

Holme Grange School incorporating Little Grange Nursery



Pandemic Policy

Date:	Amendment:	Reviewed by:	Authorised by:
February 2023	Next review Due		
February 2020	New Policy	Catherine Walsh	CRO & MJE 11/03/2020

Policy Area:	Health and Safety
Relevant Statutory Regulations:	Independent School Standard Regulations 2013 Part 3 Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Health and Social Care Act 2012 Civil Contingencies Act 2004
Key Contact Personnel in School	
Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:	Head of Pastoral

This policy will be reviewed at least triannually, and/or following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

Introduction

This policy is written to ensure that at all times, including the pending threat of a pandemic, the health and wellbeing of Holme Grange (“the School”) pupils, staff, visitors and their respective families are protected whilst continuing to deliver to the best of our ability an education appropriate to each pupil’s needs and commensurate with the prevailing medical advice.

In March 2020, The World Health Organisation warned that a flu pandemic “is both inevitable and imminent” and in previous years the country has had similar outbreaks of which we have been made aware. The School will always seek to keep the community as safe as possible, whilst aiming to continue to operate as normally as possible during a pandemic but should plan for much higher than usual levels of staff absence and the consequences of other disruption resulting from the pandemic's impact on other services such as catering and transport.

The policy falls under five broad headings:

- Prevention
- Information
- Communication
- Identification
- Action
- Staff

The School will deal with a pandemic in accordance with the following principles:

- Ensuring the health and safety of the whole school community will be the driving concern.
- The School will seek to continue to operate as normally as possible during a pandemic.
- The School’s response to a pandemic will be led by SLT.
- The School will note the generic advice of competent authorities such as the WHO, PHE and NHS.
- The School will stay in close contact with professional associations (ISC, IAPs and ACAS) throughout the pandemic seeking advice and best practice.

Prevention

Holme Grange (“the School”) currently maintains a high standard of hygiene throughout the year irrespective of threat level due to any viral outbreak. These precautions in themselves with continued education of pupils and staff are an effective means of prophylaxis. During times of increased risk, more frequent reminders of personal hygiene by means of announcement and posters will be employed coupled with more widespread availability of anti-bacterial hand cleansing agents, tissues and more regular cleaning of hard surfaces with appropriate materials.

Information

It is vital that the School is kept fully informed of the threat level of any viral outbreak and the prevailing advice from the relevant authorities. The Head of Communication, Strategy and Administration – Mrs Catherine Walsh, will ensure that, in times of heightened risk, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is provided with at least weekly written updates including advice as to change of practice required.

Parents and guardians will also be kept informed of the situation both in the wider context of any outbreak and how the School is reacting to the situation.

Communication

Clear and calm internal communication which leaves all staff, parents and pupils with a full understanding of their role in the plan will help allay fears and prevent uncoordinated or hasty decision making. The School will use the Hub, Clarion, Newsletter and e-mail to disseminate information to staff and parents. This may be supplemented by the use of letters.

Closure

Decision to Close and Re-Open

Notwithstanding the principle to continue to operate as normally as possible for as long as possible, any decision to close or re-open the School will be made by the Headteacher. This decision will be made based on the specific circumstances within the School, generic advice from the DfE, WHO and PHE and specific advice/direction from the Children's Services Department of Wokingham Borough Council.

On Closure

There are two types of 'closure':

- Closure as a school in which the pupils would be sent home but we would still operate as a place of work and staff would be on the premises.
- Closure of the school area when pupils and staff would not be able to be on the school premises.

In the event of the decision to close the School, the SMT will coordinate the collection of pupils by parents as quickly as possible. SMT will notify staff which type of closure we are operating. However, irrespective of the type of closure staff will be expected to continue to work either from school or home. If they need leave or want to report an absence they will do this in line with the Staff Leave & Absence Policy.

Remote Learning

In the event of the School closing the pupils will be expected to take as many text books with them as they can. The pupils will use their school e-mail and Google account to obtain current information including how their academic work will continue during the closure. Academic staff will be required to continue teaching to their timetable but using appropriate teaching tools like Google Classroom and Zoom. Staff will be given guidance on how to do this from work and from home.

The Head of Pre Prep, Prep and Subject Leads in both Prep and Eaton Grange, will decide on the most appropriate type of work to send to the pupils. Middle and Senior Management will monitor work being set. Academic teaching staff will be available on e-mail during normal school hours to provide guidance to pupils and work will be marked with feedback provided, via technology, where is reasonable and possible, as per the School's Marking and Feedback Policy.

Public Examinations

If the School is going to be closed during a public examination period the Head, in conjunction with the Examinations Officer, is responsible for contacting the awarding bodies to seek their advice. Clearly defined procedures will be set out by the awarding bodies for the School to follow.

Identification

The School must be in a position to monitor any possible outbreak and ensure that detailed information is recorded regarding any pupils or staff suspected of being infected. In situations where the School has not

been advised to close then a contagion chart should be commenced by Matron to identify if and how the infection is spreading amongst the School community.

If there are international instances of the virus, the School will follow advice from the WHO and PHE to track the holiday destinations of pupils and visitors to ensure that we are aware of any those pupils or families who present a higher risk of exposure to our community.

Action

As soon as an outbreak within the School has been confirmed the SLT should meet to establish what steps to take from within a menu of options as listed under Appendix A.

The following should take place in all circumstances:

- Commencement of a Policy Log if not already started showing actions taken, by whom, why and the outcome if any;
- Continued and accurate communication with parents;
- Ensure that all staff are kept apprised of the situation as it develops;
- Notification of the appropriate members of the Governing Body.

Staff

The key issues that need to be considered:

The welfare of the staff;

- The ability of the School to carry on teaching.

See Appendix C for further information applicable to staff during a period of a pandemic.

Medical Care

The School will, as a matter of policy, encourage parents to collect sick pupils from the School as soon as possible. This will help to minimise the risk of spreading the virus further and will free up space for other pupils that might be affected. The Norway meeting room in the main building will be used for quarantine purposes.

However, if the School are overwhelmed by cases the SLT will make a decision as to where sick pupils will be quarantined from those who have not caught the virus.

Parent Contract and Insurances

Parents are obliged to comply with the School's request to quarantine pupils, should it be necessary.

The Parents' Contract provides for Force Majeure, which includes pandemic. In these circumstances, the School will communicate with all families about the extent of the threat. The School has no liability in respect of the performance of its obligations during the Force Majeure, but is committed to endeavouring to ensure the continuance of educational services. In these circumstances, the School has no liability to refund any fees.

The Head of Finance is responsible for liaison with the School's insurers. The relevant cover will be:

- **Business Interruption** – includes an element of cover for loss of revenue resulting from closure of the School by a competent local authority as a consequence of an occurrence of a Notifiable Disease outbreak occurring within a 25 mile radius of the School.
- **Public Liability** – the School is expected to take all reasonable precautions which means following advice from relevant bodies such as local authorities, including trips to/from affected areas. Also, pupils, parents and staff returning from any affected area are to notify the school.

There will be no refund or waiver of fees in the event that a term is shortened, the pupil is released home early or quarantined at home for health (including precautionary) reasons, except at the discretion of the School and then only in exceptional circumstances.

Related Policies

- Remote Learning Policy
- First Aid and Medical Care Policy
- Health and safety policy
- Risk Assessments for Pandemic outbreak
- Staff Leave & Absence Policy

Appendix A What to do if there is a Pandemic Outbreak at the School

The following is a menu of options to consider should a pandemic breakout at the School:
Please see Risk Assessment for Pandemic.

- Is it serious enough to treat as a Critical Incident?
- Consider quarantine of affected pupils
- Issue advice to pupils / parents / staff
- Ensure that information is regular and up to date
- Consider publishing information on the parents' section of the School website
- Consider formulation / issuing of press statement in conjunction with the Headteacher and Head of Communication, Administration and Strategy
- Consider restricting School activities
- Consider restricting off site trips
- Consider restricting visits to the School from individuals / bodies
- Consider re-admittance of pupils from overseas
- Consider closure of the School (see Appendix B)
- Ensure Remote Learning packages are ready to be rolled out
- Ensure staff are trained and up to date on distance access
- Review public examinations situation
- Ensure we communicate with transport, catering and cleaning
- Ensure we communicate with external lettings

Appendix B Closure of the School

The decision to close all or part of the School will be taken on advice from Public Health England (PHE) and will be after consultation between SLT. Such action will only be taken after all other options have been explored and discounted.

In the event of closure, all pupils will take their books and files with them. All parents and pupils will be informed that the School will continue to set and mark work throughout the closure period and that we expect pupils to be working in an appropriate environment at home, with internet access, during their timetabled lesson times.

The Remote Learning Policy should be followed by teaching and teaching support staff, where protocols and guidelines are laid out. Members of teaching staff without access to computers at home will speak to the Headteacher. However, the **school will be a normal workplace once the school has closed to parents and pupils**, depending on the type of closure, and the expectation would be that staff come into school. Irrespective, teaching staff should:

1. Set work in the form of specific tasks (accompanied by worksheets or other resources or directions to a textbook, page on the Intranet etc. as appropriate) by Google Classroom and use Zoom where appropriate to create webinars.
2. The Subject Leader or Head of School will oversee and ensure the fact that work is being set and that it is appropriate in terms of quantity and quality.
3. Be available on e-mail during the time of their normal timetabled lessons to answer messages sent by pupils, or to receive tasks as completed for marking and returning within a reasonable time. All communications should be acknowledged.
4. Be available to answer their contact telephone, at least between 8.15am and 4.15pm, so that the School or PHE can communicate with them. The HR Manager should be contacted if your contact number has changed or changes during this period.
5. Call in sick, if they become ill during the closure, before 7.30am each morning as normal. This will help the School and the PHE to maintain records of who is affected so that a sensible decision about reopening the School can be made. Members of teaching staff who are ill must remain in contact with the Headteacher and should try to obtain appropriate medical advice and a Doctor's Certificate if the illness is serious and/or prolonged.

Appendix C - Staff Information

Staff working during a Period of a Pandemic

Throughout the period of a pandemic, the School in conjunction with the Governing Body will expect staff, if they are well, to continue to work, as normal for as far as possible, while taking additional precautions to protect themselves from infection, e.g. with regards to personal hygiene measures, and to lessen the risk of spread to others. The normal Staff Leave & Absence Policy will still be in place and staff should follow it. While managers and the Headteacher will make every effort to support staff and take into account individual personal circumstances, any unexplained absences may be dealt with under the School's "Disciplinary Policy".

Temporary Working Arrangements

While seeking to sustain the School's key functions and services, and, in order to reduce the risk of spread of infection throughout the period of a pandemic, a number of temporary working arrangements will be identified and implemented, where appropriate and practicable. All staff may therefore need to review the way that they work as well as the duties and responsibilities that they undertake with a view to becoming more flexible.

Social Distancing Measures

In order to reduce the spread of infection, a range of social distancing responses will be introduced, where practicable e.g. the use of teleconferencing, videoconferencing and electronic means of communication, to avoid face-to-face contact. It is also likely that non-essential training will be cancelled.

Temporary Deployment Elsewhere

If the school is directly affected by the pandemic then those staff at high risk of complications from a pandemic will be deployed from direct pupil care to minimise the risk of infection. These staff will include, for example, pregnant women, and those who have pre-existing respiratory disease or compromised immune systems. Staff who believe they fall into this category should inform the Headteacher, immediately who will make the necessary arrangements for deployment if necessary.

Management requests to make changes to working arrangements on a temporary basis will not be unreasonably refused by staff and they will be for the duration of the pandemic only. There will be no change to individual Condition of Employment and normal terms and conditions of employment will resume at the end of the crisis.

Homeworking

In order to reduce the spread of infection, where practicable, some members of staff may be requested to work from home. All homeworking arrangements must be authorised by the Headteacher.

Annual leave entitlements

The Headteacher, will consider requests for leave made by members of staff on their merits on a case-by-case basis. Pre-booked leave should be allowed unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Staff Sickness Absence During a Period of a Pandemic

During a pandemic the School will positively encourage staff who feel ill to stay at home until they are fully recovered. Indeed, it is of paramount importance that staff with any symptoms stay at home until the symptoms disappear, both for their own wellbeing and to reduce the risk of spread to other members of staff.

Staff who feel that they are developing symptoms at work are also required to go home straight away.

Staff who have been in recent close contact with others confirmed cases, but do not have flu-like symptoms themselves

Staff who have been in recent close contact with others confirmed cases, but do not have symptoms themselves are required to continue to work unless they are unwell.

How sickness absence will be managed during a pandemic

As far as possible, staff who are absent as a result of illness (whether it is directly related to the pandemic or not) should follow the procedures as set out in the Staff Leave & Absence Policy for the School. However, the following further guidance has been prepared to accommodate the unique circumstances that a pandemic may present, as far as it can currently be envisaged.

The Headteacher will handle sickness absence with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and take into account the difficulties that staff may encounter with regards to complying with procedures during the period of a pandemic

Notifying absence

Staff should continue to follow the School's policy for notifying absence. When notifying absence, if a member of staff finds that it is not possible to speak to their manager details of the absence (in person if possible or through a third party if not) should be reported to the HR Manager during the period of the pandemic.

Staff who feel that they are developing symptoms at work will be required to go home immediately. They should advise their manager and leave in a way that minimises face-to-face contact with anyone to reduce the risk of spread of infection.

Certification

In order to reduce the pressure on GP and other medical services, the School will extend the self-certification period for up to 14 consecutive days (including part days and regardless of whether these are working days or school holidays (during any period that this policy is implemented). A self-certification for

the entire period of sickness absence should be completed in the normal manner using the Report of Absence Form.

For absences over 14 consecutive days, if an individual member of staff encounters difficulties in obtaining a doctor's certificate(s), for instance, in light of the high demand for GP and other medical services, they should refer the matter to the HR Manager who will decide if it will be possible for them not to submit a medical certificate for the respective period of sickness absence. If it is agreed that a medical certificate does not need to be submitted, a self-certification for the entire period of sickness absence should be completed in the normal manner using Report of Absence Form.

If the difficulty with regard to obtaining medical certificates becomes widespread, the School may decide to extend the period of self-certification during the period of the pandemic beyond 14 consecutive days.

Under normal circumstances, where an end date is not specified on a medical certificate for an absence exceeding 14 consecutive days, a certificate of fitness to resume work must be obtained from a GP and given to the HR Manager on the first day back at work. To avoid adding to the high demand for GP and other medical services during a pandemic, this requirement will be suspended bringing these staff into line with staff who have self-certified for absences of up to 14 days, or longer where this has been approved.

If a manager has concerns about a member of staff's fitness for work, the member of staff should be asked to provide a medical certificate of fitness for work - a copy of the certificate must be given to the HR Manager.

Throughout the period of a pandemic, staff will be required to complete a Report of Absence Form for each period of sickness absence, as set out in the Staff Leave & Absence Policy.

Keeping in contact

Managers and staff should keep in contact during periods of sickness absence, as far as is practicable.

Return to work meetings

By the time a member of staff is no longer showing symptoms and starts to feel better they are no longer likely to be infectious and can return to work.

Throughout the period of a pandemic, return to work meetings should be held as set out in the "Staff Leave & Absence Policy".

Monitoring levels of absence/ formal sickness absence review procedure

When managers review the sickness absence history of an individual member of staff, the unusual circumstances of absences directly related to a pandemic will be taken into account.

Sick pay entitlements

Throughout the period of a pandemic, there will be no changes to the period during which sick pay shall be paid, and the rate of sick pay, in respect of any period of absence due to personal illness, as set out in the "Staff Leave & Absence Policy".

Entitlement to sick pay during a pandemic will however take into account that, in some instances, staff may need to follow the guidance as set out in this policy rather than the procedures that would normally apply as set out in the Staff Leave & Absence Policy, for example, in respect of the conditions for certifying sickness absence.

Staff Requests to make Temporary Changes to their Working Arrangements and Other Types of Absences During a Period of a Pandemic

During a pandemic, in addition to staff being absent from work due to personal illness, there are a number of other reasons why individual members of staff may not be able to attend work such as family member sickness, bereavement, and possible disruption to nurseries and schools.

The Headteacher will handle all absences and temporary working arrangements requests made by staff with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. She will make every effort to support staff, especially those that have been bereaved.

Staff requests to make temporary working arrangements during a period of a pandemic

As already stated in this policy, while seeking to sustain key functions and services, and, in order to reduce the risk of spread of infection throughout the period of a pandemic, a number of temporary working arrangements (e.g. temporary deployment including homeworking) will be identified and implemented, where appropriate and practicable.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that the duty to sustain key functions and services will need to be balanced with the pressures that will fall on members of staff that have caring responsibilities and their work commitments. In light of this, an individual member of staff may make a request for a temporary change to their place of work/location, and/or, their hours of work/ working pattern, providing that their request is made in order that they can fulfil a caring role.

In addition, if an individual member of staff (who has annual leave) wishes to take their annual leave in order to fulfil a caring role, managers will take this into account when they consider their leave request.

Any requests of the nature outlined above made by members of staff who do not have caring responsibilities but have special circumstances that they feel should be taken into account will also be considered.

All requests should be made by individual members of staff to the Headteacher and decisions will be made on their merits on a case-by-case basis.

Requests to make these temporary working arrangements will be for the duration of the pandemic only, there will be no change to individual Condition of Employment and normal terms and conditions of employment will resume at the end of the crisis.

Keeping in Contact

Managers and staff should keep in contact during periods of absence, as appropriate and as far as is practicable.

Recording Absences

The School will keep a record of all absences and follow the normal procedures as set out in the Staff Leave & Absence Policy.

Unexplained Absences

All members of staff will be expected to attend work throughout the period of a pandemic unless their absence is authorised by their manager, or, they are sick and they have complied with the procedures as set out in the Staff Leave & Absence Policy and/or the guidelines set out in this Pandemic Policy.

Managers will handle unexplained absences with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and take into account the individual personal circumstances as well as any difficulties that staff may be encounter with regards to complying with procedures during the period of a pandemic. However, any absence from work that is not in accordance with the above, may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure, and result in loss of pay.

Conduct, Capability and Grievance

Throughout the period of a pandemic, the operation of conduct, capability and grievance procedures may need to be amended, as for example, conducting investigations and hearings is likely to be impracticable. Timescales may also need to be adjusted by mutual agreement. The respective processes may therefore be suspended as a precautionary measure pending return to normal conditions. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

A pandemic is first and foremost a public health matter. There are, however, clear health and safety requirements to protect staff and pupils who come into contact with infectious micro-organisms, such as the influenza virus.

It is acknowledged that in the aftermath of a pandemic it will be likely that staff may be tired and need some time before they can return to ordinary performance at work. This will be taken into account, for example, where the capability of an individual member of staff is in question. Each situation will be handled with care and sensitivity on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix D Special Leave Summary (taken from the Leave and Absence Policy)

LEAVE MUST be applied for in advance and approved in writing by the Head. It is at the head's discretion whether special leave will be paid or unpaid, various factors (including attendance record) will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made.

Special Leave Reason	Entitlement	Headteacher Discretion
Dependant gives Birth	1 or 2 days unpaid	1 or 2 days paid or see Paternity Leave scheme if appropriate
Death of dependant	1 or 2 days unpaid	1 or 2 days paid
Funeral of dependant	1 or 2 days unpaid	1 or 2 days paid
Funeral of close relative/friend	None	½ or 1 day paid
Finalising affairs of dependant	1 or 2 days unpaid	1 or 2 days paid
For members of another schools Governing Body	None	Up to a maximum of 3 half days per annum, depending on the reasonableness of the request
Graduation ceremony – employee's own partner, son, daughter	None	1 or 2 days unpaid
Hospital appointments for children where both parents wish to attend	None	1 day unpaid
Jury Service or attendance as a witness in Court proceedings	For the required period subject to the employee claiming for loss of earnings	
Medical appointment – emergency/urgent		As necessary, paid
Medical appointment – Specialist		As necessary, paid
Moving house	None	1 day paid, max of two more days unpaid
Professional Development – sitting examinations	None	1 or 2 days unpaid
Religious devotion days	None	1 or 2 days unpaid
Severe weather*	None	Permission to leave early will not be unreasonably refused.
Sickness of dependant & unexpected incident involving dependant/child during school hours/trip	A few days unpaid	Paid / unpaid for maximum of 5 days in rolling year
Sickness of other close relative	None	Unpaid for up to 3 days in rolling year
Sickness of pet / vet appointment	None	unpaid
Weddings of close relatives	None	1 or 2 days unpaid
Interviews for other posts* *Teaching staff only, admin/support staff are expected to use annual leave	None	Maximum of 3 interviews based on posts applied for in any one year

***Severe Weather**

It will always be the school's intention to remain open. However, staff will only be expected to travel in *if it is safe to do so*.

Teaching Staff should take all holidays during the school holiday periods. Holidays during term time will not be authorised unless there are extreme circumstances that need to be taken into account. The Headteacher must be given adequate notice and will use her discretion to refer to the Chair of Governors. Should leave be granted during term time it will be unpaid and it will be the responsibility of the person taking leave to arrange cover during his/her absence.