

Schools COVID Update

Local COVID Outbreak Engagement Board 26 January 2021

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Aims for this session

- To update on:
 - Attendance and COVID absence data for Birmingham schools
 - Current guidance for schools
 - Current impact of COVID in Birmingham schools
 - Work with Birmingham Children's Trust to support vulnerable pupils
 - Joint working between BCC Education and Skills and Public Health
 - Plans for remainder of the half-term and academic year

Attendance data as at Thursday 20th January 2022

- Attendance rates have been falling in recent weeks
- The attendance rate for Birmingham was 85.4%, compared to a national figure of 87.3%

Pupil Group	Birmingham	Core Cities	Statistical Neighbours	West Midlands	England
Pupils onsite	85.4	86.4	85.4	85.9	87.3
Children with EHCP	71.1	76.6	77.8	77.3	81.2
Children with social worker	76.1	78.4	78.3	79.9	80.1
FSM Eligible	83.2	83.6	84.2	82.8	84.3

Attendance data as at Thursday 20th January 2022

- Pupils attending on site by phase:

Phase	Birmingham	National
Primary	87.7	89
Secondary	83.8	85.7
Special	67.9	78.4
PRU/Alternate	46.7	51.4
16 Plus	71.4	79.5
Not Applicable	89	89.2
State Funded	85.4	87.3

COVID absences as at Thursday 20th January 2022

- Birmingham COVID absence rate (including confirmed, suspected, not vaccinated and other) for state funded schools was 5.7%
- COVID absence rate for state funded schools nationally was 5%

Phase	Birmingham	National
Primary	6.1	6
Secondary	4.7	3.7
Special	14.8	8.4
PRU/Alternate	1.8	3.7
16 Plus	2	3
Not Applicable	3.9	3.8
State Funded	5.7	5

Guidance for schools

- Public Health Birmingham continues to offer regular, updated guidance and support to schools
- Schools are encouraged to reinforce messaging around:
 - ventilation
 - handwashing and hygiene
 - face coverings
 - lateral flow testing (as appropriate)
 - staying at home if displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or testing positive
 - encouraging take up of the COVID-19 vaccines and boosters when available
- Schools should have outbreak management plans in place. BCC has provided a template: [BCC Outbreak Management Plan Template](#).
- Schools continue to work with Health Protection teams in cases of local outbreaks
- Local Health Protection teams may advise schools to consider additional measures, including temporarily restricting attendance, during an outbreak if other measures do not contain the spread

Current situation in Birmingham schools

- A Public Health webinar with Dr Justin Varney was held with school leaders at the start of term on 5 January 2022 with the opportunity for schools to ask questions
- We have also been in touch with school leaders for their feedback
- The key issues being raised since the start of term are:
 - Overall morale/wellbeing of school staff is being affected by the continued challenges schools are facing and anxiety about rising cases
 - Schools are encountering issues with capacity to cover large numbers of isolating staff
 - Schools have had difficulties in ordering LFD test kits
 - Ventilation remains an issue for many schools
- Education and Skills officers have reported this feedback to senior officials at the DfE as part of their regular meetings with them
- We are undertaking a survey regarding ventilation and will report its findings to the DfE in the coming weeks

Vulnerable pupils

- Officers from Education and Skills continue to work closely with their colleagues in Birmingham Children's Trust to ensure support is in place for vulnerable pupils during the pandemic
- Schools are able to submit referrals using the [Right Help Right Time](#) threshold document for any children they are concerned about
- The [Family Connect Form](#) can also be submitted by schools or other professionals to request support for families through the early help system
- The early help service contacts/visits children of concern that are not open to social workers
- Social work team managers linked to schools provide general support to schools

BCC support for schools and settings

- [Outbreak management plan template](#)
- [Regular webinars \(Public Health, ventilation, attendance etc\)](#)
- Close liaison with Birmingham Public Health and UK Health Security Agency
- [Public Health documents](#) including FAQs, checklist and flowchart, regularly updated to take account of most up to date guidance
- Regular bulletins sent to schools and posted on our [Noticeboard site](#)

Plan for remainder of academic year

- Focus through the BEP school improvement contract on supporting
 - pupils with 'catching up' on lost learning
 - schools who may be experiencing temporary or partial closures with their remote learning offer
- Spotlight from BCC statutory services on children who may be 'missing education', particularly
 - children who are on a school roll but have been persistently absent during the recent COVID period
 - children who may be on part-time timetables
 - children who are not on a school roll i.e. those who are electively home educated
- Additional resources have been allocated to the Children Missing Education team (the team focusing on children where their whereabouts is not known) in response to increased activity
- Close working with Forward Thinking Birmingham and the Education Psychology Service to support the mental health of children, young people and staff in schools and settings
- Ongoing support through webinars, updated guidance and regular communication

