

Updated guidance for managing COVID-19 in childcare & education settings in Suffolk in the era of “Living with COVID-19”

25 February 2022

The Public Health framework for managing COVID-19 in Suffolk childcare & educational settings (“Suffolk COVID-19 Schools’ Plan”), which has been in place since November 2021, has helped setting leaders to manage COVID-19 incidents in their settings. Now that the government has released its “[Living with Covid-19](#)” (LWC-19) strategy (key change summarised in [appendix 1](#)), the Suffolk framework is not fit for the LWC-19 era. In addition, Suffolk case rates in people aged 0-19 have fallen rapidly since the end of January 2022 (in line with the regional and national trends, please see [appendix 2](#)). The direction of travel is to manage COVID-19 like any other infectious disease going forward.

In light of the new phase of government guidance “Living with Covid-19”, the Public Health framework for managing COVID-19 in Suffolk childcare & educational settings is revoked as of 24 February 2022. From 24 February 2022, there will be no separate Suffolk framework and settings should follow the relevant national guidance for their setting (listed below). We have provided a brief summary of the guidance in table 1. Childcare & educational setting leaders should consult the full updated national guidance for their setting and keep up to date with any changes as and when the guidance is updated. The next main update of national guidance is expected ahead of Friday 1 April 2022.

- Early years & childcare - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures> (last updated 24 February 2022)
- Schools - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> (last updated 24 February 2022)
- SEND and other specialist settings - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings> (last updated 24 February 2022)
- Further education - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision> (last updated 24 February 2022)
- Children's social care services - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services> (last updated 22 February 2022)
- Managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in education and childcare settings (“Contingency Framework”) – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings> (last updated 24 February 2022).

As per the updated contingency framework, settings should contact CYP19@Suffolk.gov.uk when in their expert view, they face severe operational disruption to face-to-face education. We expect this to be an exceptional occurrence as evidence shows that the impact of COVID-19 is under control and hence the changes being implemented by the Government as part of LWC-19.



Table 1: Summary of key COVID-19 guidance for childcare and education settings until 1 April 2022

Asymptomatic Testing	<p>From 21 February 2022, regular twice weekly testing (3 to 4 days apart) with an LFT is only advised to continue for (this is voluntary, but strongly encouraged):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Staff and students of secondary age</u> in specialist educational needs and disability (SEND) settings, alternative provision settings, and SEND units in mainstream schools or the equivalent in colleges. Please see the setting guidance for full details. • <u>Staff and children of secondary age</u> in open and secure children's homes, foster carers'. Children and young people arriving in secure children's homes should test on arrival. Please see the setting guidance for full details. <p>All settings may be advised by their local public health team to temporarily recommend lateral flow device (LFD) tests for staff and students of secondary age to manage an outbreak. The Government is revising the current COVID-19 outbreak management advice and frameworks and will set out the support to local authorities and other system partners.</p>
Symptomatic individuals	<p>If you have any of the main COVID-19 symptoms you should order a PCR test (until 31 March 2022 as free testing will end on 1 April 2022). You are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while you are waiting for the test result.</p> <p>Please see the UKHSA guidance for people with COVID-19 and their contacts for full details. This guidance will be updated on 1 April 2022.</p>
Individuals who test positive via LFT or PCR	<p>Although legal requirement to isolate is ending, adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days.</p> <p>Please see the UKHSA guidance for people with COVID-19 and their contacts for full details. This guidance will be updated on 1st April 2022.</p> <p>Although there is no legal requirement for staff to inform their employer if they test positive, all staff should follow the sickness and absence policy of their setting.</p> <p>As per operational guidance, if a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school where they have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19.</p>



Close contacts	<p>Contacts are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and routine contact tracing has ended - staff, children and young people who are contacts should attend their education settings as usual. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home. The legal requirement has been removed for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.</p> <p>Please see the UKHSA guidance for people with COVID-19 and their contacts for full details. This guidance will be updated on 1 April 2022.</p>
Bubbles / mixing restrictions	<p>This is not an option going forward.</p>
Outbreak management	<p>The Contingency framework: education and childcare settings sets out outbreak management principles and measures settings should be prepared to introduce.</p> <p>All settings should continue baseline infection prevention and control measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep occupied spaces well ventilated, and follow UKHSA guidance on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19 (summarised in this table above). • continue to encourage coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination uptake for eligible students and staff. <p>When to seek public health advice for additional control measures</p> <p>Settings should contact CYPC19@Suffolk.gov.uk when in their expert view, they face <u>severe</u> operational disruption to face-to-face education. As an indication, you may want to seek public health advice if you have concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a higher than previously experienced and/or rapidly increasing number of staff or student absences due to COVID-19 infection • evidence of severe disease due to COVID-19, for example if a pupil, student, child, or staff member is admitted to hospital due to COVID-19 • a cluster of cases where there are concerns about the health needs of vulnerable staff or students within the affected group <p>We expect this to be an exceptional occurrence as evidence shows that the impact of COVID-19 is under control.</p> <p>CYP colleagues will liaise with local public health team as needed to consider appropriate additional public health control measures. Public Health Suffolk will seek expert guidance from UKSHA colleagues as appropriate.</p> <p>Any additional measures will be advised to the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible.</p>



UKHSA educational setting advice service	UKHSA educational setting advice service (accessed through DfE Helpline) will stop from 31 March 2022.
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Appendix 1: Summary of national guidance “Living with COVID-19” changes

From 21 February 2022 the Government is:

- Removing the guidance for staff and students in most education and childcare settings to undertake twice weekly asymptomatic testing.

From 24 February 2022 the Government will:

- Remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days.
- No longer ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days, and remove the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- End self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- End routine contact tracing. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests.
- End the legal obligation for individuals to tell their employers when they are required to self-isolate.
- Revoke The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations.

From 24 March 2022, the Government will:

- Remove the COVID-19 provisions within the Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance regulations.

From 1 April 2022, the Government will:

- Update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to minimise contact with other people. This will align with the changes to testing.
- No longer provide free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England.
- Consolidate guidance to the public and businesses, in line with public health advice.
- Remove the health and safety requirement for every employer to explicitly consider COVID-19 in their risk assessments.
- Replace the existing set of ‘Working Safely’ guidance with new public health guidance.



Appendix 2: 0-19 case rates in Suffolk

Case rates in Suffolk in people aged 0-19 peaked at the end of January 2022, a few weeks after the return to school from the Christmas break. Since then, case rates in 0-19s have fallen rapidly.

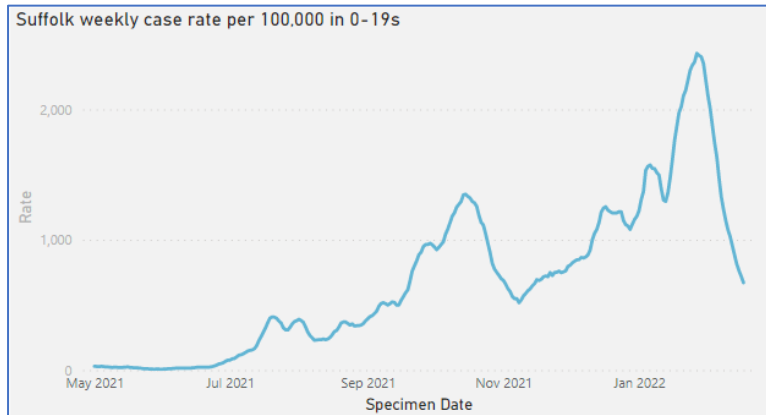
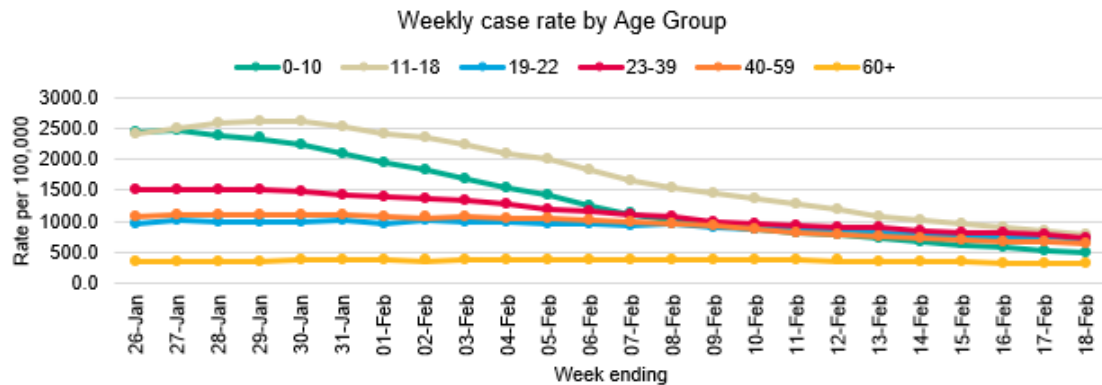


Figure 1 Suffolk COVID-19 case trends by age group



This is in line with the regional and national data. However, the 0-19 case rate in Suffolk remains above the East of England and England averages and is falling more slowly than the East of England and England averages.

Area	Current 0-19 weekly case rate	Last week 0-19 weekly case rate	Change in 0-19 weekly case rate
Suffolk	671.1	1,077.5	↓ -37.7 %
East of England	419.9	849.2	↓ -50.6 %
England	368.5	692.0	↓ -46.7 %

Case rate halving times are currently between 7 and 14 days for the 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 age groups.

Suffolk weekly case rate per 100,000 in 0-19s as heatmap																
Age Range	04/02/22	05/02/22	06/02/22	07/02/22	08/02/22	09/02/22	10/02/22	11/02/22	12/02/22	13/02/22	14/02/22	15/02/22	16/02/22	17/02/22		
00_04	568.0	504.1	445.2	414.5	383.8	363.3	330.1	314.7	312.2	327.5	307.0	286.6	281.5	273.8		
05_09	2,148.5	1,966.6	1,746.0	1,546.0	1,409.6	1,280.0	1,166.3	1,114.0	1,036.7	959.4	857.1	807.1	732.1	657.0		
10_14	2,741.9	2,567.7	2,288.6	2,009.5	1,828.7	1,719.2	1,614.3	1,496.0	1,362.0	1,216.9	1,134.3	1,053.9	1,004.8	953.4		
15_19	1,319.3	1,319.3	1,259.9	1,221.2	1,203.1	1,133.4	1,110.2	1,094.7	1,032.7	965.6	895.9	852.0	813.3	761.6		

Source: Analysis of data from <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk>.