

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Weekly Epidemiological School Bulletin



Epidemiological Week 11 (to 20 March 2022)

Northern Ireland

Summary - In the 28 days up to 20 March 2022

(Week 11):

- There were 9,577 confirmed cases notified to the Contact Tracing Service (CTS) where the case advised they attended or worked in a school (5,681 primary, 3,558 post primary and 338 special school cases)
- 59.3% of cases were associated with primary schools, 37.2% with post primary schools and 3.5% with special schools
- The proportion of confirmed cases which were pupils was 2.4% of the total enrolled school population
- 85.2% of cases were pupils
- 86.7% of primary, 100% of post primary and 92.5% of special schools have had at least one case. Of schools with at least one case in the last 28 days, 65.2% had 10 cases or fewer
- In 86.5% of schools the number of cases in pupils was less than 5% of their enrolled school population
- There were no post primary schools with cases in pupils in the last 28 days greater than 10% of their enrolled school population, compared to 2.7% in primary schools

Schools' Surveillance

From 10 September 2021 there was a change to contact tracing of children within schools settings^{1, 2}. The change in contact tracing arrangements, data systems and recording mean data presented from that date will differ from that previously presented on schools in the PHA COVID-19 bulletin. These data is therefore not directly comparable with the schools data included in previous COVID-19 bulletins.

Reported association of cases with a school or educational institution does not necessarily mean that transmission occurred in school. COVID-19 transmission to pupils and staff can occur in a variety of settings, including their households where the risk of transmission is known to be high. Inferences should not be made from these data about where COVID-19 transmission took place.

1. Joint memo from the Offices of the Ministers of Education and Health regarding revised arrangements for contact tracing of children in schools - <https://www.educationni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Joint%20Memo%20from%20DE%20and%20DoH%20Ministers.pdf>
2. Updated CMO guidance regarding schoolchildren - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/CMO-letter-to-school-community.pdf>

Methodology and caveats

- This report contains data related to COVID-19 cases (PCR and LFD positive) entered onto the CTC database between 21 February and 20 March 2022 (Epi weeks 8 to 11 based on date of sample) where the case is reported to be associated with a school. Data was extracted at 10am on Wednesday 23 March 2022.
- Weeks 8,9,10 etc. refer to Epidemiological weeks, running Monday to Sunday. This is dependent on the data available and annual comparisons are not yet possible as the virus only emerged in 2020.
- It is important to note that the definitive source for the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in school aged children is from PCR testing via the National Testing Programme and HSC laboratories and results reported via the government portal. Direct comparisons should not be made between laboratory data and data in this report. This report is subject to change as data quality and methods develop.
- Cases associated with nurseries, pre-schools, further education colleges and universities are not included in this report.
- The association of cases with a primary, post primary or special school is based on self-reported data collected as part of the contact tracing process. These data presented were analysed using data from the CTC database, which is designed for contact tracing purposes and not for identifying where transmission took place. Reported association of cases with a school or educational institution does not mean that cases were in school during their infective period or at the date of the test, nor that transmission occurred in school. Inferences should not be made from these data about where COVID-19 transmission took place.
- Cases aged 4 to 19 years are categorised as pupils and those over 19 years categorised as staff. Cases without a recorded date of birth were excluded from pupil/staff totals, which may be slightly different from other table totals.
- School enrolment numbers are taken from <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolment-school-level-date-202021>. Data on the number of school institutions has been updated

(<http://apps.education-ni.gov.uk/appinstitutes/default.aspx>) and may differ from previous reports.

- The data included in this report are the most up to date data available at the time of the report; however this is subject to change as the data are subject to ongoing quality assurance.

Table 1 shows the total number of cases (includes pupils and staff) by school type in the 4 weeks up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 1. Number of COVID-19 cases reported by school type				
Epidemiological Week and Week ending	Primary	Post Primary	Special	Total Cases
Wk 8 (27 Feb)	1,184	866	99	2,149
Wk 9 (06 March)	1,732	920	87	2,739
Wk 10 (13 March)	1,640	936	85	2,661
Wk 11 (20 March)	1,125	836	67	2,028
Total	5,681	3,558	338	9,577

Primary: includes primary and preparatory schools. Post primary: includes secondary and grammar schools.

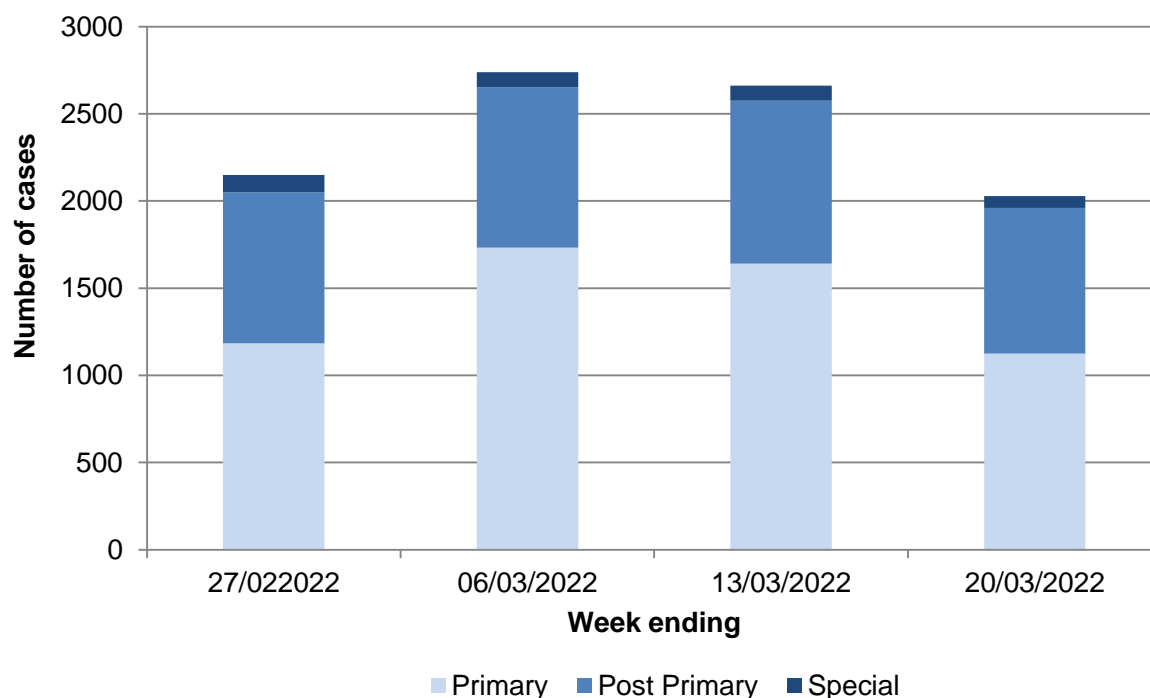


Figure 1. Number of COVID-19 cases reported by school type in the 4 weeks up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 2 shows the number cases that are pupils by school type and as a proportion of all enrolled pupils in NI, in the last 7 and 28 days, up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 2. Number of cases and as a proportion of all school age children, by school type, in the previous 7 and 28 days to 20 March 2022				
School Type	7 days		28 days	
	Cases	Proportion of pupil enrolment for sector	Cases	Proportion of pupil enrolment for sector
Primary	960	0.5%	4,858	2.7%
Post Primary	726	0.5%	3,065	2.1%
Special	38	0.6%	190	3.0%
Total	1,724	0.5%	8,113	2.4%

Table 3 shows the number of pupils and staff cases, by school type, in the previous 28 days, up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 3. Number of pupil and staff cases, by school type, in the previous 28 days to 20 March 2022				
School Type	Pupils	Staff	Total	Proportion of all cases that are pupils
Primary	4,858	776	5,634	86.2%
Post Primary	3,065	484	3,549	86.4%
Special	190	148	338	56.2%
Total	8,113	1,408	9,521	85.2%

Table 4 shows number of schools with cases and the proportion, by school type, in the previous 28 days, up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 4. Number and proportion of schools with COVID-19 cases by school type			
School Type	Number schools with at least one case	Proportion of schools with at least one case	Total number of schools in NI
Primary	696	86.7%	803
Post Primary	193	100%	193
Special	37	92.5%	40
Total	926	89.4%	1,036

**Please note the total number of schools has been updated and may differ when compared to previous weeks*

Table 5 shows the number and percentage of schools with cases in pupils or staff, by type of school in the previous 28 days, up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 5. Number and percentage of schools with cases by school type					
	Schools with COVID-19 cases				
School Type	1-5	6-10	11-15	>15	Total
Primary	357 (51.3%)	166 (23.9%)	67 (9.6%)	106 (15.2%)	696
Post Primary	24 (12.4%)	32 (16.6%)	31 (16.1%)	106 (54.9%)	193
Special	12 (32.4%)	13 (35.1%)	5 (13.5%)	7 (18.9%)	37
Total	393 (42.4%)	211 (22.8%)	103 (11.1%)	219 (23.7%)	926

* Data not disclosed due to small numbers. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6 shows positive cases in the context of school pupil population by considering the number of pupil cases in each school relative to the number of pupils in that school. It shows the number and percentage of schools categorised by the proportion of pupil cases relative to the enrolled school population, by type of school in the previous 28 days, up to Epidemiological Week 11 (20 March 2022).

Table 6. Number and percentage of schools categorised by the proportion of pupil cases relative to the enrolled school population by school type						
School Type	Percentage of cases relative to school population					Total
	0.1 to 2.4%	2.5 to 4.9%	5.0 to 7.4%	7.5 to 9.9%	≥10%	
Primary	352 (52.4%)	211 (31.4%)	65 (9.7%)	26 (3.9%)	18 (2.7%)	672
Post Primary	133 (69.3%)	53 (27.6%)	6 (3.1%)	*	*	192
Special	12 (37.5%)	14 (43.8%)	*	*	*	32
Total	497 (55.5%)	278 (31%)	75 (8.4%)	28 (3.1%)	18 (2.0%)	896

* Data not disclosed due to small numbers. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. The total number of schools in Table 6 (which considers pupil cases only) may differ from Table 5 (which includes pupil and staff cases). Percentage of cases relative to school population = number of pupil cases/ total pupils enrolled. Table does not include schools with no cases.

School sizes vary a great deal, with some having fewer than 100 pupils and others having more than 1,000. Having 10 cases in a school with 1,000 pupils is very different in its impact to having 10 cases in a school with 50 pupils. Pupil cases divided by the enrolled pupil populations have been calculated as percentages for all schools with at least one case. These have then been grouped into five categories, ranging from those with less than 2.5% of pupils testing positive in the 28 day period to those with 10% or more. This is shown in Table 6.

There were no post primary schools with cases in pupils in the last 28 days greater than 10% of their enrolled school population, compared to 2.7% in primary schools.

Source: PHA Education Cell and Contact Tracing Cell

Further Information

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