



# Coronavirus Risk Assessment & Outbreak Management Plan

Updated 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Introduction

This risk assessment reflects the *SEND and specialist settings: additional COVID-19 operational guidance* published by the Department for Education (DfE) published 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. Further guidance has been issued on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021. This risk assessment and outbreak management plan was updated on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 in response to revised guidance.

DfE guidance outlines that schools should work closely with young people, parents or careers, staff and unions when agreeing the best approaches for a school's circumstances and the guidance underpins our approach to developing and updating our coronavirus risk assessment.

Over the past 18 months mainstream schools have been directed to close on two occasions and national lockdowns imposed due to covid. As specialist schools our schools have remained open throughout the pandemic. Some children continued to attend school as usual whilst others elected to remain at home and engage with remote learning.

Whilst schools nationally have now fully reopened, it is incumbent upon every one of us to acknowledge sensible precautions. This risk assessment and outbreak management plan seeks to outline the key points which should be observed whilst working at Belle Vue and Cornfields schools and the action to be taken in the event of an outbreak of covid. These points are not exhaustive, and such is the fluidity of the pandemic that the most up to date recommendations promoted during government briefings and the DfE guidance published for schools should always take precedent.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 all schools in England re-opened. In September 2021 the government issued further advice. That guidance removed the need for school bubbles and the need for 'bubbles' to self-isolate in the event of a close contact testing positive test.

On November 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021 news of a new variant – the Omicron variant – was reported which has understandably caused concern for people including teachers, wider education and childcare staff, parents, pupils and students.

The government announced that they would take targeted and proportionate action as a precaution while they began find out more information about the new variant. They immediately put in place enhanced safety measures, including introducing isolation for 10 days for close contacts of suspected Omicron cases.

The emergence of the new Omicron variant has sent infection rates soaring. Whilst there have currently been a smaller proportion of hospitalisations reported there is a risk of large numbers of subsequent hospitalisations due to the sheer numbers involved. Whilst Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have re-imposed further coronavirus restrictions, the government in England remains reluctant to do so whilst hospitalisation numbers remain manageable.

Critically to schools, however, and particularly to small schools, is the warning from Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of Schools and College Leaders in late December 2021 where he shared concerns that staff shortages due to isolation requirements were already causing some schools to contingency plan to send whole year groups home in order that the need for face to face teaching could be prioritised.

The school remains committed to wherever possible providing face to face teaching but we are also alert to ensuring that both pupils and staff wellbeing is maintained.

We have in place a fit for purpose covid risk assessment which reflects current DfE guidance and a remote learning policy is in place in the event of needing to provide remote learning through imposed restrictions or staff shortages.

**A summary of the changes from Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 which we are adopting are detailed below.**

Face coverings

The government strongly advise that face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all settings by staff, visitors and pupils or students in year 7 and above, unless they are exempt.

Pupils or students in year 7 or above should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport, unless they are exempt.

Pupils and students in year 7 or above should wear face coverings in shops.

Testing

All educational and childcare settings should continue to encourage staff and students to twice weekly using lateral flow device (LFD) tests.

## Contact tracing and isolation

The current guidance on contact tracing and isolation remains in place - which means that close contacts should take PCR tests but do not need to isolate unless they are over 18 and unvaccinated. The exception is for close contacts of suspected or confirmed Omicron cases, who will be required to isolate for 10 days.

## Vaccination

All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters.

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on.

## Good hygiene

Across all settings, people should continue to follow the basic rules of good hygiene. This will help to protect individuals and others from COVID-19. These are:

- washing your hands
- cleaning your surroundings
- covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.

Our schools have had coronavirus risk assessments in place for over 12 months. They are reviewed every term or when the government make significant changes to policy. This risk assessment has been reviewed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 with important updates regarding the Omicron variant.

The Omicron variant has been assessed as extremely transmissible; however, the severity of the new variant is not yet fully understood. Whilst the full impact of this variant is not fully understood there is a need to contain it as far as possible and the government have adopted precautionary measures which we have embedded into this policy.

In our school if any person has any concerns for any pupil regarding coronavirus then this should be raised immediately with the Head Teacher or Senior Member of staff in order that appropriate safety measures can be taken.

## **Priority**

Our priority is for all pupils to be safe and to receive face-to-face, high quality education. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

## **Risk assessment**

Schools must comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures. We are required to regularly review and update our risk assessments, treating

them as 'living documents' according to the circumstances at our school and the prevailing public health advice. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective and working as planned.

All employers are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain what measures they have put in place to keep their employees safe at work. Whilst individual risk assessments are not required, employers are expected to discuss any concerns that people have previously or subsequently raise. Any concerns should be directed to a member of the senior leadership team or one of our nominated Staff Health and Safety Officers.

## Symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)**
- **a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)**
- **a new loss of taste or smell**

## Daily Routine

Staff have been conducting bi-weekly lateral flow tests at home for many months. Staff are encouraged to record these on the NHS site. This practice is ongoing and we will continue with this practice unless government guidance changes. Should any test return as positive then the member of staff will immediately leave the school and follow current advice regarding isolation and further testing.

Staff will continue to encourage the current advice of maintaining distance where possible, regular sanitising and working in well ventilated areas.

The school will be clean at the start of the day and all staff are encouraged to ensure their working space is wiped down regularly.

Staff and pupils of secondary age should be encouraged to wear face coverings when in communal spaces, in public buildings, shops or on public transport, however, if any pupil or member of staff is exempt then this will be acceptable.

In line with the government guidance all pupils have been supplied with lateral flow tests. Pupils are requested to complete these bi-weekly and record their results on the NHS website. This is a rapidly changing situation though and these plans are dynamic and will reflect the most recent, and often short-notice, notifications from the Government.

On arrival at school pupils will be offered hand sanitiser. Pupils should wash their hands regularly, especially if they sneeze, cough and especially at the end of school prior to going home. Staff are also encouraged to wash their hands regularly. Pupils will be managed carefully when leaving the school.

Staff should ensure lessons are prepared prior to the pupils arriving and that all resources are available to minimise the need to hand items out during the lesson.

Pupils may bring their own stationary and they may use this. If pupils do not have their own stationary, then staff are required to have set resources for each pupil to avoid cross contamination. The sharing of items is discouraged but where this occurs the equipment should be wiped down after use.

Staff should have their own stationary and not share with others.

Consideration should be given on how pupils should be grouped/sat in class. A balance between managing the risks, anxieties and demeanour of pupils needs to be balanced against the desire to maintain social distance and to follow Covid 19 guidelines.

At the beginning of the lesson, teachers will need to give consideration to taking some time to reassure the children. Some children may be more anxious than others and may benefit from reassurance throughout the day. Be open and honest with them and allow them to ask questions if they wish.

A message of 'minimised contact' must be encouraged.

**In the event of a pupil testing positive through a LFD they will be instructed to take a PCR test and refrain from school until this result is returned.**

**In the meantime, all pupils who have been in contact with the pupil concerned will engage in LFD testing if the pupil consents.**

**If any result is assessed as being positive due to the Omicron variant then NHS 119 will be informed and advice will be taken regarding self-isolation instructions unless the person has already been contacted by NHS Test & Trace.**

## **Staffing Interactions**

The precautions and implications of coronavirus are well known to all of us. We need to look after ourselves and each other and observe the guidelines which have been well publicised. In particular, we must ensure we maintain social distancing as much as possible and wash hands regularly. Soap is available at all sinks. Disposable paper towels are also available.

Social distancing will restrict the use of the kitchen and staff should not congregate in the kitchen where it is not possible to maintain a good distance between people.

Staff will wear face masks in school in communal areas unless medically exempt. It is a matter of personal choice if a member of staff wishes to wear a face covering in a classroom

or as part of their day-to-day work schedule if this takes place in an area which is not communal.

These are unique and challenging times at the moment, and we must all play our part in depriving this disease of the opportunity to spread. Be vigilant and be safe.

## **Pupil Attendance**

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age, and it is a priority to ensure that as many pupils as possible regularly attend school.

Where a child is required to self-isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19 in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE, they should be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where they are unable to attend because they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code I (illness).

In some specific cases, code Y (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) will apply. Further guidance about the use of codes is provided in the [school attendance guidance](#).

We will continue to clearly and consistently communicate the expectations around school attendance to families and any other professionals who work with the family. Any discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the child or young person and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or young person. This conversation is particularly important for children with a social worker.

## **Children or young people self-isolating**

Clinical studies have shown that children and young people, including those originally previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), are at very low risk of serious illness if they catch the virus. The UK Clinical Review Panel has recommended that no children and young people under the age of 18 should be considered CEV and under-18s should be removed from the Shielded Patient List. The chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency and head of NHS Test and Trace, Jennifer Harries, has written to parents of these children to inform them.

Children and young people previously considered CEV should attend school or college and should follow the same guidance as the rest of the population. However, if a child or young person has been advised to isolate or reduce their social contact by their specialist, due to the nature of their medical condition or treatment, rather than because of the pandemic, they should continue to follow the advice of their specialist.

Although shielding was paused on 1 April 2021, we know that for some this may be a significant change and they may be anxious about attending face-to-face education. Attendance is mandatory and we work collaboratively with families to reassure them and to help their child return to their everyday activities. Discussions have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the child or young person and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or young person.

Further information is available in the guidance on [supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#).

Pupils and students who live with someone who is CEV should continue to attend school as normal.

Where a pupil or student is unable to attend their education setting because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we will continue to offer them access to high quality remote education. We will keep in contact with them and regularly check if they are accessing remote education.

## **Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan Compliance**

At times it may be necessary to conduct some aspects of EHC needs assessments and reviews in different ways, for example, because children or young people are isolating. It is important that the assessments and reviews continue to ensure that the child or young person, and their parent and carer, is at the centre of the process and can engage with the process in a meaningful way.

As well as the duty to secure or arrange provision in an EHC plan, we will ensure that we meet all the statutory duties relating to EHC needs assessments and annual reviews. We will co-operate in supporting requests about potential placements, providing families with advice and information where requested.

## **Visiting specialists, support staff and wider provision**

Specialists, therapists and other health professionals who support children and young people with SEND (for example speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and specialist teachers), will provide interventions as usual. They will be required to wear face coverings in communal areas or whilst attending meetings.

Where children and young people with an EHC plan are in receipt of health provision, recognising that the duties to deliver provision set out in an EHC plan are fully in force, we will work collaboratively with their local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and health providers to agree appropriate support in view of the latest and current local public health guidance.

Where children and young people with EHC plans are not attending school because they are following public health advice, multi-agency professionals will collaborate to agree how to

meet their duties to deliver the provision set out in the EHC plan. This may include face-to-face visits to the home, or virtual support by means of video or telephone calls, or via email.

## **Remote education**

Not all people with COVID-19 have symptoms. Where appropriate, we will support those who need to self-isolate because they have tested positive to work or learn from home if they are well enough to do so.

We will maintain our capacity to deliver high-quality remote education across this academic year, including for pupils who are facing challenges to return due to COVID-19.

Teachers are best placed to know how to most effectively meet pupils needs to ensure they continue to make progress if they are not in face-to-face education because they are following public health advice.

We recognise that some pupils and students with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support and we therefore work collaboratively with families and put in place reasonable adjustments so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education appropriate for their level of need.

Further details on delivering remote education for children and young people with SEND are set out in [remote education good practice](#).

We make daily contact with pupils who are accessing remote learning to ensure pupils are engaging with their work, and work with families to rapidly identify effective solutions where engagement is a concern.

## **Protection measures and outbreak management plans**

The DfE no longer recommend that it is necessary to keep children and young people in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that bubbles are not needed.

However, we are mindful of contingency planning in the event of an outbreak and our outbreak management plan would result in the possibility that it becomes necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period to reduce mixing between groups. Additionally, in light of the new omicron variant at this time we have made alternative arrangements to avoid mixing at lunch.

Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' would not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education.

## **Tracing close contacts and self-isolation**

Close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace.

As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case or their parent to identify close contacts. Contacts from school will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact.

School may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- they have taken part in, or are currently part of, an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

The following exceptions apply in relation to the Omicron variant of covid-19:

- Where a person has tested positive for the Omicron variant of covid-19 they will be required to self-isolate for a period of 10 days.
- Those who have had close or prolonged contact with the person testing positive for the Omicron variant will also be required to self-isolate for a period of 10 days irrespective of age or vaccination status.
- NHS Test & Trace will be responsible for contacting those close contacts who are not immediately obvious

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a [PCR test](#). We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.

We may wish put in place temporary additional protective measures whilst waiting for the outcome of any PCR test following identification as a close contact. These could include those identified as close contacts limiting contact and mixing with those identified as clinically vulnerable, and increasing hygiene and cleaning routines. Those identified as a close contact should also continue to engage with regular LFD testing.

Any decision to take additional precautions will be based on the specific circumstances of the individual close contact and the clinically vulnerable children and young people within the school and we will weigh up what impact additional precautions may have on education and wellbeing.

No pupil will be denied education based on their compliance with any additional precautions. Health professionals attending our school may be following slightly different guidance from PHE if they are identified as a close contact due to their wider work in settings with clinically

extremely vulnerable people and we will be respectful of the guidance they are following whilst ensuring that the school guidance is complied with.

## **Stepping measures up and down**

We have contingency plans (outbreak management plans) outlining what we would do if children, young people or staff test positive for COVID-19, or how you would operate if we were advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children and young people, any measures in schools and colleges should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible.

## **Hand hygiene**

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. You should continue to ensure that pupils and students clean their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

You should also continue to consider:

- how often pupils, students and staff will need to wash their hands
- whether staff working with pupils and students who spit uncontrollably want more opportunities to wash their hands than other staff
- whether pupils and students who use saliva as a sensory stimulant or who struggle with 'catch it, bin it, kill it' need more opportunities to wash their hands
- how to help pupils and students with complex needs to clean their hands properly.

## **Respiratory hygiene**

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. As with hand cleaning, you should ensure that younger pupils and those with complex needs are helped to get this right.

The [e-Bug COVID-19 website](#) contains free resources for settings, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

## **Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)**

Most staff in school will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a pupil already has routine care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Additional PPE for COVID-19 is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when performing [aerosol generating procedures \(AGPs\)](#).

The guidance on the [use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) provides more information on the use of PPE for COVID-19.

## **Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents**

We will maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This will include regular cleaning of areas and equipment.

## **Keep occupied spaces well ventilated**

We will ensure the schools are well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

Opening external windows can improve natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air. If necessary, external opening doors may also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).

We will balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

The [Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and [CIBSE COVID-19](#) advice provides more information.

CO2 monitors are located in our schools and staff can quickly identify where ventilation needs to be improved.

## **Our approach to Risk**

We will put in place the following control measures and follow the guidance from the DfE. Control Measures in place

- ensure good hygiene for everyone
- maintain appropriate cleaning regimes
- keep occupied spaces well ventilated
- follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

Some pupils with SEND will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that these measures will involve. Staff should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

To make sure pupils with medical conditions are fully supported, we will work with:

- local authorities
- health professionals
- regional schools' commissioners
- other services

Use individual healthcare plans to help pupils and students receive an education in line with their peers. In some cases, the pupil's and student's medical needs will mean this is not possible, and educational support will require flexibility.

Further information is available in the guidance on [supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#).

## **Asymptomatic testing**

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within school settings.

Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits, 3 to 4 days apart. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to test.

The DfE recognise specialist settings will have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing and [additional guidance on testing in specialist settings](#) has been published.

We have retained some testing capacity on site so they can offer testing to pupils who are unable to test themselves at home.

Testing is voluntary and no child or young person will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person. Where the appropriate person has given consent but the child declines to be tested they will be given encouragement and support but will not be made to take the test.

## **Outbreak Management Plan**

### **When someone develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test**

Pupils, students, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on [when to self-isolate and what to do](#). They should not come into school if they have symptoms or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine or have a positive test).

If anyone in school develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, we will send them home and they should follow public health advice.

For everyone with symptoms, they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

If a pupil is awaiting collection, they should be left in a room on their own if possible and safe to do so. A window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if possible.

### **Confirmatory PCR tests**

Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the [stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

They will also need to get a [free PCR test](#) to check if they have COVID-19.

Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive LFD, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD and the individual can return to school, as long as the individual does not have COVID-19 symptoms.

Additional information on [PCR test kits for schools and further education providers](#) is available.