



Transforming the lives of children living on the Autistic Spectrum

COVID 19 POLICY

Author: Michael Westmoreland
 Responsible Organisation: Hope House School
 Date issued: March 2020
 Review date: March 2021

Version 5

Signed by the author:

This policy has been read and signed by a Member of the Trustees board in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team.

Signed by the
 Trustee Board Member:

Version Control Sheet

Document title		Covid 19 Policy	
Status of policy		<i>Statutory/non-statutory guidance This is to support the contingency planning under the Coronavirus pandemic and future possible emergency situations which will require the school to close and provide remote learning.</i>	
Author (name & role title)		<i>Michael Westmoreland Vice Principal</i>	
Version number		V5	
Date approved			
Approved by		Board of Trustees	
Date of review			
Published on school website		For stakeholders to access	
Document history			
Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
V1	March 2020	MW	Initial draft
V2	September 2020	MW	Review with regard to schools returning aligned to DfE guidance
V3	January 2021	MW	Released to staff 4th January 2021
V4	January 2021	AO/JH/ST/LG	Review with regard to DfE guidance and National Lockdown 9 th January 2021
V5	January 2021	AO/JH/ST/LG	Feedback from school nurse

Introduction

Hope House School is an Independent Autism Specific School set in the rural area of Newark on Trent.

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 have pupils whose parents are 'Critical' workers.

We know that for many of our pupils, **the routine and structure of school is extremely important for their wellbeing**, so we aim to maintain normal routine as much as possible.

Some of the measures below are additional 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, face shields for staff where the pupil may tend to spit)
- the limitation of pupil travel by the cancellation of trips and by reviewing the risk of even local [out of school] activities.
- the limitation of staff travel to other venues– staff should not attend external events such as conferences or training unless the settings are covid secure and following the national guidelines
- the minimising of school visitors – only those deemed essential will be allowed to come into school
- 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). Although staff will endeavour to encourage parents to send pupils to school aligned with updated DfE guidance (11th January 2021), for pupils with an EHCP to have access to face-to-face learning at school
- Pupils who remain at home will continue to be supported by suitable remote learning as well as 'safe and well' checks made by school staff.
- Pupils will be taught in school in bubbles aligned to DfE guidance, with key worker staff remaining with small groups of pupils, currently up to 3 pupils in a group.

Prevention

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who are required to stay at home do not attend school.
- 2) Where recommended, the use of face coverings in schools.
- 3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- 4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- 5) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.
- 6) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- 7) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- 8) Always keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

Numbers 1 to 5, and number 8, must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 6 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

- 9) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.
- 10) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community.
- 11) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Numbers 9 to 11 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

The School's policy towards staff and pupil illness linked to Covid 19:

- if a member of staff or pupil, shows symptoms that could be related to Covid 19 under the current Government guidance, they must go home immediately to 'self-isolate' for a period of 10 days and arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID 19. Their families will need to isolate for 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, in line with Public Health England (PHE) guidance. Staff must remain at home until they have been symptom free for 48 hours or have had a negative covid test.
- It is recognised that the judgement 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.
- If a member of staff displays symptoms they must leave the premises and go home.
- If a pupil displays symptoms in school, arrangements will be made for them to be in the medical room, if possible, until parents/carers collect them from school. During this time, any staff supervising the pupil will be wearing full PPE and follow the hygiene procedures, to wash hands and remain at a safe distance. The room must be well ventilated and once the pupil has left the room, a full clean must be carried out. If the pupil needs to use the bathroom, they should use a separate bathroom, if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, even while wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or pupils who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, even if wearing a face covering, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the PHE advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

Sick Pay

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

School Closure

Since September 2020 Government advice was that blanket school/college closure in response to the COVID-19 epidemic is not appropriate at this time, unless re-advised by the relevant health authorities. However, an announcement on 8th January 2021 of another 'national lockdown' until at least February half term 2021, where schools now operate reduced numbers of pupils, unless they are classified as vulnerable or children of key workers. The expectation is for pupils with an EHCP

should be provided with a place in school and that special schools offer a place to all pupils who want one.

The Principal in conjunction with the Chair of Trustees has the discretion to close the school if in her judgement:

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

Staffing Levels

The safety of our pupils while in school is our overriding priority. The varying needs of our children 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 children will be assessed daily and on a 'per class' basis and in careful consideration of the individual needs of each child and/or each class.

If in the judgement of the Principal, there are insufficient staff to ensure the safety of all children, one or more classes may be closed for a period and the relevant children 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.

Responsibilities

Trustees

The trustees must be satisfied the school leadership are following the DfE guidance for schools by remaining up to date with any changes as they occur. They will be in regular contact with the Principal/Designated Person throughout the period of the pandemic. Trustees will also have an opportunity to contribute to the review of this policy.

Principal

The Principal/Designated Person is to maintain and update all information relating to the development of the epidemic and the current advice from the Government, DfE,

Local Authority and NHS. This policy will be made available to all staff and be available on the school website.

School Staff will:

- follow government guidance on self-isolation.
- report symptoms immediately (to the Principal and /or HR) and leave work to go home and to self-isolate
- report any concerns regarding a child displaying relevant symptoms.

Objectives:

- to minimise the risk to pupils and staff during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- to carefully consider and implement ongoing Government advice and guidance.
- 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 for many of our children, the **routine and structure of school is extremely important for their wellbeing** and aim to maintain as normal a routine as much as possible.

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 all areas of school, including classrooms. Signs and posters will be used to remind staff and children of the above.

Safe wearing and removal of face masks

Initial advice to schools regarding face masks being worn in schools is limited to wearing them when moving around school in corridors for secondary pupils and staff. However, as guidance is updated the school will ensure it is aligned to Government/ DfE/Local Authority or NHS officials. In the meantime, school keyworker staff working in bubbles, may exercise personal choice to wear a mask, for the protection of others, unless it causes unnecessary distress to some of our more vulnerable children.

Subject coordinators who visit each bubble to deliver the curriculum, are required to wear a mask and endeavour to keep their distance from other staff. Specialist masks may be required for 'hearing impaired' where pupils may need to lip read. Where possible, work side by side or at a safe distance when supporting pupils in each bubble.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Pupils must be instructed not to touch the front of their face covering, if they are choosing to wear one in school, during use or when removing it and they must dispose of temporary face coverings in a ‘black bag’ waste bin (not recycling bin) or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands again.

All rooms will be well ventilated with windows regularly opened throughout the day, to minimise the risk of aerosol transmission indoors.

Essential measures linked to DfE guidance (January 2021)

A requirement that people stay at home if they:

- are ill with virus symptoms
- have tested positive, even if asymptomatic
- have been advised by NHS Test and Trace to do so
- are household members of a positive case, even if that case is asymptomatic
- are required to self-isolate for travel-related reasons
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning and ventilation arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible
- minimise the potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

How contacts are reduced will depend on the school’s circumstances, including how many children need to attend during this period, and will (as much as possible) include:

- keeping children in consistent groups
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

Educational Visits

Following the DfE guidance, there should be no educational visits until the guidance for schools is updated.

It is recognised that trips into the community (for example to shops, cafes, or museums) are an essential part of school for many pupils. At present, these cannot continue despite having a risk assessment, which is reviewed and updated to consider the COVID-19 risk. When DfE guidance is changed and suggests it is safe for visits with pupils out of school to take place, this will remain the case.

Additional precautions are to be considered and/or implemented when DfE guidance relaxes to allow for educational visits:

- the choosing of destinations based on more/less likely exposure risk.
- avoiding busy times for visits to reduce exposure and
- including additional hand washing/use of sanitiser as part of any visits.

Staff visits to other settings

Staff should not attend external events such as conferences, training and/or visits to other schools unless government guidance at the time allows for this. At present there is a 'national lockdown' (January 2021) for essential travel only. Once this is lifted, it may be possible to attend events and training, provided they operate in a 'Covid safe' manner, and information is shared by the provider, which is aligned to government guidance.

Visitors to School

- General information visits to school should be cancelled to minimise the exposure of our children.
- Other visitors to school can be admitted provided:
 - The visit is essential for the education, health, or wellbeing of the pupil
 - The visit is to carry out essential urgent maintenance on school property – nonurgent 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.
- The visitor must wear a face mask.
- Aligned to the 11th January 2021 guidance external professionals who are delivering services to pupils which is part of their EHCP can take place following national Covid safety guidance.

Parental Choice

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

In September 2020, the government announced pupils must attend school. From January 2021, the national lockdown arrangements for schools stated pupils should learn remotely until February half term.

In Special schools, settings should continue to offer face to face provision for all pupils, where appropriate. It also indicates pupils with an EHCP should be welcomed and encouraged to attend school where their parent/carer wishes for their child to attend. There will be a focus on the welfare of pupils who remain at home and make provision for them to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

DfE Guidance January 2021 stated:

'Limiting attendance does not suggest that schools and colleges have become significantly less safe for young people. Instead limiting attendance is about supporting the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities'. P5

'For vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers, who should still attend school or college, as they did in March to July, and their teachers, the system of protective measures means that any risks are well managed and controlled'. P6

Mass asymptomatic testing for staff and secondary aged pupils

Since the start of the Spring term 2021, schools have been provided with lateral flow tests to be used for staff and pupils. Testing is important because staff, students and pupils without symptoms could be carrying the virus and may spread it to others. Testing staff and students will support schools and colleges to operate as safely as possible. New, simple, and quick tests, known as Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests, enable us to rapidly test pupils, students, and staff, without the need for a laboratory.

The guidance states:

We will keep schools and communities safer by working together to:

See statement below from Public Health England 20th January 2021:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/daily-contact-testing-in-schools-statement-from-phe-and-nhs-tt-about-next-steps/position-statement-regarding-daily-contact-testing-in-schools-from-phe-and-nhs-test-and-trace>

In light of this changing situation, we now recommend that the rollout of daily contact testing within schools is paused, other than for schools involved in further evaluation. This will enable the further detailed evaluation of changing circumstances including, potentially, lower infection rates and modelling work required to understand the benefits of daily contact testing in this new phase of the pandemic.

Schools should continue to test their staff regularly (twice weekly where possible, in line with recommendations for other workforces that need to leave the home to work)

and test pupils twice upon return to school, as has been the case since the start of January.

- Test as many **secondary pupils as possible** on **their return to school**. This means two LFDs tests three to five days apart.
- Carry out weekly testing of school and college staff.

PowerPoint Presentation (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The tests will be carried out following the guidance supplied and supported by our qualified school nurse.

All staff have access to the lateral flow tests provided by the NHS and are tested weekly until the guidance is reviewed.

Advice from Mass asymptomatic testing in specialist settings will be followed.

Mass asymptomatic testing in specialist settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

As regards pupils, we recognise testing is voluntary, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within schools and colleges.

The person giving the consent (parent or legal guardian or the young person) needs to have a sound understanding of the risks and benefits of testing. The setting is responsible for communicating the purpose of the testing.

Even if the child or young person and/or the parent or legal guardian has given consent, if the individual at any point is not willing to participate in testing then that choice should be respected.

Annex 1

School closure – nationally - 23rd March 2020

Following two members of staff being diagnosed with the virus the Principal made the decision to close the school.

There were also several members of staff shielding (due to family members or their own health conditions) and several were self-isolating due to their own health conditions.

- There was no regular 3-day First Aider available
- There was no regular DSL
- Staff were asked to stay at home and work if they could by planning etc
- Management continued to work from home
- Administration staff and the caretaker attended the school daily to ensure that there was always someone on site

- The animals were tended to by the Animal Unit staff
- Staff who resided near the home of pupils whose parents were key workers were asked to support these pupils either at home or at other facilities
- Learning packs were sent to all other pupils

This continued until 1st June when certain pupils were asked to attend school. However, the consensus of opinion of the parents was that they were happy with the pupils being supported by Learning Packs, Zoom calls with virtual learning.

Subject co-ordinators came into school from 1st June to provide this.

All staff were paid in full as per the Local Authorities instructions.

Return to work September 2020

The school site reopened on Tuesday 1st September for staff and Thursday 3rd September for pupils. All work around making the site safe for staff and pupils has been completed with inspection by our Health and Safety Consultants.

Correct Social Distancing measures are in place with appropriate PPE.

National Lockdown November 2020 – December 2020

In response to the government announcement for an increased lockdown for a period of 4 weeks the school continued to operate in line with schools nationally. The tier system was introduced and the local area was placed in Tier 3 and eventually increased to Tier 4, until the national lockdown was announced on 8th January 2021, where schools were instructed to close for most pupils, unless they were classified as vulnerable, including pupils with an EHCP or children of critical workers.

National Lockdown January 2021

School staff were scheduled to attend INSET on 8th and 9th January 2021 with pupils due in school Wednesday 10th January 2021. In light of the Prime Minister's announcement at 8pm 8th January 2021, a staggered return for pupils was in place from 10th January with a small group of pupils remaining at home at parental request.

During the Christmas holidays December 2020, information was released to schools regarding lateral flow tests for staff and secondary aged pupils. Tests were carried out on staff during the first week of the school term and all were negative. Two staff were isolating at home due to testing positive over the Christmas holidays.

The new guidance was released on 11th January 2021 including new information on:

- Attendance – including confirmation of who should attend (including in alternative provision and special schools) and how attendance should be recorded
- Testing – including confirmation that the testing programme can continue in secondary schools

- Workforce – including advice for those who are extremely clinically vulnerable • Free School Meals
- Educational visits – confirmation that no visits should take place during this period
- Remote education – including further information on remote education expectations
- Accountability expectations – including inspections, exams, and assessments

References

DfE guidance – Covid 19 all updates since March 2020

DfE - **Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools** – *Guidance for all schools*- 11th January 2021

Mass asymptomatic testing in specialist settings

[Mass asymptomatic testing in specialist settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings)

Covid 19 National Testing programme Schools and Colleges handbook

[PowerPoint Presentation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91242/covid-19-national-testing-programme-schools-and-colleges-handbook)