112.htm>

to trust students and families to do the right thing, especially as the winter months approach. In turn we will ensure high quality remote education is provided for the duration of the isolation period.

What happens to students in bubbles with other students who develop symptoms or are sent home?

This information in this section corresponds with this guidance [here](#).

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any pupils who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless

- (a) they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they will go home immediately and they should arrange a test)
- (b) if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

School will take swift action when we become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Contacting PHE Surrey and Sussex Health Protection Team PHE.sshpu@nhs.net / 0344 225 3861. The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate. Based on the advice from the health protection team, school must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious.

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating from that household subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow [stay at home guidance for households](#).

They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and should isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following [stay at home guidance for households](#)

If school has two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, we will work with our local health protection team on additional actions that may be required. In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole site or year group.

What about students who are shielding or highly anxious about returning to school?

The government has stated that in future far fewer children and young people will be advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high and so therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school.

Current advice on shielding can be found here: [current advice on shielding](#).

Equally, some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school. You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#)

As shielding advice for adults and children paused on August 1st 2020 we expect shielded students to be able to return to school. More importantly the plans we have put in place at school are careful and thorough to ensure the safety of everyone on site. We have implemented a range of measures from enhanced cleaning, increased hand washing and hygiene facilities, staggered breaks and starts/finishes, mandatory [face coverings](#), one way systems as well as teaching bubbles, staff not student movement between classes and reduced class sizes. These measures will help significantly in keeping all students (and their families and school staff) safe.

Parents/carers of any student who has been instructed to continue shielding should contact our Attendance Officer Mrs A Glyne Thomas to discuss how school will support your child aglynethomas@blatchingtonmill.org.uk.