

Bridge House Independent School



Social Distancing Policy

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This policy was reviewed and adopted on 09/10/20 by Clare Hiom (head teacher)

Statement of intent

This policy outlines the school's approach to social distancing measures in light of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and how we will adhere to the guidance published by the government and health organisations.

We understand the concerns of many of our stakeholders, e.g. parents and staff members. That is why we have created this policy – to outline the steps the school will take to mitigate the risk of infection spreading and, ultimately, ensure the safety of our school community.

We will be updating this policy in light of updates to government guidance and/or concerns raised by stakeholders.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Coronavirus Act 2020
- DfE (2020) 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings'
- DfE (2020) 'Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)'
- DfE (2020) 'Guidance for full opening: schools'

1.2. This policy operates in accordance with the following school policies:

- Bereavement Policy
- Staff Leave of Absence Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Full Opening Plan
- Risk Assessment for Full Opening in September

2. Risk assessments

2.1. A risk assessment has been carried out to ensure sensible measures are put in place to protect staff members and pupils, including appropriate social distancing measures. This will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and in line with any new or altered government advice.

2.2. The risk assessment and/or associated policies will address the following areas:

- Safety of the school premises

- Cleaning measures
- Infection control and the ability to implement protective measures, e.g. social distancing
- Supporting staff and pupil wellbeing
- Supporting pupils' learning
- Safeguarding
- Communication of plans and procedures

3. Social distancing measures - Use of 'bubbles'

- 3.1. Consistent pupil bubbles will be used to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced. Where possible, and where the normal operation of the school will not be restricted, the size of these bubbles will never exceed 20 children.
- 3.2. Each bubble will contain a year group to ensure we are able to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and allow pupils to receive specialist teaching.
- 3.3. Pupils will be encouraged to maintain a distance within their bubbles; however, we recognise that this is difficult for a number of our children, due to the nature of their additional needs.
- 3.4. Pupils will remain in these bubbles for the majority of the day but it may be inevitable that they will mix with others during the school day or on subsequent days. This will be minimised where possible.
- 3.5. Staff will be permitted to move between bubbles but should continue to follow the school's social distancing measures where possible.
- 3.6. Teaching staff will be asked to maintain a distance from pupils by staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible.
- 3.7. Where possible, social distancing measures will be adhered to, including the two-metre rule. Pupils will be seated side-by-side facing forwards – any unnecessary classroom furniture will be removed to facilitate this.
- 3.8. The headteacher will decide whether it is viable to hold lessons or classroom activities outdoors to help with adherence to social distancing measures.

4. The school day

- 4.1. The headteacher and other key staff members will review the school timetable and make amendments to reduce movement around the school, such as ensuring separate classroom areas are used for different bubbles.
- 4.2. Staff and pupils will be sent a copy of the finalised timetable and will be informed of any changes to this timetable.

Break and lunchtimes

- 4.3 Pupils will take their breaktimes and lunchtimes with the pupils in their bubble to avoid mixing.
- 4.4. Each year group will be allocated a base room where they will eat their lunch and spend break times within their bubble.
- 4.5. Pupils will have their lunch bought to them so they can remain within their base classroom and bubble.
- 4.6 Pupils will wash their hands before eating.

PE lessons

- 4.7 Pupils will be kept in their bubbles for PE, sport and physical activity, contact sports will be avoided, and sports equipment will be thoroughly cleaned between each use by different bubbles.

Enrichment

- 4.8. Before deciding whether enrichment activities can go ahead, the headteacher will consider how such provision can operate alongside the school's wider protective measures, including keeping pupils within their bubbles where possible. Where this is not possible, we will use small, consistent groups instead.

PE

- 4.9. Only COVID safe sports, where social distancing can be practised will be played. Contact sports will not be played under any circumstance.
- 4.10 All equipment, e.g. balls, and areas will be cleaned and disinfected before and after use.

5 Behaviour

- 5.1 We understand that following some of the social distancing principles will be extremely challenging, so staff and pupils will not face any stringent action if they are unable to follow them.
- 5.2 If a staff member is unable to follow the principles, they should speak to their line manager.
- 5.3 If a pupil is unable to follow any social distancing measures, the headteacher and relevant staff members will discuss whether additional support can be offered to help them do so.

6 Transport

6.2 The headteacher will liaise with the LA and the school's transport providers to ensure an appropriate plan is in place to protect pupils and staff members who use public transport to get to school.

6.3 When organising dedicated school transport, we will consider the following:

- How pupils are grouped together on transport, ensuring this reflects the pupil groups organised in school as much as possible
- Use of hand sanitiser upon boarding or disembarking
- Additional cleaning of vehicles
- Organised queuing and boarding where possible
- Distancing within vehicles where possible
- The use of face coverings for pupils over the age of 11, where appropriate, e.g. if they are likely to come into close contact with people outside of their group

6.4 Pupils and their families will be informed of any new arrangements before they are implemented.

7. Supporting pupils

7.1 The SENCO will review EHC plans and risk assessments to determine whether appropriate support is in place for pupils with SEND ahead of their return to school.

7.2 The SENCO will consider the capacity for the pupil to understand and follow social distancing measures that have been put in place and ensure support is in place to aid in this.

7.3 When planning for each stage of reintegration, the implications for the wellbeing of pupils, staff and families will always be considered. One of the school's key priorities in relation to wellbeing is ensuring that the school community feels safe when we open.

7.4 The headteacher will liaise with the LA to discuss what wider support services are available and to secure additional support and early help, where possible.

8. Infection control measures

8.1 We know that implementing social distancing measures in a school setting is extremely challenging. Therefore, we will also implement robust infection control measures to help ensure the safety of our school community.

8.2 Infection control measures are implemented in line with the "Infection Control during COVID-19 Policy".

8.3 All staff members will be briefed on what they can do to mitigate the risk of infection, and they will be reminded of their responsibilities relating to control measures daily in a daily morning meeting.

8.4 The following measures will be implemented across the school:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, have someone in their household who does, or have tested positive within the last 7 days do not attend the school for 7 or 14 days.
- Cleaning hands frequently – wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- Minimising contact and mixing of pupils and staff by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered breaktimes)
- Ensuring individual and frequently used equipment (e.g. stationery) is not shared and that classroom-based resources (e.g. books) are only used and shared within bubbles. Resources that must be shared between groups, e.g. art equipment, will be cleaned frequently and always between use by different bubbles.
- Discouraging pupils from touching their faces or putting objects in their mouths
- Teaching pupils to wash their hands frequently, particularly after eating or using shared toys

9. Test and Trace

9.1 To meet our duty to engage with the NHS Test and Trace process, we will ensure that staff members and parents understand that they must be ready and willing to:

- Book a test if they, or their child, are displaying symptoms of coronavirus.
- If they, or their child, were to test positive or contacted by NHS Test and Trace, provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with.
- Self-isolate if they have been in close contact someone who develops symptoms of, or tests positive for, coronavirus.

9.2 The school will review guidance from the government regularly, and update this policy and other documents, e.g. the Risk Assessment for Full Opening in September, where necessary.

10 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Reference to PPE in this section means:

- Fluid-resistant surgical face masks (also known as Type IIR).
- Disposable gloves.
- Disposable plastic aprons.
- Eye protection, e.g. face visor or goggles.

10.1 The government has advised that the majority of school staff do not need to wear PPE beyond what they normally would for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of two metres from others.

10.2 In accordance with government guidance, PPE will be provided to staff in the following circumstances:

- Where staff are caring for pupils whose intimate care needs already require the use of PPE
- Where a pupil becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus at school and requires direct personal care until they can go home, a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn by the staff member caring for the pupil. If contact with the pupils is necessary, the staff member should wear disposable gloves, a disposable apron, and a fluid-resistant surgical mask. Where there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, e.g. from coughing, eye protection should be worn.

10.3 When using face masks, staff will ensure the masks:

- Cover both the nose and mouth.
- Do not dangle around the neck.
- Are not touched once put on, except when carefully removed before disposal.
- Are changed once they become moist or damaged.
- Are only worn once and then discarded.

10.4 When using PPE, staff members will follow PHE's guidelines on putting on and taking off equipment.

10.5 The safety of our staff is paramount, so additional risk assessments will be conducted to determine whether PPE is required for other tasks and activities, and we will do our utmost to ensure staff are provided with the PPE they need.

10.6 Where the wearer of PPE does not have coronavirus symptoms, the equipment will be placed in a refuse bag and be disposed of as normal domestic waste.

10.7 PPE that has been worn by, or near, someone with coronavirus symptoms will be disposed of by:

- Putting it in a plastic rubbish bag and tying it when full.
- Placing the rubbish bag in a second rubbish bag and tying it.
- Putting it in a suitable container and secure place marked for storage for 72 hours.

10.8 Waste will be stored safely and securely kept away from pupils. Waste will not be put in communal waste areas until it has been stored for at least 72 hours. This waste does not require a dedicated clinical waste collection.

10.9 In line with government guidance, pupils and staff will be asked to remove homemade non-disposable face coverings when they arrive at school. The wearer will be asked to bring a plastic bag to school to put the face covering into in order to take it home – the wearer must clean their hands once they have removed the face covering. If a staff member or pupil (or their parent) does not want to remove their face covering while at school, they should speak to the headteacher or the most senior member of staff on site.

10.10 The headteacher will liaise with the LA about procuring PPE.

11. Communication

11.1 All social distancing measures will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders, including pupils, parents, staff, visitors, suppliers and contractors.

11.2 Staff will be informed of all relevant plans, including safety measures, timetable changes and staggered arrival and departure times, and will have opportunities to discuss training on the new measures.

11.3 Staff will be engaged regularly to get their feedback on the arrangements that are in place.

11.4 Visual aids will be placed around the school to remind our community of the measures that we have put in place.

12. Monitoring and review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly and after the release of additional government guidance.

12.2 All updates made to this policy will be communicated to all staff members and parents by the headteacher.