

## Revised COVID-19 Guidance

The NASUWT has been continuing to monitor the developing situation with regard to the novel coronavirus, now officially termed COVID-19, that emerged in China late in 2019.

### **NASUWT advice to schools**

1. All schools should follow advice given by their relevant authority – Public Health England, Public Health Wales, Health Protection Scotland or the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. The Governments of Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man and Gibraltar are also issuing advice.
2. These bodies are updating advice on a daily basis.
3. Currently, UK health authorities are advising that anyone who has travelled from Wuhan should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people for 14 days after returning, whilst the Jersey Government has extended this to travellers returning from all parts of China.
4. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised against any travel to mainland China, so it is unlikely that schools will have pupils or staff returning from China after the half-term break.
5. The area affected by COVID-19 includes the following countries:
  - China
  - Thailand
  - Japan
  - Republic of Korea
  - Hong Kong
  - Taiwan
  - Singapore
  - Malaysia
  - Macau
6. Current government advice in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man is for travellers from these countries who develop symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath within 14 days of return to self-isolate and seek advice

from NHS 111, 0300 200 7885 in Northern Ireland, 01534 445566 in Jersey, or telephone your GP/out-of-hours service in Guernsey or the Isle of Man.

7. The **Government of Gibraltar is advising against travel to all of these countries** and requires all travellers arriving from one of the affected countries to report to a Borders and Coastguard Officer/Officer of the Gibraltar Port Authority on arrival in Gibraltar and self-isolate for 14 days.
8. It is likely that schools will have pupils and staff returning from the other affected countries listed above after the half-term break. With the exception of Gibraltar, authorities have not said that self-isolation is required after a visit to this area unless symptoms develop.
9. Schools may wish to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the symptoms of COVID-19, especially around the need to self-isolate should symptoms arise.
10. It is possible that advice will be extended to other countries if the virus continues to spread. It is possible that school staff will be required to self-isolate having travelled during the half-term break. As cases occur in the UK, it is also possible that more people will be required to self-isolate. It is vital that staff follow the advice of the Government in this case to prevent the spread of infection. Where teachers are absent from work due to self-isolation, this should be considered a medical suspension rather than sick leave and full pay should apply. Absence should also be disregarded for absence management procedures.
11. The NASUWT is aware that advice is being given to schools that teachers travelling to the affected area who subsequently are required to self-isolate should not be paid for this period. This is unacceptable and is likely to result in individuals who should be self-isolating attending work and potentially spreading the infection. Schools should be in no doubt that the NASUWT will robustly oppose such draconian measures, including naming and shaming schools involved.
12. If a school is concerned that a pupil or staff member may be exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, emergency advice should also be obtained from the NHS 111 service in England, Wales or Scotland, 0300 200 7885 in Northern Ireland, 01534 445566 in Jersey, and local health services in Guernsey, Isle of Man or Gibraltar. If the person is seriously ill, a 999 call should be placed.
13. Whilst awaiting advice or an ambulance, government advice is that that the individual should be isolated from other people behind a shut door. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the

bin. If no bin is available, put the tissue in a bag or pocket for disposal in a bin later. If there are no tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. The room will need to be cleaned once they leave.

### **School visits abroad**

14. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently advising against non-essential travel to mainland China and schools should not operate any trips or visits to mainland China. There are currently no other virus-related restrictions, but this situation may change rapidly.
14. Please note, however, the more stringent advice issued by the Government of Gibraltar, detailed above. No Gibraltar schools should be operating visits to the affected areas.
16. Schools should ensure that risk assessments for visits abroad are reviewed, taking into account not only the risk of infection, but also the risk of becoming stranded, should the situation deteriorate rapidly. Schools should liaise closely with tour operators in their decision-making process of whether to cancel any visits.
17. Schools may also wish to obtain further advice from their Local Health Protection team in England, NHS board public health department in Scotland, Public Health Wales, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland, or local health services in Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man and Gibraltar.

### **Other precautions**

18. All health authorities are stressing the need for good hand hygiene. Schools should ensure that all washing facilities are clean, with adequate supplies of soap, and encourage all staff and pupils to regularly wash their hands for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitisers can also help, provided they contain at least 60% alcohol.
19. Schools should also ensure that surfaces and 'touch points' such as door handles and light switches are regularly disinfected. This particularly applies to fingerprint scanners, where applicable.
20. Irrespective of the COVID-19 outbreak, these are sensible precautions that will also help prevent the spread of existing viruses, such as the cold, flu and norovirus.