

## **Our position statement on supporting pupils and learners, November 2020**

Ambitious about Autism, and our Schools Trust, run TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College serving around 300 children and young people across London and the Home Counties.

During this challenging and rapidly changing time we are guided by our values, mission and by information, advice and guidance for education providers issued by the Government, Public Health England (PHE), Health and Safety Executive and other key bodies. When taking account of this guidance, our first consideration is the safety and well-being of our pupils, learners and staff.

National restriction measures are in force from 5 November to 2 December 2020. On 4 November the Government published [guidance](#) on what these mean for education and childcare. Early years settings, schools, colleges and universities remain open to support children and young people's well-being and education and help working parents and carers.

All education settings need to continue to follow Government and PHE guidance and control measures to minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission. On 5 November the Government updated their [guidance](#) for both mainstream and specialist settings, with additional [SEND specific guidance](#) being updated at the same time. Both pieces of guidance are continually updated by Government and we take account of these updates. [The links will always take you to the most up to date version of the guidance.](#)

### **What has changed in relation to the new guidance?**

Due to the new national restriction measures several areas of the Government's guidance have been updated including around attendance for those self-isolating and shielding, and arrangements for clinically extremely vulnerable people.

We have updated this position statement taking into account these changes. We are committed to being transparent, giving timely information to our pupils/learners, their families, our key partners and our staff.

### **Our key principles**

Since the end of March our schools' and college's decision making has been guided by a set of principles. We have adapted these principles<sup>1</sup> as the situation and Government guidance has changed. This update is based on the latest Government guidance under new national restrictions from 5 November to 2 December 2020. Our key principles are:

- We will continue to put the safety of our pupils, learners and staff at the forefront of all we do;
- We will continue to follow Government guidance and keep our position under review;
- We will continue to ensure that each pupil/learner has an individualised, updated, Covid-19 Risk Assessment;
- Pupils and learners will learn in 'bubbles' with the same staff assigned to these bubbles, where possible;
- Pupils/learners and staff will not always be able to social distance within bubbles because of the support needs of our pupils and learners;
- Staff with peripatetic roles (e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist) will need to work in a few bubbles. We will ensure we minimise the number of contacts these staff have;
- When outside of these bubbles, staff will practise social distancing of 1m plus;

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<sup>1</sup> Version 2 was published on 12 May, Version 3 on 8 July, and Version 4 on 19 August.

- We will work in partnership with placing Local Authorities and parents and carers on an ongoing basis;

### **Running a 'Covid Secure' school or college**

The Government's guidance is clear that:

*“While coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, this means making judgements at a setting level about how to balance and minimise any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience for children and young people.”*

It is critical that our schools and college are 'Covid Secure' which includes:

- Having risk assessments in place for pupil/learners, staff and buildings;
- Having the correct levels of trained staff in place to meet pupils/learners' needs safely;
- Ensuring pupils, learners and staff who have Coronavirus symptoms (or someone in their household that does) stay at home and follow Government guidance;
- Having robust hand-washing and respiratory hygiene in place;
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements;
- Engagement with the NHS track and trace system. This means that if a person has tested positive for Coronavirus within a 'bubble', pupils, learners and staff in that 'bubble' may be asked to self-isolate.
- Practising social distancing when possible;
- Having the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) in place as needed.
- In line with Government [guidance](#), from 16 October face coverings will be worn by all staff in communal areas such as corridors and toilets

Our schools and college, like all others, may face staffing challenges going forward for several reasons. These include staff self-isolating due to being deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, staff isolating awaiting a Covid test because they are symptomatic, staff having to self-isolate through the track and trace system and normal winter sickness. We will do everything in our power to ensure continuity of service for our pupils/learners. However, we must also risk assess on a daily basis to ensure we can operate safely. If the situation changes, we will inform you at the earliest possible opportunity.

The pupils and learners who attend our settings need specialist support tailored to their needs. They thrive in settings with a positive and supportive culture that prioritises their needs, safety and wellbeing, where the environment has been adapted and staff are trained and skilled in meeting their needs. They need personalised support to enable them to adapt to changes in routines or environment.

Our staff also benefit from a positive and supportive culture, experienced and competent leadership, a safe and secure environment and opportunities to learn and develop.

This is our priority as we support pupils, learners and staff at school and college. Things will be different, as we continue to manage the risks posed by Covid-19, but our values and aims remain the same.

### **Advice for parents and carers**

Alongside the guidance published for schools and colleges, the Government also published advice for [parents and carers](#).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [This was updated on 29 October, and it will be updated again in light of the new national restrictions. The link will always take you to the most up to date version of the guidance.](#)

We ask all parents and carers to work with us to balance the risks of managing Covid-19 alongside returning all pupils and learners back to education in September.

- If your child is unwell with Coronavirus symptoms (or someone else in the household has Coronavirus symptoms) or has been directed to self-isolate (e.g. through NHS track and trace), they must not come into school or college;
- If your child develops Coronavirus symptoms or is unwell at school or college, you must collect them as soon as possible;
- Pupils and learners who are of compulsory education age (aged 5 to 18 years) must attend their education settings during term-time and it's the legal duty of parents and carers to ensure they attend. This remains the case following the new national restrictions;
- Where pupils/learners are not able to attend their setting, due to clinical and/or public health advice, the school or college will support their parents/carers to provide learning and support virtually;
- Parents/carers should plan their holidays within school and college holidays and avoid absences during term time. In planning holidays, parents/carers are asked to note the [Government's travel guidance](#) on potential quarantine requirements for entering other countries and returning to the UK. Your child or young person will not be able to attend school or college during a quarantine period.

We recognise that this pandemic has turned the world upside down for many of our pupils/learners and families and routines and arrangements have been disrupted significantly which will have caused anxiety and distress. The new national restrictions may be causing further anxiety. Our schools and college will listen to concerns and work in partnership with pupils/learners and their families to put in place strategies to support their education.

### **Clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable people**

Guidance under the new national restrictions makes changes around measures that need to be in place for staff and children and young people identified as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' (CEV), which we are following in our settings.

The Government deems those with following conditions as 'clinically extremely vulnerable':

- solid organ transplant recipients
- those with specific cancers:
- people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
- people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
- people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- people having other targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- those with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- those with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell disease)
- those on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
- adults with Down's syndrome
- adults on dialysis or with chronic kidney disease (stage 5)
- women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired

- other people who have also been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, based on clinical judgement and an assessment of their needs. GPs and hospital clinicians have been provided with guidance to support these decisions

If your child or young person was deemed CEV during the first lockdown, please seek advice from your GP or clinician about whether they should continue to attend school/college in person and advise us accordingly. Children who live with someone who is CEV, but who are not CEV themselves, should still attend education.

If your child or young person started with us in September, please do ring us and inform us if they are deemed CEV. To protect them they must stay at home, but we will support them with home learning either via a pack or virtually.

Following the Government guidance, we have also identified staff members who are CEV who must also remain at home for the period of the national restriction measures.

We have also identified clinically vulnerable (CV) staff who will continue working in our setting with a robust risk assessment in place.

## **Processes in our schools and college from Sept 2020 in relation to symptomatic staff, pupils and learners**

The processes set out below might vary very slightly in our settings but the overall approach will remain the same.

### **Part A: Symptomatic Pupils/Learners**

#### **What we do when a child or young person presents as symptomatic in our schools or college:**

- Immediately move the child or young person to the identified designated room in the building;
- Ask the member of staff accompanying the child or young person to wear a face mask, gloves and plastic apron;
- Ring the parents/carers and request that the child or young person is collected immediately;
- Inform the placing LA that the child or young person will be learning from home until a test is administered;
- Contact the families of those children/young people in the bubble to advise them to isolate should they become symptomatic.
- Ask the parents of the affected child/young person to have them tested and let the school/college know of the outcome. We recognise that not every child or young person will be able to have a test, and in these cases the pupil/learner will be asked to self-isolate;
- Should the test result come back positive (or a test is not taken) we will take advice from our local Public Health England, and send pupils/learners and staff in that bubble home to self-isolate and follow up with others who might have had peripheral contact to self-isolate.
- Be clear with parents/carers of the length of time for self-isolation;
- Ensure the day cleaner cleans spaces the person has been in contact with;
- Designated room cleaned down once vacated;
- Deep clean areas used by affected staff, pupils and learners.

## **Part B: Symptomatic Staff**

### **What we do when a staff member presents as symptomatic in our schools or college:**

- Quarantine/ isolate them in the identified designated room in school/college until they can go home
- Check when their symptoms started;
- Check who they've had contact with within their bubble (staff and pupils/learners) over the past 3-5 days;
- Tell the affected staff member to take a test;
  - Should the result come back negative, we advise self-isolation is no longer needed (unless of course they show new symptoms or have been directed to self-isolate by NHS test and trace) and they return to work
  - Should the result come back positive we will send pupils/learners and staff in that bubble home to self-isolate and follow up with others who might have had peripheral contact to self-isolate.
  - We may check in with those self-isolating to monitor their symptoms and if needed, (ask them to) follow up with people they've had contact with.
- We will take advice from our local Public Health England representative;
- Ensure the day cleaner cleans spaces the person has been in contact with;
  
- Designated room cleaned down once vacated;
- Deep clean areas used by affected staff, pupils and learners.

## **Managing local and national lockdowns**

New national restrictions are in place from 5 November to 2 December 2020 and we are following Government guidance as outlined above. However, we must plan for and prepare for localised lockdowns or a return to a full lockdown including closure of education settings. Our schools and college take children and young people from 30 of London's Local Authorities and our staff live across London, and in the outer London areas. As we have from the beginning of our pandemic, we are following Government guidance. Experience of local lockdowns to date indicates that the response will vary depending on the local authority, the cause of the outbreak and the needs of the local area. We will develop specific plans in response to local, regional or national lockdowns once specific guidance is issued and continue to ensure any pupil or learner can access learning from home.