

25 Aug 2021 Press Release

Vigilance urged as schools feel impact of COVID increase

Issued by NHS Highland in partnership with The Highland Council

As confirmed cases of COVID rise across the NHS Highland area, local schools, which saw pupils returning last week after the summer holidays, have begun to feel the impact.

From 16 – 22 August, NHS Highland saw over 1000 cases which represents almost 10% of our total case count for the whole pandemic in a single week. This increase is expected to continue and we are already seeing a large number of outbreaks in Highland schools with around 60 schools affected so far.

Dr Jenny Wares, Consultant in Public Health Medicine (Health Protection), from NHS Highland said: “There is no single situation driving the numbers up and we are experiencing sustained community transmission. COVID-19 is spreading very rapidly and the impact on families, local schools and businesses remains significant. Whilst COVID-19 is circulating at such high levels, we would advise you try to minimise your contact with others as much as possible to limit further spread within our communities.

“It is so important that we remain vigilant for symptoms. The typical symptoms are a new continuous cough, a high temperature or fever and a loss of, or change in, normal taste or smell. However, people with COVID-19 can present with a wide range of symptoms including headache, sore muscles and joints, tiredness, sore throat, cold-like symptoms and diarrhoea and vomiting. Anyone that becomes unwell should isolate immediately and book a PCR test.”

Details on how to book a PCR test are available on NHS Inform [here \(external link\)](#).

Free, fast and regular testing is also available for people who do not have symptoms. Around 1 in 3 people do not show symptoms, so can spread the virus to others without knowing. Regular testing helps us to find positive cases in people who have no symptoms, but who are still infectious.

Everyone in Scotland can do this test twice a week. For more information please see the guidance on NHS Inform [here](#) (external link).

Dr Wares added: “Since moving beyond level 0 the Scottish Government guidance for the management of COVID-19 cases in schools and childcare settings has changed with close contacts in these settings not routinely asked to isolate. However, if there is evidence of COVID-19 transmission within the class, additional actions such as PCR testing and self-isolation may be advised to try to control the outbreak.

“This change is being closely monitored for the first few weeks of pupils returning to the classroom.”

Nicky Grant, Executive Chief Officer for Education and Learning in Highland said: “The Highland Council continues to work in partnership with NHS Highland’s Health Protection to manage a number of COVID-19 outbreaks in school settings. It is vital that parents/carers and pupils take protective measures set out for schools and follow the advice from the Health Protection Team on receiving any letters about local cases. Online learning or home learning material will be available for those who are isolating but, otherwise, remain well.”

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13897/vigilance_urged_as_schools_feel_impact_of_covid_increase