



COVID-19: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE PRIMARY SETTING

All schools in the Trust have remained open during the COVID-19 crisis. All leaders and staff share the Government's ambition to engage in wider opening when it is safe to do so. We have produced a set of principles to guide the wider opening of Trust schools and these are set out below.

Key Principles:

1. **Staffing:** Pupils will work only with staff they know and who are already employed by the Trust. Additional staff (eg supply teachers) will not be brought into school;
2. **Groupings:** In school, pupils will be organised into protective "bubbles" of no more than 15 pupils and bubbles will remain in an allocated space, both inside and outside, to minimise contact and the risk of infection;
3. **Safeguarding:** All groups will be taught by qualified teachers, working alongside support staff. In all schools, there must be a headteacher or deputy, designated safeguarding lead, SEND specialist, qualified first-aider and a paediatric first-aider on site (primary only) at all times
4. **Health and Safety:** A comprehensive risk assessment will have been completed and quality assured (externally) prior to wider opening. The risk assessment will embed revised COVID-19 routines for the site - both inside and out - and this will include a weekly deep clean whilst pupils are not in school. The risk assessment will be kept under constant review;
5. **Support for other learners:** Schools must be able to continue providing high quality online learning and feedback for the year groups remaining at home and time must be allocated for this.

By adopting these principles, we aim to strike a balance between getting pupils back into school and learning, whilst providing the safest environment that we can for pupils, staff and, by extension, their families and the communities in which they live.

All schools will be providing further detail and examples for their parents/carers and pupils, but we hope that the following FAQs are helpful.

1. Who will make the decision on schools reopening?

For your child's school, the decision will be taken by the Trust.

The decision will take into account the Government's ambition for EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 children to begin a phased return to school, alongside risk assessments for each school (which will include the availability of staff and the suitability of each school environment to support social distancing). The guidance published by the Government is non-statutory so decisions relating to how, or to what extent, schools reopen rests with the Trust, in full consultation with the schools and other advisers.

2. Will all primary schools in the Trust return at the same time?

Probably - yes.

We have worked to achieve a consistent approach across all Trust schools, although staffing and accommodation varies from site to site. During lockdown, we have sought to minimise the risk of cross infection by not moving staff between sites unless absolutely necessary and this practice will continue. Some staff members also fall into the category of shielding and are not able to return to work.

Government guidance relating to arrangements for the wider opening of primary schools was sent on the evening of Thursday 14th May. The Government acknowledges that schools require 3 weeks to implement changes. We are, therefore, working to the following timetable:

Week beginning 1st June	Children of key workers and other groups continue to attend school full time as they have since lockdown began.
Monday 1st - Wednesday 3rd June	Staff will be in school preparing and training for the revised arrangements. Final cleaning and checks will be completed.
Thursday 4th June	EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 children are welcomed back.
Friday 5th June	EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 children have their second day in school.
Week beginning Monday 8th June	EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 children attend for four days each week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. This pattern of a 4 day week will continue for the foreseeable future.

Wider opening, therefore, will operate from **Thursday 4th June**. In subsequent weeks, pupils should attend on four days: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Although the four day week is intended to be our standard model of working, it may need to be amended in light of HSE or government advice, or where there is a significant change in staffing levels at the school.

NB: Children of key workers and other groups can continue to come to school Monday - Friday as they have been throughout the lockdown.

3. Why are most children in EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 not coming to school on Wednesday?

Essentially for 3 reasons:

- (a) Although a deep clean has already taken place at each school, schools will be deep cleaned on Wednesday each week as part of our risk assessment;
- (b) Staff need time to plan and prepare thoroughly;
- (c) Pupils in Years 2,3,4 and 5 will not be in school and staff need time to monitor pupils' learning and progress and provide them with quality work.

4. How will classes be organised?

All schools will ensure that children are in groups **of no more than 15 pupils**. This will create a protective “bubble” and children will remain in their bubble throughout the day.

Bubble groups will be allocated entrances and exits and will remain distanced from other bubbles operating in the school. Distancing will remain in place at lunchtime, either through designated areas, or staggered play times.

Schools will provide more details for parents/carers and pupils prior to 4th June. We must also make it clear that class teachers will determine the composition of the “bubbles” based on their knowledge of the children and their friendship groups. Safety remains paramount and we will not make any changes to the groupings unless there is a significant change in numbers and new bubbles need to be created.

5. Will my child have their usual teacher and be in the same classroom?

Not necessarily.

Nearly all classes are being divided in half and placed in different areas of the school. Some pupils may be working with their class teacher but, inevitably, some will not. That is why we have adopted the following key principle related to staffing: all pupils will work with a staff member who is familiar to them, even if this teacher is usually assigned to another year group.

6. What will the curriculum and lessons look like?

Although there will be an emphasis on the core subjects of English and Maths, we will make the curriculum broad and balanced and as interesting as possible.

We understand that lockdown has been stressful for many pupils and it is extremely important that time is given to supporting pupils’ mental health and well-being from outset.

There will be changes to how the school looks, what children are able to do and important new rules (particularly relating to following instructions as soon as they are given, and not behaving in a way which poses a risk to others). Teachers will guide pupils through these carefully and they will be reinforced daily to ensure a safe environment for all.

There will be some resources (soft toys for example) which will not be available, but we are confident that children will be able to enjoy their time at school and make progress.

7. What if my child becomes ill during the course of the day?

It is extremely important that, on any given day, parents/carers do not send any child to school if they are ill, whether this relates to COVID-19 or not. Controlling the transmission of the virus is the first control in the Government’s hierarchy to manage and mitigate the risk of COVID-19.

If a child begins feeling unwell during the day and the symptoms could be linked to COVID-19, a dedicated first aid room has been identified in each school. Please be aware that staff supervising pupils until they can be collected will wear PPE and we will follow Department of Health guidelines in cleaning this room.

The Health and Safety Executive is likely to be informed of any child or adult who becomes unwell whilst at school and displays symptoms of the virus. Staff or pupils who become symptomatic are now eligible for a COVID-19 test.

8. What about the Year Groups not in school?

Staff will continue to prepare and monitor work completed by other year groups. Time has been set aside to enable them to do this, alongside the commitment to teach the “bubbles” in school.

We have no information yet on how other year groups will be able to return to school. The Government will need to look at this very carefully as creating “bubbles” of no more than 15 children doubles the staffing required in most schools.

9. My child is in a Year Group designated to return, but I do not intend sending them to school. What support will be available?

Attendance is a decision which will be made by parents/carers. The Government has made it clear that schools will not be held accountable for attendance during this academic year and parents/carers will not be reported to the Education Welfare Service if they choose not to send their children to school.

Staff will now be fully committed to teaching designated year groups in school whilst providing work for other groups not yet identified by the Government. They will not, therefore, be in a position to support online learning in the way in which they have been doing thus far. Parents/carers will be signposted to online resources, but packs of work may not be available from June 8th onwards.

The only exception to this will be where pupils have been advised not to attend school on medical grounds in which case staff will do whatever they can to provide appropriate work and support.

10. What about school uniform and lunches?

Although we would always encourage pupils to wear school uniform, the most important consideration by far is that parents/carers are able to send pupils to schools in freshly washed clothes. If this means that pupils need to wear their own clothes on some days, or throughout the week, rather than school uniform, that will be acceptable for this period. We are also aware that some pupils may have grown out of school shoes and replacing these will have been extremely difficult, if not impossible. Alternative footwear such as trainers or casual shoes will be acceptable.

Lunch is already supplied to EYFS and Year 1 pupils and this offer is now being extended to Year 6 pupils. Lunch will be packaged so that it can be taken directly to pupils, thus reducing movement round the school and reducing cleaning.

11. My child is in Year 6 and I am concerned about transition to High School. What will happen?

Government guidance has made it clear that it does not expect induction to take place this year. However, all Trust schools will do whatever they can to support this process and it is likely that all those pupils transferring to **Stowupland High School** will be able to spend a day at the High School in their “bubble”, accompanied by their teacher.

A limited number of other “bubbles” may be present on the same day, but groups will be kept well apart and be housed in separate areas (and possible buildings) of the school. The experience will be different

from previous years, but all staff want to make it as meaningful as possible. This offer will also be made to other primary schools and further information will be published as soon as possible.

The Trust is extremely fortunate in having Mrs Cook - an experienced primary headteacher - leading the transition process to High School.

12. How can I be sure that it is safe for my child to return to school?

The present situation is unprecedented. The Government has been clear in saying that there is much about the virus that is not known and that there are no guarantees.

In terms of the physical environment, there has already been a deep clean in all Trust schools and there are enhanced cleaning and site routines operating in response to COVID-19.

Schools have also benefited from the fact they have been open throughout the lockdown period and therefore utilities and services have been subject to routine compliance checks. All schools are in the process of completing a risk assessment for their own site and working arrangements and there will be external quality assurance **at all sites** prior to opening.

The most recent information from scientific advisers has identified the following hierarchy of controls to control the spread of COVID-19 and this will result in different arrangements for both staff and learners.

SAGE Hierarchy of Control:

1. *Controlling the transmission of the disease:* minimising contact with children and adults who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
2. *Management and control through personal hygiene:* cleaning hands more often than usual - washing hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and drying them thoroughly or using alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered;
3. *Ensuring good respiratory hygiene:* promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
4. *Enhanced cleaning regimes:* cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products such as detergents (please note that bleach should not be used routinely in a school setting);
5. *Minimising contact and mixing (social distancing):* altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times).

The arrangements and resources in each school will seek to support all controls. We are, for example, ensuring that there is a cleaner on site throughout the school day, in addition to morning and evening cleaning regimes. Additional resources will also be in place in each classroom: tissues, pedal bins, sanitiser, wipes etc.

NB: Some staff in school may be wearing elements of PPE, depending on the age groups taught and the activities being undertaken. Full PPE will be worn when dealing with children (or staff) who become unwell during the day.

13. What about visitors to the school?

Prior to lockdown, we had implemented checks and the use of hand sanitiser prior to any visitor entering the building.

With wider opening, there will be no visitors unless it is absolutely essential (contractors undertaking emergency repairs for example) and there will be enhanced requirements such as wearing a face mask.

We will also be unable to accommodate visits by parents/carers. Schools will be available by telephone (the office will be open throughout the school day) and virtual meetings with staff will also be possible at a mutually convenient time.

We have endeavoured to focus on some of the areas raised most frequently by parents, carers and pupils. Concerns are entirely understandable, but we hope this information has begun to clarify some points and provide some reassurance.

Individual schools will be providing more detail relating to the organisation of their own sites, the particular routines they will be establishing and the curriculum on offer. There will also be the opportunity to respond to the individual concerns of parents. We appreciate that this is a worrying time, but all schools remain firmly committed to the safety and well-being of the communities they serve.