

Covid-19 and Testing

“It is essential that people who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who share a household with someone who has symptoms, do not attend school, nursery or other childcare settings, and must self-isolate along with all members of their household. If the test is negative, self-isolation can end for everyone. If the test is positive, Test and Protect will give you further advice” Professor Leitch letter to all parents (31 August). This advice is also applicable to all school staff.

The NHS Inform coronavirus webpage is the fastest way for people to get the latest health advice and information.

Risk Assessments

There is a long-standing requirement for employers to put in place measures to ensure workplace safety where a significant health and safety risk is identified. It is the employer's responsibility to protect employees from harm. Some workers will be at greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

All staff should have regular individual risk assessment that includes their personal circumstances and the areas in which they are expected to work. This may include remaining at home and asked to support remote learning.

Physical Distancing

The SSTA survey highlighted the lack of physical distancing in classrooms and around the school with 33% of members reporting that physical distancing measures have not been put in place.

All schools need a strict 2 metre physical distancing system that must be enforced for all staff. All staff must adhere to staff physical distancing measures at all times and be role models in the school community. Adhering to strict physical distancing measures reduces the requirement for face coverings.

Face Coverings

The SSTA survey showed only 32% of schools were providing face coverings for staff.

SSTA recommends that all members have access to face coverings that meet the required standard and are provided by the employer. All members are advised to wear face coverings when in close contact with other staff and pupils.

SSTA recommends that all in secondary schools pupils wear a face covering and should be mandatory in classes for all senior age pupils.

Staff who have underlying health conditions, or have members of their households with conditions, must ensure pupils in their care wear face coverings and adhere to strict cleaning regimes.

Plastic Screens

Schools should ensure the availability of protective plastic screens for those teachers who request them. In addition, all teaching areas that are unable to guarantee appropriate physical distancing between staff and pupils must have plastic screens installed. It is the employer's responsibility to reduce the risk and keep staff safe.

Cleaning Regimes

The SSTA survey highlighted the inconsistency in schools and the complacency of the employers in addressing cleaning in classes. Only 47% of classes are cleaned after each lesson with the expectation that pupils (79%) and teachers (61%) to be the main players in a schools cleaning regime.

It is essential that all schools have rigorous cleaning regimes that are planned, managed and delivered by appropriately trained staff. This cleaning must take place prior to a new class entering a teaching area.

Teaching Areas

Schools should ensure that no teaching area presents a risk to staff or pupils particularly small teaching areas. Schools should reduce class sizes and/or relocate to larger appropriate teaching areas. Less than 2% of members reported that class sizes had been reduced.

Teacher Work Spaces and Staff Areas

“Only 47% of members had been allocated an individual work area with appropriate physical distancing” (SSTA Survey).

All teacher work spaces and staff rooms must have strict 2 metre physical distancing measures in place and allocated spaces for designated members of staff. Should no safe teacher work space be available within the school building, members are advised to remove themselves to a place of safety away from the building.

ICT Equipment

“67% of members are expected to share ICT equipment” (SSTA survey).

All ICT equipment and telephones must be allocated to individual staff and must not be shared with other colleagues. No ‘hot desking’. ICT equipment in classrooms must not be shared by teaching staff and classroom administration tasks need to be reviewed and alternative arrangements made. All teachers should be allocated individual ICT equipment (e.g. laptops, tablets, keyboards) that prevent unnecessary sharing and reduces the risk to teachers.

Education Equipment and Materials

“70% of members highlighted the lack of clear advice on teaching approaches to be taken in a way that minimises the sharing of educational equipment with 68% of teachers, who have practical elements in their subject, not receiving subject specific advice on keeping safe” (SSTA survey).

All members are advised to conduct a risk assessment as to the sharing and cleaning arrangements of equipment and materials to ensure staff and pupils are kept safe.

Pupil Behaviour

“A major concern for members was the lack of a detailed pupil discipline policy that includes actions for pupils who refuse to adhere to physical distancing and safety measures (such as hand hygiene) with only 21% of members indicating such a policy was introduced in their school” (SSTA Survey).

As schools are not back to normal and pupil and staff safety is a priority, SSTA expects a high level of pupil discipline with a ‘zero tolerance’ approach in schools. Pupils refusing to follow safety measures cannot be accommodated in school and must be sent home.

8 September 2020