

Policy COVID 19

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic is developing rapidly. This document sets out the School policy on actions to be taken in response to the epidemic. It should be noted that any compelling advice issued by central Government or the Local Authority will take precedence over the actions set out in this policy.

We recognise that some of the pupils in our care are among the most vulnerable members of society and so may need additional precautions.

We also recognise that for many of the pupils, the routine and structure of School is extremely important for their wellbeing, so we aim to maintain normal routine as much as possible.

The School policy in response to the COVID-19 epidemic is summarised below. Some of these are additional measures and some are a continuation of our already existing Health and Safety policy. We intend to limit the risk to pupils and staff by:

- the introduction of additional personal hygiene requirements for staff and pupils as they move around the School (e.g. hand washing/sanitising - PPE will only be used for close up personal care work or if guiding a pupil is needed);
- the limitation of pupil travel by the cancellation of residential trips and by reviewing the risk of even local [out of School] activities;
- the limitation of staff travel – staff should not attend external events such as conferences, training or exchanges;
- the minimising of School visitors – only those deemed very important will be allowed to come into School and
- the introduction of parental choice - School will authorise absence if parents/carers take the view that the risk to a pupil is minimised by staying away from School (for example a particularly vulnerable pupil).

The School's policy towards staff and pupil illness will be that:

- if a member of staff or a pupil shows symptoms that would require 'self-isolation' under the current Government guidance, they will be sent home immediately to 'self-isolate' and
- sick pay will be paid to staff who are self-isolating in line with Government guidance.

School Closure

Current Government advice is that blanket School closure in response to the COVID-19 epidemic is not appropriate at this time, unless re-advised by the relevant health authorities. The Principal, in conjunction with the Chair of Governors, has the discretion to close the School if in his judgement:

- the overall staffing absence level is so high that the safety of pupils cannot be guaranteed and/or
- the rate of staff or student illness is excessive.

Responsibilities

Objectives:

- To minimise the risk to pupils and staff during the COVID-19 epidemic;
- To carefully consider and implement ongoing Government advice;
- To maintain full awareness of the vulnerability of a large proportion of our pupils and to always act accordingly.
- To maintain full awareness of the fact that for many of our pupils, the routine and structure of School is extremely important for their wellbeing, and aim to maintain as normal a routine as much as possible.

Principal

The Principal is to maintain and update all information relating to the development of the epidemic and the current advice from the Government, Local Authority and NHS.

School Staff will:

- Follow Government guidance on self-isolation;
- Report symptoms immediately (to Principal and/or Admin Staff) and leave work to go home and self-isolate;
- Report any concerns regarding a pupil displaying relevant symptoms to the School HCC.

Hygiene Precautions

Pupils and staff will be required to follow the Government advice on regular hand washing as being the best method of avoiding transmission of the virus. Hand sanitiser and tissues will be available in School. Verbal reminders, signs and posters will be used to remind staff and pupils of the above.

Face masks will only be worn for staff taking temperatures on arrival or when attending to pupils' personal care and will not be worn unless explicitly advised by Government/Local Authority or NHS officials, as this may cause unnecessary distress to some of our more vulnerable pupils.

Pupil Travel

There should be no foreign travel until further notice. It is recognised that trips into the community (for example to shops, cafes or museums) are an essential part of School for many pupils. These can continue provided the risk assessment is reviewed and updated to consider the COVID-19 risk.

Additional precautions are to be considered and/or implemented – these are:

- The choosing of destinations based on more/less likely exposure risk;
- Avoiding busy times for visits to reduce exposure.
- Including additional hand washing/use of sanitiser as part of any visits.

Staff Travel

Staff should not attend external events such as conferences, training and/or information exchange visits to other Schools until further notice.

Visitors to School

- General information exchange visits to School should be cancelled to minimise the exposure of our pupils. Other visitors to School can be admitted provided:
- The visit is essential for the education, health or wellbeing of a pupil

- The visit is to carry out essential urgent maintenance on School property – non urgent maintenance should be carried out when pupils are not present in School.
- The visitor is not showing any symptoms that would require ‘self-isolation’ under the current Government guidance.
- The visitor follows the hand washing / sanitisation requirements.

Parental Choice

The School recognises that some parents/carers may judge that the risk to a pupil will be minimised if they do not attend School. This is most likely to be the case for those pupils at highest risk from COVID-19. The School will authorise such absences.

Staff or Pupils who become ill

If a member of staff or pupil becomes ill, the symptoms will be assessed against current Government advice. If the symptoms are consistent with a requirement to ‘self-isolate’ the member of staff or pupil will be sent home.

It is recognised that the judgment about whether the symptoms are consistent with the need to self-isolate may be difficult for mild symptoms. Where it is uncertain, the School will err on the side of caution and assume that self-isolation is appropriate, unless medical advice to the contrary is obtained.

The School recognises that this is likely to result in a significant increase in staff and/or pupil absence from School, but also that this is appropriate to limit the risk to all members of School and their families.

Sick Pay

Sick Pay will be allowed to staff who are self-isolating in line with the Government advice and this policy.

Staffing Levels

The safety of our pupils while in School is our overriding priority. The varying needs of our pupils means that it is not possible to specify a simple number of staff that are needed to ensure the safety of our pupils. Our ability to ensure the safety of our pupils will be assessed daily and on a ‘per bubble’ basis and in careful consideration of the individual needs of each pupil and/or each bubble.

If, in the judgment of the Principal, there are insufficient staff to ensure the safety of all pupils, one or more bubbles may be closed for a period and the relevant pupils sent home.

Administrative Staff

It is necessary to maintain many of the administrative functions of the School, even if the School is closed. If there is significant staff absence in the administrative functions, precautions to reduce the risk of not meeting the essential requirements will be implemented. These may include for example:

- the separation of key personnel into different offices and
- staff being required to work from home.

Review Period

This policy shall be reviewed as new advice becomes available.