



Wipe away worry

How to keep schools clean and safe
in the COVID-era



Myth-busting, essential cleaning advice, and future gazing to aid COVID-19 cleaning strategies

Foreword

We recognise that every member of schools and nurseries – from managers, teachers, carers and cooks you all have such an important role to play when it comes to looking after the children in your care. From the outside looking in, we know your primary role is education and childcare, but in reality your remit in 2021 now covers so much more – education, development, child welfare and of course safety....

As the nation has headed in and out of lockdown over the past months, schools and nurseries up and down the country have continued to work so hard to deal with closures, set pathways for reopening, devising new systems, strategies and bubbles. To go above and beyond what could ever be expected of you, but what also must be done to hold up the promise you make to parents and the children in your care.

Cleaning and social distancing may have only infrequently entered your minds when you first set out on your professional journeys, but it is what you must face every day in the here and now. And we know this transition hasn't been easy. With this added pressure to get things right and effectively take on the challenges of the new normal, you need the right information at your fingertips.

Here at Uniwipe, we are committed to helping our customers in education find answers and solutions to the cleaning challenges they face.

Which is why we have developed this whitepaper to help communicate the hygiene measures that should be taken and to assist with the very real challenges you continue to face every day. We hope it goes some way to provide helpful guidance that so many of you have told us you need.

With greatest thanks,

The Uniwipe Team



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Introduction

Teachers, educational professionals, school staff, and schools themselves have never been under as much pressure as they are in 2020. As soon as COVID-19 arrived in the UK, schools were top of the agenda. Should they be placed in lockdown? Are they a safe environment for our children? Can we afford to have students missing school at such an important time in their lives?

Safety was and is of huge concern. And with this comes increased pressure on teaching and school staff. Cleaning and hygiene are now top priorities in order that schools and classrooms can remain safe and open. According to the UK Government, schools must introduce enhanced cleaning, including regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

But enhanced cleaning is coming at a cost. Two thirds of schools have had to pay additional costs for cleaning. Nearly 100% have had to purchase extra cleaning supplies, and 50% have invested in hand-washing stations. On average schools spent just below £10,000 extra from the period March to September than the previous six months.

School Business Manager, Oxford: "There are lots of financial constraints. We're spending on things we didn't use before like masks, visors and gloves and we still have to spend on things like hand dryer contracts that were in place before COVID-19. We're spending a lot on keeping people safe, but we've also lost a lot of income from things like wrap-around care which have just stopped."

New protocols must be defined, and the school environment must be kept clean, whilst pupils and parents require ongoing education on what measures are being implemented.

The margin for error is extremely tight, and only exacerbated by conflicting arguments and a myriad of information sources. Underpinning any new measures and procedures for school premises must be clear and accurate information. This whitepaper is your foundation to make key decisions affecting the safety of your pupils. You'll find clear guidance on what and how to clean. You'll understand the best products to purchase, have the most common myths dispelled and gain an insight into what the future could bring for cleaning in our schools.

Section 1: Understanding COVID-19

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-Cov-2 virus. This spreads between people, mainly when an infected person is in close contact with another person. It can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe heavily. This is more likely to happen when people are in direct or close contact with an infected person (less than one metre apart).

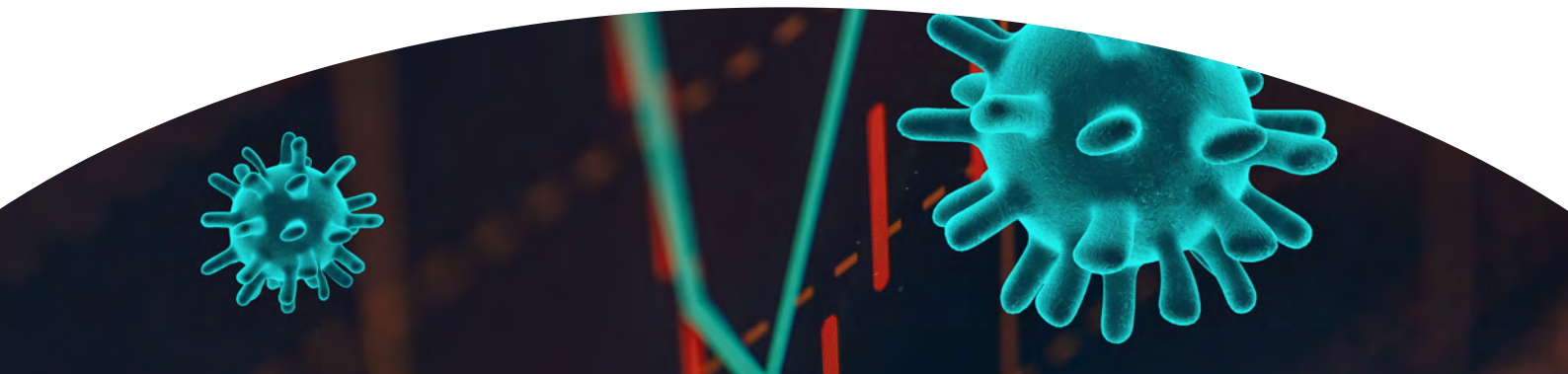
The virus can also spread once infected people sneeze, cough on, or touch surfaces, or objects – these include tables, doorknobs and handrails. When other people touch these contaminated surfaces then touch their eyes, noses or mouths without having cleaned their hands first, they may also become infected.

Settings where COVID-19 can spread more easily

The risk of transmission increases when the Three Cs are present. These are:

- *Crowded places with many people nearby*
- *Close-contact settings, especially where people have conversations very near each other*
- *Confined and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation*

Where these three factors overlap, the risk of COVID-19 spreading is higher.



COVID-19 myth busting

Tackling the spread of the virus relies on effective measures being in place across schools. But these measures will only be effective if they are underpinned by solid, clear and trustworthy communication.

Unfortunately, there are many different opinions when it comes to COVID-19. Despite what the science might say, several theories have developed about how it spreads, or doesn't spread, and the measures that should or shouldn't be taken. This has led to a number of COVID-19 myths. If communication isn't clear and the myths creep in, it can undo all the good work in other areas of virus containment. Here we refute some of the most commonly held assumptions.

myth...

...Children are relatively immune



From the very beginning, it was thought that children were relatively immune to the virus. Unfortunately, this isn't the case. According to recent data from the Office of National Statistics, rates now seem to be steeply increasing among secondary school children, with older children and young adults currently having the highest levels of infection.

It is however true that children don't generally get as sick as adults, but it can still be extremely serious. A British Medical Journal study examining 651 children in hospital with the virus from January to July, found that just six died in hospital (only 1%). Eighteen needed intensive care, while each of the six who died had "profound" underlying health conditions that had been complex and life-limiting.

Another commonly held assumption is that children can't spread it to adults if they do catch it. There is some evidence to suggest this is the case with a study from South Korea finding that children under 10 transmitted it less often to adults, but those between 10 and 19 spread just like adults.

Myth...

...If you look healthy, you can't really be sick

Often people feel safe and forget to social distance and wear masks because everyone around them "looks healthy". It's important to note, however, that in some cases as many as 40 to 50% of people that are infected showed no symptoms. This makes it fundamental to continue to implement good practice across the school at all times even when kids look and feel healthy.



Myth...

...You should wear gloves to reduce the spread of the virus

Wearing gloves isn't necessary as there are no studies that show disposable gloves increase protection against COVID-19. It's important to note that the virus won't infect someone through well-moisturised hands. If someone does get infected, it will be most likely from touching their face, with or without gloves



Myth...

...COVID-19 can't be caught twice

This is one of the biggest myths surrounding the virus and a potentially dangerous one to get wrong – just because someone has had the virus once doesn't mean that they can't get it again. Currently we can't be sure how long people have immunity after they've been infected and how long this lasts. Estimates are that it may last a few months.



myth...

...Letting hands air dry is the best approach



When the pupils and staff around the school sanitise their hands, make sure that they don't simply let their hands air dry. For it to be most effective, hands should be rubbed together until they are dry. It's also important that any hand sanitiser used in the school should be at least 60% alcohol.

myth...

...Masks with filter points are the best option



Masks with filter points should not be worn as they are designed for people working around chemicals or toxic fumes. The masks actually force out the air they're breathing through the port – which propels the breath further and more forcefully.

Fabric masks are recommended to prevent onward transmission in the general population in public areas and in areas of community transmission.



Section 2: Cleaning excellence in an educational setting

For more than a third (34%) of education professionals responsible for keeping good hygiene in schools, it feels like their jobs have changed beyond recognition. Defining daily cleaning procedures is essential, but in the face of conflicting information how can you make sure the approach you take is effective?

School Site Manager, Reading: "Since Covid-19 my job has been absolutely manic and completely changed. I feel like all eyes on me and it is a big burden of responsibility. I have no idea what each day holds and it really is about thinking on your feet as things can change by the hour."

COVID-19 has been described by senior politicians as an "invisible enemy" and this is a key point to consider. Even if you can't perceive it, it is very likely that you will have some form of contamination on any floors, walls and surfaces that are subject to heavy use. Consider the challenges you face in places like toilets, kitchens, classrooms and heavily trafficked corridors and external doors.

Even if the surface looks clean and you believe that you have cleaned it, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is free from contamination. This is why it is so important to choose an effective product that is designed to cater for high traffic areas in commercial settings – only then can you be confident you are doing everything you can to tackle bacteria and the virus with one simple wipe.

Of course, it is likely that school cleaners will come into the building, potentially up to twice a day at the moment. What needs to be remembered is that this alone isn't always enough. Contamination could easily happen throughout the day as specific areas are subject to heavy traffic.

Teachers may therefore be tasked with wiping down surfaces in classrooms, or other staff may be required to regularly clean down doors and desks after use in reception areas for example. When this happens it is vital that staff use the most effective products.

Choosing your products wisely: domestic vs. professional

Having cleaning wipes to hand is therefore essential for good cleaning practice. However, often the responsibility of sourcing them falls on teachers and other staff. Our research into this area illustrates that it is teachers that are most likely to buy antibacterial wipes for schools (18% of cases), followed by admin staff (13%) and business managers (10%).

And where are they turning to? Supermarket own brand or consumer brands of wipes are the top contenders and are bought around 45% of the time. Is this enough, however? Ask yourself the following questions:

- *Is this product designed specifically for educational or commercial settings?*
- *Has it been rigorously tested to tackle COVID-19?*

Teacher, London: "Sourcing cleaning products has been a major issue for us. Many times we've been scrambling round trying to find wipes and since the pandemic we've used six different suppliers including places like Lidl and Morrisons."

"We've found that the shelves are often cleared and the product we like isn't always available – one week it's there, the next it goes out of stock. That was all we were doing at one point – just sourcing products and the rest of the job doesn't stop. It takes up an awful amount of our time."

By choosing commercial cleaning products you will cut down on cleaning time, cross-contamination and waste. Importantly, you will find a product that will get the job done fast and done well.

Manufactured in the UK, Uniwipe products are recognised as among the most trusted wipes in the world. For example, its Uniwipe Clinical Disinfectant Midi-Wipes are designed specifically for high traffic areas, helping to eliminate cross-contamination and killing 99.999% of bacteria in 30 seconds and killing viruses in 60 seconds.

Extremely effective against the Coronavirus family of enveloped viruses including SARS-Cov-2, their 60 second kill rate on viruses and 30 second kill rate on bacteria makes them perfect for wiping down desks and equipment between lessons. Uniwipe Clinical Midi-Wipes are independently laboratory tested in accordance with EN14476 to kill SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. They are also dermatologically tested to be safe on hands and alcohol-free.

Easy to order from all UK distributors in bulk, as well as online from Amazon, they provide a cost-efficient, simple and a very effective solution to school cleaning requirements. They should form an essential part of your COVID-19 cleaning strategy.





Essential advice to keep your cleaning consistent

When developing your COVID-19 cleaning strategy, it's vital for all staff members (cleaners and non-cleaners) to have a clear picture of what should be cleaned and how.

This includes how often to clean, what should be worn when cleaning, and how to dispose of waste.

School Business Manager, Cheshire: "We have a good team but we're not cleaning experts and we have no one to draw upon. There's no one official giving us clear advice or checking we're cleaning things properly (apart from Environmental Health in the kitchen), we just have to trust we're doing the best we can."

1. How often to clean

The first thing to note is that frequently touched surfaces should be wiped down twice a day as a minimum – one of these must be at the beginning or end of the school day.

In high traffic areas, cleaning should be more frequent depending on the number of people using the space, whether they are entering and exiting the setting, and the access to handwashing and hand-sanitising facilities.

While this is a good rule of thumb, it's important to note how long the virus lives on specific surfaces. The following is a handy guide:

- **Metal**, including doorknobs: Up to 5 days
- **Glass**, including mirrors: Up to 5 days
- **Paper**: Up to 5 days (according to some sources)
- **Wood**, including furniture: Up to 4 days
- **Plastics**, including whiteboards and learning equipment: 2 -3 days
- **Stainless steel**, including water bottles, cutlery, sinks: 2 -3 days
- **Cardboard**: 1 day
- **Aluminium**, including drinks cans: 2 – 8 hours
- **Fabrics**: This is currently inconclusive, but it is thought to be for the same amount of time as it lives on hard surfaces



2. How to tackle your high-traffic areas

Classrooms, halls, and corridors are all areas where it is essential to be certain that your cleaning measures are effective. And this again comes down to your choice of products. Effective disinfectants and professional cleaning wipes must be tested using European Standard Test Methods. These methods specify a 99.999% reduction in bacteria to pass the test.

Bacteria are microscopic free-living single-celled organisms. This means a surface that is contaminated could have millions of bacteria per square centimetre. This is where what appears to be the tiniest variation between cleaning products can have the biggest difference.

For example, a product that kills 99.999% of bacteria kills over 100x times more bacteria than a wipe that's claims 99.9%. That is a vast amount of extra bacteria killed and could be as much as over 1,000 germs! Remember, the nastier they are the harder to kill so please make sure you pick the right product and ensure its killing 99.999% of bacteria to ensure you are kept as safe as possible.

This is so important when you're dealing with such fine margins.

3. What you should wear when cleaning

Whilst personal protective equipment (PPE) might be essential in settings like hospitals – both for medical and cleaning staff – on school premises, things are much less stringent.





This means that when cleaning surfaces, it really isn't necessary to wear PPE or clothing over and above what would normally be used. This is great for teachers and other staff that may be involved in general cleaning on a regular basis throughout the school day.

4. Disposing of waste

Again, there aren't necessarily any more stringent guidelines that need to be followed when it comes to washing clothes and disposing of waste. Any items worn when cleaning the school should simply be washed as normal in line with the manufacturer's guidelines.

And cleaning waste doesn't need to be segregated unless an individual in the setting shows symptoms or tests positive. You should dispose of routine waste methodically, placing any used wipes in black bag waste bins immediately to avoid any cross-contamination.

5. Hand sanitisation

In high-traffic areas, including corridors and classrooms, it is essential to install hand sanitiser stations. These stations should be at the entrance to each classroom and strategically placed along corridors for example.

Each must be accompanied by notices reminding students and staff of the importance of using them, as well as hand sanitisation best practice. Combining these with your notices around social distancing protocols is key for effective communication.

6. Daily cleaning in practice

So, what does best practice look like? It really depends on the nature and use of each room. Try and breakdown each location methodically, considering the area of the school and the surfaces within.

Here we'll detail key areas and their cleaning requirements. Remember, that every school will be different, so this is just a guide.



Entrances and reception areas

It's likely that you'll have been able to increase the drop-off areas for parents and the entrances for pupils, but an indoor reception area will still be subject to heavy traffic. Limiting this flow might be manageable now, but as we continue to live with the virus it is likely that traffic will increase. Vigilance is essential, especially with surfaces that people regularly touch.

The following must be cleaned daily (ideally twice daily):

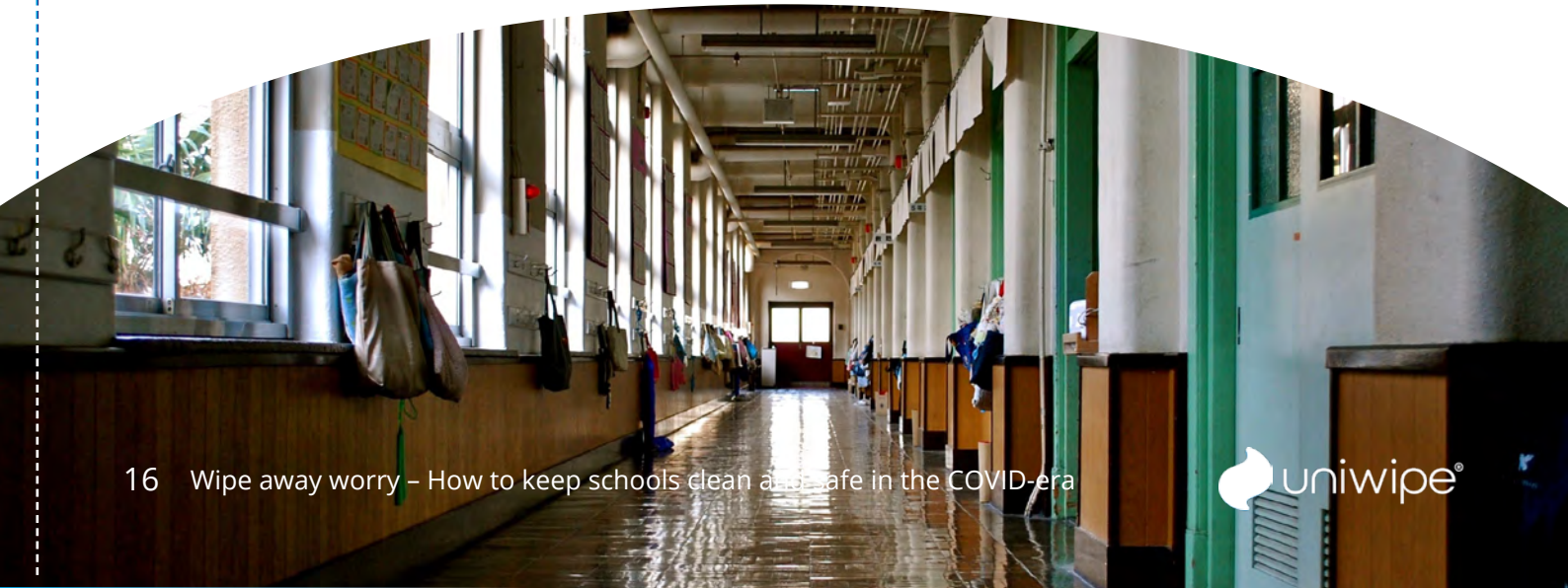
	Wiped down	Vacuumed	Mopped	Emptied and bleached
Doors	✓			
Door handles	✓			
Windows and glass partitions	✓			
Sills and ledges	✓			
Hard floors		✓	✓	
Carpets	spot cleaned if necessary	✓		
Rubber welcome mats			✓	
Skirting boards	✓			
Chairs and tables	✓			
Stationary	✓			
Bins				✓
Light Switches	✓			



Corridors

This is a heavy traffic area and possibly one of the most crucial. Classroom bubbles and staggering might cut down on traffic occurring all at once, but it's inevitable that hallways and corridors will be subject to plenty of foot traffic throughout the school day. The following should be done twice daily:

	wiped down	vacuumed	mopped	emptied and bleached
Corridor walls	✓			
Exteriors of classroom doors and door handles	✓			
Floors		✓	✓	
Rubber mats		✓	✓	
Windows and window ledges	✓			
Bins				✓
Tables	✓			





Classrooms

Pupils of course spend the most time in classrooms. This means that thorough cleaning is essential, ideally at the start and end of the school day. Deep cleaning is crucial, even if the classroom is only used for one class.

Each day (potentially twice a day), you should focus on:

	wiped down	vacuumed	mopped	emptied and bleached
All doors and door handles (including cupboards)	✓			
Pupils' desks	✓			
Teacher's desk	✓			
Floors		✓	✓	
Carpets and rugs		✓		
Bins				✓
Shared stationery and apparatus (if applicable)	✓			
Light switches	✓			
Plug sockets	✓			





Staffrooms and offices

Daily cleaning is again vital in here at the end of every school day, with the following also a key focus:

	wiped down	vacuumed	mopped	emptied and bleached
Doors and door handles	✓			
Windows and windowsills	✓ (and dusted)			
Cupboards, bookcases and other storage furniture	✓ (and dusted)			
Shared computers, TVs and electrical appliances	✓			
Kitchen worktops	✓			
itchen appliances (e.g. toasters and kettles)	✓			
Tables and chairs	✓			
Tabletops	✓			
Crockery and cutlery	washed in hot soapy water			
Staffroom toilets	✓			✓
Floors	swept	✓	✓	
Carpets / rugs	spot cleaned if necessary	✓		



Section 3: Short, medium and long-term measures

We are all facing an uncertain future. What the next few months, or the year ahead holds is extremely difficult to predict. One thing, however, that is certain is the role of our schools, universities and educational establishments; the fact that they were exempt as England entered its second lockdown at the end of 2020 is a clear message of the importance placed on education.

It is also clear that COVID-19 is something we're likely going to be coping with potentially for years to come.

According to virologist Byron Martina from Artemis One Health Research Foundation in the Netherlands: ***"The virus is here to stay. Normally, the longer a virus stays in the population, the less aggressive it becomes. However, this may be a process of years."***

The important role of schools continues to increase pressure to ensure cleaning procedures and protocols are precise and efficient. And whilst eliminating the spread of COVID-19 completely is a task beyond schools and staff, what can be within their remit is to ensure that every school puts appropriate measures in place to contain and control the virus.

With 65% of educational professionals we surveyed believing that current COVID-19 restrictions are here to stay, **in the short term** this means adequate hand sanitisation, social distancing measures, masks, class bubbles and restrictions of third parties entering the school premises. From a cleaning perspective it requires methodical and regular cleaning with each room and surface cleaned in line with its specific requirements. And crucially this demands cleaning products that are specially designed to cater for commercial settings with high-traffic areas. For many staff, cleaning might not have been a core responsibility, but in the current climate a key part of the role is to ensure everything is being done to keep the school safe for pupils and staff – this includes buying the right products if required to do so.

In the medium term, measures around social distancing and sanitising for example will likely be here to stay, but the burden can be eased on school staff. Understanding the latest guidance and effectively communicating this to pupils, staff and parents is fundamental. As is ensuring that adequate cleaning products are always at hand – systematically buying in bulk and distributing methodically to keep classrooms and other areas cleaned regularly is crucial.

Further in the future, technology may have an increasingly important role to play, and is already beginning to emerge. We're already seeing the use of robotic vacuum cleaners in care homes and some schools in the UK for example. But with tech innovation always comes the question, will it ever be as effective as human hands?

Hi-tech cleaning methods may be essential to help with cleaning larger spaces, but the human touch brings experience, knowledge and training on how to disinfect. With the expenditure we've already seen since the start of the pandemic, it is human hands that are helping us cope with the here and now and will likely continue to do so. And if advanced cleaning technology does eventually make it into our schools, it will likely be to complement and enhance the work of human hands, rather than as a replacement.



Final thoughts

As schools and pre-schools stay open amidst lockdowns and as our lives continue to change, the role of teachers, educational professionals, carers and school staff to look after not only the education, but also the wellbeing and safety of children in their care will play a fundamental role in society.

And with an effective daily cleaning strategy, the right cleaning products available at all times, and ongoing and consistent education across the teaching, office and operational staff, safe and consistent measures can be found.

Learn more about Uniwipe Clinical Disinfectant Midi-Wipes and order online today or sign up to claim your free sample. Remember you can also subscribe to regular deliveries on Amazon to make Uniwipe Midis an essential part of your COVID-19 cleaning measures, while Uniwipe's distribution partners can provide a personal service and regular deliveries to ensure vital cleaning products are continually delivered to keep schools and early learning facilities running.

Whatever your ongoing school cleaning requirements, Uniwipe it.



For more information about our range of wipes or to discuss your cleaning requirements with us, contact us on +44 (0) 333 241 9220 or sales@uniwipe.com or visit www.uniwipe.com/education

