

Infection Control in Schools

Healthy pupils. Healthy staff. A safer school.

Small steps make a big difference



What is infection control?

Infection control is about reducing the spread of infections while keeping pupils and staff safe and minimising unnecessary absence from school.

1 Everyday prevention



Hand hygiene

- Use liquid soap, warm water and paper towels.
- Wash hands after the toilet, before eating and after contact with bodily fluids.
- Teach pupils to wash their hands thoroughly.
- Use alcohol-based sanitiser only when appropriate (not effective against norovirus).
- Staff should wash hands after changing nappies, toileting or cleaning up bodily fluids.

Respiratory hygiene



- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or elbow.
- Provide tissues and bins.
- Keep classrooms well ventilated.
- Stay home if unwell.



Cleaning and disinfection

- Clean frequently touched surfaces (door handles, desks, taps, shared equipment).
- Clean toilets, kitchens and food areas regularly.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces contaminated with vomit, faeces or blood using the right product and following the instructions.
- Store chemicals securely and ensure staff are trained.

2 When should pupils stay off school?

Follow UKHSA exclusion periods to reduce transmission and avoid unnecessary absence.

Infection or illness	When can they return?
Diarrhoea and vomiting	48 hours after symptoms have stopped
Norovirus	48 hours after symptoms have stopped
Chickenpox	5 days after the rash first appeared
Impetigo	When all blisters have crusted over, or 48 hours after starting antibiotics
Scarlet fever	24 hours after starting antibiotics
Measles	4 days after the rash first appeared
Mumps	5 days after the swelling started
Flu	When feeling better and no longer having a temperature
Mild cold or cough	Usually can attend if otherwise well and without a high temperature



Important: For diarrhoea and vomiting, the 48-hour rule applies even if the child seems well enough to return sooner.

3 Managing a child who becomes unwell at school



Have a clear procedure in place:

- 1 Assess the child's symptoms and immediate needs.
- 2 Keep them separate from others where practical, with adult supervision.
- 3 Contact the parent or carer and arrange collection if needed.
- 4 If symptoms are severe or a medical emergency, call 999.
- 5 Clean and disinfect any contaminated areas safely.
- 6 Record the incident and any relevant symptoms or diagnosis.
- 7 Follow the school's illness and infection-control procedures before the child returns.

4 Managing bodily fluids safely



- Wear disposable gloves and an apron when there is a risk of contact.
- Use eye or face protection if splashing is possible.
- Keep pupils away from the affected area.
- Use the right cleaning and disinfection products.
- Dispose of contaminated materials safely.
- Wash hands thoroughly after removing PPE.



Never handle blood or bodily fluids with bare hands when exposure is possible.

5 Managing outbreaks



An outbreak may be suspected when several pupils or staff develop similar symptoms, or when a serious infection is identified.

Schools should:

- Keep a record of affected individuals, symptoms and dates.
- Monitor attendance and identify patterns.
- Reinforce cleaning, hand hygiene and ventilation.
- Inform parents and carers when appropriate.
- Contact the local UKHSA health protection team when required.
- Follow any additional instructions from public health professionals.

6 School infection-control checklist



Daily and routine checks

0/10 complete

- ☐ Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels available
- ☐ Handwashing routines taught and reinforced
- ☐ Classrooms adequately ventilated
- ☐ Frequently touched surfaces cleaned regularly
- ☐ Toilets and food areas cleaned appropriately
- ☐ PPE and cleaning supplies available
- ☐ Spillages and bodily fluids managed safely
- ☐ Illness and exclusion policy accessible to staff
- ☐ Parents and carers know how to report infections
- ☐ Outbreak reporting and escalation procedures in place



Reset checklist



Official guidance and resources

For the full guidance, including detailed exclusion periods and infection-specific advice, visit:

- [UKHSA: Health protection in children and young people's settings](#) (main guidance for schools in England)
- [Preventing and controlling infections](#) (hygiene, cleaning and prevention)



[Public health exclusion periods](#) (illness-specific return-to-school rules)



[Managing outbreaks and incidents](#) (reporting and response)



[NHS: Is my child too ill for school?](#) (advice for parents and carers)

Together we can help keep our school healthy!

