



Guidance

Advice to SAIS on the provision of immunisation sessions in schools where there are cases or outbreaks of COVID-19

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The continued offer of vaccines to school-aged children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic remains an important measure to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases. This includes COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 12 to 15 years of age and all routine vaccinations against influenza, meningococcal disease, human papillomavirus, diphtheria, tetanus and polio. It also includes immunisations as part of catch-up offers, such as measles, mumps and rubella vaccination and vaccines that may be offered as part of an outbreak control strategy, such as pertussis and hepatitis A.

Schools should already be following Department for Education (DfE) [Schools Operational Guidance](#) (endorsed by Public Health England (PHE)) to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This includes a range of measures such as good hygiene, cleaning, ventilation, and management of positive cases, both symptomatic and asymptomatic. Face coverings for staff and children are not routinely recommended. Self-isolation is not recommended for contacts aged less than 18 years and 6 months and fully vaccinated members of staff.

Under these measures school-based immunisation sessions should go ahead as planned, with all healthcare staff following infection prevention and control measures as set out in the [national COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) guidance](#).

Schools experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 should follow DfE's [contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#). Local authorities, directors of public health (DsPH) and PHE health protection teams (HPTs) can recommend measures described in the guidance to schools, as part of their outbreak management responsibilities. The main aim of the guidance is to prioritise education, maximise the number of children in face-to-face education and minimise any disruption, in a way that also best manages COVID-19 risks.

There is currently limited evidence to support [the use of COVID-19 vaccines as post-exposure prophylaxis or to interrupt transmission during outbreaks](#). Given the longer-term benefits of vaccines, however, immunisation sessions should still go ahead as planned when a school has a COVID-19 outbreak, unless specifically advised not to by a health protection team (HPT) or Director of Public Health (DPH). Other factors that may impact on the ability to offer immunisation sessions include the number of children still in school and whether the school has had to send some year groups home or close due to lack of staff.

Providers of School Age Immunisation Services (SAIS) should work with the school, local authority, HPT and DPH to ensure the risk of transmission of infection is minimised through the use of any additional measures that a risk assessment might identify, or as advised by the provider's IPC team and outbreak control team.

School-aged immunisation teams will need to work with the school to ensure children who missed vaccinations because they were self-isolating at home or for other reasons, including exclusion, are re-offered immunisation at an appropriate time in the future.

References

1. Department for Education, [Guidance: Schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#), updated 27 August 2021.
2. Public Health England, [COVID-19: infection prevention and control \(IPC\)](#), updated 2 September 2021.
3. Department for Education, [Managing coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in education and childcare settings: What measures education and childcare settings should be prepared to introduce to manage COVID-19](#), updated 17 August 2021.
4. Public Health England, [Green Book, Chapter 14A, COVID-19 - SARS-CoV-2](#).

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