

Advice on addressing coronavirus (COVID-19) in PSHE lessons

Teaching about hygiene routines, how bacteria and viruses affect health and recognising illness is a part of the Health Education aspect of PSHE education at all key stages. Pupils may ask about coronavirus (COVID-19) while discussing these topics, or may raise concerns regarding the virus in response to media coverage. We therefore offer the following advice to help you to plan for such discussions and it is also important to refer to the guidance on the [NHS website](#) and [Public Health England's guidance for educational settings](#).

When discussing, or teaching topics related to, coronavirus:

- ✔ Continue to maintain a safe learning environment through agreed ground rules and distancing the learning.
- ✔ Stress that currently most people are at low risk of catching the virus, and even if they do most people's symptoms are not serious.
- ✔ Teach or reinforce hygiene routines such as hand-washing technique and important times to carry out these routines, such as before leaving home, on arriving at school, before eating and after using the toilet.
- ✔ Introduce or reinforce practices to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, such as coughing into the crook of the elbow, catching a sneeze in a tissue, putting the tissue in the bin and washing hands. Alternatively, if they don't have a tissue, they should sneeze into their sleeve not onto their hand.
- ✔ Emphasise the importance of avoiding touching the eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands and of not sharing cups or bottles.
- ✔ Challenge misconceptions that associate coronavirus with any particular group of people and signpost accurate sources of information such as the NHS or Public Health England.
- ✔ Be mindful of pupils who may feel more anxious about coronavirus, for example those who are concerned for elderly relatives. It may not be apparent who these pupils are, so keeping this in mind when discussing this topic with a class will help to avoid unnecessary distress.

It is important to avoid:

- ✘ Approaches to discussing or teaching topics related to coronavirus that could induce fear, or focus on a worst-case scenario. Scaring pupils can make it more difficult for them to engage with the lesson effectively and may cause unnecessary panic.
- ✘ Causing feelings of guilt or using blaming language regarding the transmission of coronavirus. Emphasis should be on routines to reduce transmission.
- ✘ Encouraging stereotypes or assumptions associated with coronavirus. Pupils need to understand that there is not a higher chance of catching it from people of any particular group, nationality, or race.