

Parent Briefing for full school opening September 2020

As you are aware, the government guidance has been received and we are delighted to confirm that we are able to welcome all children back to school in September. We are really pleased that all our children will be together again as we have missed you all.

The purpose of this communication is to outline, to all parents and carers, the measures that school leaders and staff will be taking to – as best we can – maintain the safety of your children and our school team. It is also intended to give you an insight into how life at school will change for pupils whilst government COVID-19 measures are in force.

The government guidance reinforces our message that it is important to get all our children back to school. It explains:

“Now, the circumstances have changed. The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased our NHS Test and Trace system is up and running, and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools. Returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children’s future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. We know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families. Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today’s pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households, school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.”

Systems of control

This is the set of actions schools must take. They are grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection’ and are outlined in more detail in the sections below.

Prevention:

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- 2) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- 3) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach
- 4) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- 5) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- 6) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

7) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

8) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community

9) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Handwashing

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. Schools must ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future.

- There will be enough hand washing soap available so that all pupils and staff can clean their hands regularly
- We will ensure supervision of hand sanitiser use given risks around ingestion.
- We will build these routines into school culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them.

Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so we continue to have tissues and bins available in the school to support pupils and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, schools must ensure younger children and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all pupils understand that this is now part of how school operates.

Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in schools. This evidence will be kept under review. They are not required in schools as pupils and staff are mixing in consistent groups, and because misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. There may also be negative effects on communication and thus education. Face coverings are required at all times on public transport (for children, over the age of 11) or when attending a hospital as a visitor or outpatient.

Class group bubbles

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. Bubbles been used in schools in the summer term in recognition that children, especially the youngest children, find it difficult to socially distance from staff or from each other and this provides an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible.

However, the use of small groups restricts the normal operation of schools and presents both educational and logistical challenges, including the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as playgrounds, dining halls, and toilets, and the provision of specialist teaching.

In this guidance for the autumn term, maintaining consistent groups remains important, but given the decrease in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, we will change the size of the bubbles within our system of controls and increase the size of these groups to class bubbles.

Social Distancing

In the classroom allocated to your child's 'bubble', children will be required to only use their allocated desk. The classrooms have already been set up and all desks face the front. The infant children will be given a zippy wallet with their own allocated stationery. **From Year Three the children will need to bring a simple see-through pencil case containing their own stationery – pencil, coloured pencils, eraser, glue stick, pencil sharpener.** Please ensure this is plain school-type stationery and not the gimmicky kind. This must stay in school at all times. As a school, we are limiting the sharing of equipment and whenever equipment must be used, will be thoroughly cleaned, after use, by an adult.

The cloakrooms will not be operational and instead, coats and bags will need to be left on the child's seat or under the desk. For this reason bags must be as small as possible. Only absolute essentials should be brought into school.

If it is felt that your child frequently and wilfully contravenes social-distancing expectations or requirements thus endangering themselves and others, the school reserves the right to request that they no longer continue to attend school, whilst government COVID-19 measures are in place.

What Does My Child Need?

Infants

- Water bottle
- Sun hat (if needed)
- Coat (if needed)
- Hand sanitiser (if possible)
- Reading book
- Reading record

Juniors

- Water bottle
- Sun hat (if needed)
- Coat (if needed)
- Hand sanitiser (if possible)
- Packed lunch (if needed)
- Reading book
- Reading record
- Diary
- Plastic see-through pencilcase containing stationery outlined above

We ask that children limit what they bring into school to only these items to avoid contamination between home and school.

Children will continue to wear their school uniform, which ideally should be washed on a daily basis, thereby limiting the risk of cross contamination. **On PE and swimming days children from Year 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 will come to school in accepted school PE kit.** In cold weather they will need a school tracksuit. All items must be in line with the school uniform list.

Entry and exiting school

At the start and end of the day, we kindly request that only **one parent/carer** accompany their child/children to school. In order to minimise the risk of cross infection, **pupils will be allocated differing start and pick up times.** It is imperative that the correct entrance is used and that pupils arrive at the specified time. Please do not arrive too early or late as we need to minimise queueing.

If you have children in more than one class, please come at the earliest family time and your children can come into school together. Similarly collect your children at the latest time allocated to your family. Staff will be available to help children and so only the parents of the new entrants should come onto site.

We would like you to take your child's temperature in the morning before you leave home. Any child with a temperature over 38°C will need to self-isolate and have a test. Staff will be available on the gate to take your child's temperature if you have been unable to test your child's temperature at home.

If your child becomes distressed, staff will try to coax them into school using all their usual strategies. However we will not be able to touch your child and we would suggest if your child is too distressed they return home.

All pupils will enter the school by the external door of their respective classroom. We will continue with our one-way route around the school but plenty of staff will be available to help your children navigate this.

Cleaning

We have increased the allocated of hours provided for our in-school cleaning team. This will allow them to thoroughly clean classrooms/ rooms used at the end of the school day. Throughout the day, staff will frequently clean high-contact areas such as taps, doors and light switches. All internal and external doors will be wedged open to minimise the need for pupil and staff contact.

Parent Contact

We need to protect all staff including the office staff. Parents must not enter the school building unless it is for an essential reason e.g. your child has forgotten their inhaler and then they can only enter the office. If you have any queries, you must telephone or email the school. All parent/ teacher communication will be conducted by telephone/email or using a virtual platform.

Response to any infection

We will require parents and school staff to engage with the NHS Test and Trace process and we will also contact our local Public Health England health protection team for advice if we have a positive test result. We need to ensure that staff members and parents/carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they are displaying symptoms. Staff and pupils must not come into the school if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them in school. All children can be tested, including children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents/carers if using a home testing kit
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test & Trace
- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing. We have already had children and staff who have had tests and results have been quickly shared with school by them.

The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient. We will release more details on new testing avenues as and when they become available. Schools have been told that they will be provided with some testing equipment but we have not received any more detail about this.

We will ask parents and staff to inform them immediately of the results of a test: if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.

if someone tests positive, they should follow the ‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection’ and must continue to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community

We will take swift action when we become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). We will contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

The health protection team will work with us in this situation to guide us through the actions we will need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must

send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious.

Close contact means: direct close contacts

- face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we will keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes place between children and staff in different groups.

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'.

They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'
- Although we should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation, we will invite parents to share this information with our school to keep others safe. All parents and staff tested so far have been willing to share their negative test result and we would hope parents will continue to share such information.

Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If we have two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, we would be advised that we may have an outbreak, and we will continue to work with our local health protection team who will be able to advise if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole school or key-stage group.

As we will be implementing controls from this list, addressing the risks we have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole school closure based on cases within the school will not generally be necessary, and will not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

In consultation with the local Director of Public Health, where an outbreak in a school is confirmed, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive. Testing will first focus on the person's class, followed by their key stage group, then the whole school if necessary, in line with routine public health outbreak control practice.

Final note

We are really pleased to be reopening our school at this difficult time. The staff have really missed the children and are keen to make September a very positive experience.