COVID-19 School Health Policy

Developed collaboratively with unions, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and NYC Test & Trace Corp, this policy provides guidance for schools regarding:

- Thresholds for school opening and closure during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Daily health screenings for students and school-based staff,
- The establishment of an Isolation Room,
- What to do if a student or staff member shows signs of COVID-19 while in a school,
- What to do if there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 of someone in a school, and
- COVID-19 testing scenarios for staff.

Thresholds for School Opening and Closure During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The health and safety of students and staff are of the utmost priority when considering reopening schools. The DOE has worked closely with DOHMH to determine thresholds for opening and, if necessary, closing schools.

In order for schools to reopen and stay open, the percentage of positive tests in New York City must be less than 3% using a 7-day rolling average. Schools will need to close if the percentage of positive tests in New York City are equal to or more than 3% using a 7-day rolling average.

It is important to note that the above threshold is just one trigger for closing schools but may not be the only trigger. For example, a decision to close schools would be made where there were recurrent, uncontrolled outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools, even if the overall case rates across New York City were to remain low.

Daily Health Screenings

Daily health screenings, including temperature checks, must be completed at home by families and by school-based staff. The DOE will launch a robust education campaign that makes clear to parents and school-based staff how important these daily health checks are to keeping school communities healthy and safe. The DOE is also committed to purchasing thermometers for at-home use for families who may need them.

School-based staff and students cannot report to school if they have:
- Been knowingly in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19.
- Tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- Experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days.

- Traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the New York State Travel Advisory in the past 14 days.

Random Temperature Screenings

Every morning, prior to entering the school, specific staff will perform random samplings of temperatures for both students and school-based staff using non-touch thermometers. Additional guidance on random temperature screenings is forthcoming.

- Schools are prohibited to record or track student and/or staff temperatures or other health information.
- Face coverings and gloves will be worn continually by designated staff taking temperatures.
- Any student exhibiting a fever from a random temperature check must be evaluated by the nurse or health professional in the Isolation Room. The student must stay in the building's Isolation Room until picked up.
- DOE-contracted Community Based Organizations providing early childhood services must continue to conduct daily health checks and align with DOE and DOHMH issued guidance that pertains to their program and setting.

The DOE is also exploring enhanced at-school temperature check protocols and processes and will ensure such compliance with state health guidance.

Isolation Room

In order to accommodate a student who may exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, every building must designate space to be used as an Isolation Room. An Isolation Room is a place where a student with suspected COVID-19 symptoms can be safely isolated in the building until they can be picked up by a guardian.

- A student showing symptoms of COVID-19 must be escorted to the Isolation Room by a staff member wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The area where the student was showing symptoms must be immediately cleaned and disinfected.
- If there is a nurse or health professional assigned to the building, the student must be evaluated by the nurse/health professional in the Isolation Room.
  - Should the nurse/health professional be unavailable to examine the student **OR** the school does not have a nurse or access to a health professional at that time, the student must wait in the building's Isolation Room.
- The principal will designate a staff member to supervise a student in the Isolation Room.
  - The school (or schools, if on a campus) must provide additional staff to support the supervision of the Isolation Room.
- The nurse/health professional and any additional staff supervising the Isolation Room must be given the appropriate PPE, including, but not limited to N95 respirators, gloves, gowns, and face shields or goggles.
- When an ill student has been picked up, the Isolation Room must be closed and a deep cleaning must be performed before it can be used again.

Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School

Student Shows Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School

- Students showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be escorted to the Isolation Room by a designated staff member wearing appropriate PPE.
  - Symptoms of COVID-19 are:
    - Fever of 100.0°F or higher or chills,
    - Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
    - Fatigue,
    - Muscle or body aches,
    - Headache,
    - Loss of taste or smell,
    - Sore throat, congestion or runny nose,
    - Nausea or vomiting,
    - Diarrhea.
- The area where the student was showing symptoms must be immediately cleaned and disinfected.
- The nurse or health professional, wearing appropriate PPE, will evaluate the student in the Isolation Room for symptoms of COVID-19.
  - If no nurse or health professional is available, the student will wait in the supervised Isolation Room until picked up.
- A family member or guardian will be contacted by a staff member and asked to pick up the student.
- Upon pick up, the nurse/health professional and school staff will strongly advise the family to visit a doctor and get the student tested for COVID-19, and provide the information of the closest testing site, if asked.
- The Isolation Room must be closed and a deep cleaning must be performed before it can be used again.

School-Based Staff Member Shows Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School

- School-based staff members showing symptoms at COVID-19 will be directed to leave the building.
  - Symptoms of COVID-19 are:
    - Fever of 100.0°F or higher or chills,
    - Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
    - Fatigue,
    - Muscle or body aches,
    - Headache,
    - Loss of taste or smell,
    - Sore throat, congestion or runny nose,
    - Nausea or vomiting,
    - Diarrhea.
- The school will strongly advise the staff member to visit a doctor and get tested for COVID-19.
- The area where the staff member was showing symptoms must be immediately cleaned and disinfected.

Criteria for Returning to School After Showing Symptoms

Any individual (student or staff member) showing signs of COVID-19 can only return to school when all the following conditions are met:

- Received a positive COVID-19 test AND
- Isolated for 10 days AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

OR

- Received a negative COVID-19 test AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

OR

- Never got a COVID-19 test AND
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms started AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

If DOHMH or NYC Test & Trace Corps determine the individual is considered a close contact of a positive case, the individual can only return to school when all the following are met:

- The individual has completed a 14-day quarantine regardless of symptoms or COVID-19 test results since their last exposure to that case AND
- Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation AND
- The student has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- Students in quarantine should participate in remote learning if feeling well enough.

Positive COVID-19 Case in School

Definitions:

- <u>Case</u>: A person (student or staff member) with infection caused by the virus that causes COVID-19.
- <u>Contact</u>: A person (student or staff member) who has close contact (exposure) to a case.
- <u>Infectious Period</u>: The period of contagiousness when COVID-19 can be transmitted to another person.
    - For COVID-19 the infectious period is two days before symptom onset until ten days after illness onset, as long as the case has been at least three days fever-free without the use of medication.
    - For people with no symptoms (asymptomatic), the period is two days before through ten days after specimen collection.
- <u>Incubation Period</u>: The period after exposure during which a person is at risk for becoming sick.
    - For COVID-19 the incubation period is two to 12 days.

- Exposure: Defined as close contact less than six feet for more than ten minutes with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 during the case's infectious period, regardless of the use of a face covering or barrier.
  - In the school setting, people who use a classroom at a different time from a case are not considered exposed.

Important to Note:

- Anyone with a positive COVID test (staff, teacher, student) must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days since onset of symptoms.
  - The period of self-isolation may need to be longer if the case has fever or symptoms between days seven to ten, as the case must be symptom free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication.
- A positive case can be reported by:
  - NYC Test & Trace Corps finds through case interview,
  - Staff or parent alert school,
  - Staff or parent alert DOHMH hotline.
- DOHMH will begin investigating self-reported positive COVID-19 test results from a school community within three hours.
- All case contacts will be monitored by NYC Test & Trace Corps and linked to COVID-19 testing and Take Care services.
- Contact tracing will not be activated without a laboratory confirmed case or without a presumed case due to a recent close contact developing symptoms.
  - Cases are confirmed via the New York State lab results system or by DOHMH confirming the lab results presented by a teacher, staff, or parent.

Unconfirmed Case in a School

Any student or staff member who self-reports an unconfirmed positive case of COVID-19 or is exhibiting COVID-like symptoms will be immediately removed from the classroom or school building, told to stay home, and encouraged to get tested.

- The classroom and school building will remain open at this time.
- Contact tracing will only occur if there is a laboratory confirmed case or if the person is a close contact of a presumed positive.
- If a positive case is confirmed, the school must follow the protocols listed below.
- If a negative test result is received, the individual may return to school after presenting clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND** after being symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- If the individual does not get tested or seek clearance from a health care provider, the individual cannot return to school until:
  - 10 days have passed since the first symptom **AND**
  - The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

One Confirmed Case in a School

- DOHMH will notify the principal and Central DOE of confirmed case.

- Principal notifies Building Response Team, superintendent, and informs affected teacher(s).
    - o Please see additional guidance regarding the Building Response Team during COVID-19.
    - o Building Response Team notifies Borough Safety Director.
    - o Additional guidance on notifying other Borough Citywide Office points is forthcoming.
- All students and teacher(s) in class(es) with a confirmed case are assumed close contacts and are instructed to quarantine for 14 days since their last exposure to that case.
    - o In schools where students travel between classes, the school must require quarantine for individuals in all classes attended by the confirmed case.
- Learning continues remotely for students who are in quarantine.
    - o A negative COVID-19 test result for a student does not reduce the 14-day quarantine period.
- NYC Test & Trace Corps will interview the case and school administration to establish if there were any other additional close contacts.
- NYC Test & Trace Corps will interview staff members to verify levels of contact with the confirmed case.
    - o If a staff member is deemed NOT a close contact, then the staff member can opt to return to school.
    - o If a staff member is considered a close contact, then the staff member is required to complete the 14-day quarantine.
- The school must communicate to all families and students at school when a case is confirmed by DOHMH (letters are forthcoming):
    - o Families of students who are confirmed close contacts of the positive case must receive a letter stating that their child has been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual; this letter gives clear direction to quarantine for 14 days and see a health care provider.
    - o Families of students who are not considered close contacts must receive a letter stating that there was a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the school but that their child is not considered a close contact therefore there is no need to quarantine.

Two or More Confirmed Cases in a School

- If two or more confirmed cases present within seven days of each other, NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH begins investigation immediately and makes every attempt to conclude the investigation within 24 hours.
- DOHMH will notify the principal and Central DOE of confirmed case.
- Principal notifies Building Response Team, superintendent, and informs affected teacher(s).
    - o Please see additional guidance regarding the Building Response Team during COVID-19.
    - o Building Response Team notifies Borough Safety Director.
    - o Additional guidance on notifying other Borough Citywide Office points is forthcoming.
- During the NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH investigation:
    - o Two or more confirmed cases within the same class triggers a classroom quarantine but the schools stay open.
    - o Two or more confirmed cases within the same school triggers classroom quarantines and school is closed for a minimum of 24 hours while the NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH investigation is underway.

- NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH must determine by 6:00 pm whether the school needs to remain closed beyond the minimum 24 hours in order to reach the conclusion of the investigation.
- Once the NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH investigation is complete:
    - NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH investigations will results in one of the below conclusions (see table).
    - NYC Test & Trace Corps makes recommendation to NYC Department of Buildings and Central DOE on the closure of classroom(s) and/or school as well as the duration of closure.
    - Central DOE informs principal and superintendent and communicates closure decision to school community.
    - School moves immediately to remote learning mode during temporary closure.
    - Students on split schedules return for in-person learning on the next assigned day following reopening.
    - Any exposed contacts will be directed to see a health care provider and to COVID-19 testing resources.

NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH Investigation Conclusions:

Conclusion of Investigation	During Investigation (for at 24 hours)	After Investigation
One confirmed case	Close classroom, transition to remote learning	Classroom remains closed for 14 days; Students and staff in close contact with positive case quarantine for 14 days
At least two cases linked together in school, same classroom	Close classroom, transition to remote learning	Classroom remains closed for 14 days; Students and staff in close contact with positive case quarantine for 14 days
At least two cases linked together in school, different classrooms	Close school building, transition to remote learning	Classrooms of each case remain closed and quarantined for 14 days Additional school members are quarantined based on where the exposure was in the school (e.g., the locker room)
At least two cases linked together by circumstances outside of school (e.g., acquired infection by different setting and source)	Close school building, transition to remote learning	School opens after investigation; Classrooms remain closed for 14 days
At least two cases, not linked but exposure confirmed for each outside of school setting	Close school building, transition to remote learning	School opens after investigation; Classrooms remain closed for 14 days
Link unable to be determined	Close school building, transition to remote learning	Close school for 14 days

COVID-19 Testing Scenarios for School-Based Staff

Pre-Opening Testing for School-Based Staff

School-based staff are asked to get tested for COVID-19 prior to the start of in-person instruction. Participation in COVID-19 testing for school-based staff is entirely voluntary.

- Any school-based staff member can opt into pre-opening testing.
- Staff are recommended to get a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test at least seven days before school opens.
    - DOHMH is providing free, prioritized PCR testing at any of 34 city-run testing locations at a staff member's convenience.
    - The City will aim for a 24-hour COVID-19 test result turn around at any of its 34 city-run testing locations.

- Any school-based staff member testing positive for COVID-19 during this time is required to quarantine for 14 days and be symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

Once School is Open

- School-based staff members are encouraged to opt into monthly repeat surveillance COVID-19 testing.
  - The DOE and DOHMH will help establish a rolling pattern of testing for all teachers and staff.
- Testing may occur at any location, but school-based staff are encouraged to use City-run sites where DOE tests will be prioritized and they will aim to receive test results in 24 hours.