



ST THOMAS CATHOLIC ACADEMIES TRUST
STAYING SAFE IN SCHOOL DURING COVID-19
POLICY

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ST THOMAS CATHOLIC ACADEMIES TRUST (STCAT)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic 'lockdown', schools have remained open for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Once the government suggested that primary schools should start to re-open to children in Nursery (where applicable), Reception, Year 1, and Year 6, all STCAT schools carried out risk assessments and drew up detailed plans, adapting these in line with government Guidance each time it was updated. Schools will continue to watch for future updates or changes.
- 1.2 Secondary schools have been asked to provide some level of face-to-face support for students in Years 10 and 12 from a later date. The two secondary schools in STCAT have also prepared risk assessments and plans.
- 1.3 As part of this new development, the STCAT Board of Directors has adopted this policy, focusing on keeping our school communities safe.
- 1.4 We recognise that there is, understandably, a great deal of anxiety in our school community about how pupils can safely return without them or others being placed at risk. We believe that in order to address these concerns, it is important that we are transparent with our school community about the steps we are taking to minimise the risks and how we propose to manage the gradual re-integration of pupils into our schools.
- 1.5 We are asking our school community (staff, parents and carers, contractors and volunteers) to work with us to help keep staff and pupils safe and ensure that the best education possible can continue to be provided to our school community.
- 1.6 This policy, therefore, forms part of the Trust's overall response to managing the safe return of pupils to our schools. Each school's individual Risk Assessment and Operational Plan gives the details of the preparations that have been made. In addition, the Board of Directors have approved other policy additions on behalf of the whole Trust: A Remote Learning Policy; an addendum to each school's Safeguarding Policy; and an addendum to each school's Behaviour Policy. All such additions deal directly with issues arising from the circumstances of the pandemic.
- 1.7 In developing this policy, and in all the preparatory work undertaken by our schools, proper consideration has been given to 'Guidance' from the Department for Education (DfE). Such Guidance has been very regularly updated by the Department since the start of the pandemic, and we anticipate that there will be many more changes and developments over the next months.
- 1.8 All current DfE Guidance is available on their website. They have a special section for Coronavirus/Covid-19.
- 1.9 Individual schools, the Strategic Executive Leader of STCAT, and Directors, will keep abreast of these changes and modify policies and procedures as might be required. They will regularly engage with the wider school community in order to identify any local changes that would improve practices or procedures.
- 1.10 We will have regard to our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty when we are designing and implementing control measures to manage risks in the school environment.

- 1.11 The Board of Directors take the health and safety of our school community very seriously. The nature of the risks posed by the coronavirus are such that our schools have to make a number of significant changes to the way they usually operate in order to re-open safely. We recognise that some of these changes may cause some inconvenience and disruption to staff, pupils, visitors, and contractors but we are required to take these steps in order to keep people safe while they are on our school premises.
- 1.12 We also recognise that there may be some uncertainty as we all adjust to new ways of working and interacting with each other. To address this, individual Headteachers will aim to send out regular communications to their school community which are clear and consistent. We will also provide training to members of staff on our new procedures.
- 1.13 We wish to extend our gratitude to everyone who plays their part in complying with our new arrangements and to ask for patience while we all adjust to a new way of educating our children.
- 1.14 The Directors also wish to acknowledge and extend their gratitude on behalf of the whole school community for the hard work and dedication of all members of staff who are working tirelessly to keep our school community safe in such challenging circumstances.

2. WHAT PUPILS AND PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

- 2.1 The Government's intention is that Nursery, Reception, Year 1, and Year 6 should be the first years to be invited back to school. In addition, the Government are encouraging all eligible children (key workers' children and vulnerable children) to attend school (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household), even if parents are able to keep their children at home.
- 2.2 The Government has also stated that it would in due course like secondary schools to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 students.
- 2.3 A decision has been made by each school in the Trust as to the date it will open and for which year groups. These decisions have been ratified by the Board of Directors.
- 2.4 There is a hierarchy of measures that all schools will be implementing in line with Government Guidance in order to keep our schools safe during the coronavirus pandemic. These include the following:
- 2.4.1 minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend our schools;
 - 2.4.2 cleaning hands more often than usual - 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;
 - 2.4.3 ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach;
 - 2.4.4 cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products, such as detergents and bleach;
 - 2.4.5 minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times).
- 2.5 In addition to the above measures and in order to comply with government Guidance, our schools are required to make a number of changes to school life in order to minimise the risk of the coronavirus spreading in school. Some of these changes are explained in this policy and others are identified in schools' Risk Assessments, which will be regularly reviewed in the light of Government advice. These assessments examine the schools' overall risk levels and identify additional and specific measures that need to be put in place to address those risks.
- 2.6 Individual school action plans have been developed, by each school, which take into account any particular risks that need to be considered; for example, how pupils are dropped off and collected by parents / carers; any furniture or equipment which needs to be moved in order to provide adequate space; and any other logistical issues which might arise.
- 2.7 Headteachers and staff will keep parents informed of all new arrangements and any future changes in them. Until further notice, schools will be generally closed to visitors and any conversations with parents or carers will be arranged in advance and conducted by telephone.

- 2.8 The Guidance requires pupils to be split into groups of no more than 15 pupils and one teacher (and, if needed, a teaching assistant). If there are any shortages of teachers, then the guidance states that teaching assistants can be allocated to lead a group, working under the direction of a teacher.
- 2.9 For early years settings, the Guidance states that existing space requirements and staff to child ratios for these age groups, as set out in the early years statutory framework, should allow for small group working. Where the physical layout of a setting does not allow children to be kept in small groups, and to avoid mixing of children between groups, schools will exercise judgement in ensuring the highest standards of safety are maintained.
- 2.10 Each 'group' of children and the staff members who are leading that group of pupils should not mix with others in the school. As far as possible, members of staff who are assigned to a group will remain the same, though for secondary schools there will be some subject specialist rotation of staff. It is therefore likely that some children will be allocated to a group with a member of staff who is not their usual teacher. Where this is the case, we will ensure that members of staff are provided with relevant educational information about all the pupils in their group to assist with pupils being re-integrated into school and to ensure that any safeguarding concerns or special educational needs can be properly taken into account.
- 2.11 Within each group, pupils are required to keep apart where possible although the Guidance recognises that social distancing cannot be maintained at all times especially with younger children. The Guidance also states that while in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk. We will ensure that, wherever possible children and young people use the same classroom or area of a school throughout the day. Objects and surfaces that are touched regularly will be cleaned throughout the day and schools will be thoroughly cleaned at the end of the day in line with Government Guidance. Where appropriate, and possible, pupils will be seated at the same desk each day with space between pupils where possible.
- 2.12 As many schools are not designed to cater for large numbers of small groups of pupils, each school will decide on the steps that need to be put in place to keep contact with others to a minimum. As well as this possibly involving staggered drop off and collection times as noted above, pupils may be required to eat their lunch in the classroom.
- 2.13 Each school will inform parents of any arrangements for school meals – which are very unlikely to be hot meals for the foreseeable future. The details of each school's plan, and of the provision for those who are eligible for free school meals, will be communicated to parents.
- 2.14 As far as possible, the school will try to allocate children to a specific group if there is a good reason to do so, for example, twins or if children are being dropped off and collected by one childminder. In addition, once a child joins their 'group' or class, they cannot change groups after that point as the Guidance does not allow children to mix with other groups, to reduce the risk of the infection spreading.
- 2.15 If a school is continuing to care for vulnerable children and children of critical workers in other year groups, they will also be split into small groups of no more than 15 and will be required to comply with the arrangements being put in place to keep schools safe.
- 2.16 If a school within the Trust is unable to provide small groups for all eligible years, the Headteacher, in accordance with Guidance, has the flexibility to focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups and, then, to prioritise groups of children as follows:

- 2.16.1 infant schools - nursery (where applicable) and reception; or
- 2.16.2 primary schools - nursery (where applicable), reception and year 1.
- 2.17 There may be occasions when our schools will need to ask certain classes or groups of children not to come if we are unable to comply with the Guidance requiring us to provide small groups, for example, due to staff shortages or if we are informed that the infection threat level has risen significantly in our school community. We may be either advised or directed to close by Public Health England, the Department for Education or other Government department.
- 2.18 Headteachers will be monitoring the risk level in our schools on a daily basis, They will ask staff and contractors to indicate each day whether they are fit for work and they will be asking parents and carers to keep their school informed of their child's attendance at school and the reasons for any absence, whether that be as a consequence of self-isolating due to vulnerability or because of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or because someone in the household is being shielded. More detail is set out below.
- 2.19 Our schools will aim to give parents / carers as much notice as possible of any subsequent school closure or arrangements to send groups home but there may be occasions when the decision will need to be communicated at short notice. We understand that this may cause inconvenience and difficulties to parents / carers regarding childcare and working arrangements, but any such decisions will be made in the interests of the safety and welfare of our school communities.
- 2.20 In addition, it is also likely that schools will need to make adjustments to our new arrangements: for example, in order to comply with any updated Guidance from the DfE, in order to safely accommodate additional children as they come back to school and / or in order to address any issues which arise. The school will aim to clearly communicate any changes and provide as much notice as circumstances allow.
- 2.21 Each primary school within the Trust has developed and communicated a plan to parents / carers which explains:
 - 2.21.1 which group their child is in;
 - 2.21.2 what time parents / carers are required to drop off their child and collect them from school;
 - 2.21.3 where parents / carers should drop off and collect their child;
 - 2.21.4 any new arrangements for dropping off and collecting children from school including how children will be safely handed over between the school and parents / carers and where / how parents should wait for children at pick up times;
 - 2.21.5 that if their child needs to be accompanied to school, only one parent should attend;
 - 2.21.6 whether or not pupils are required to wear school uniform; and
 - 2.21.7 what our procedures are if parents / carers need to drop off or collect a child outside of their allocated time, for example, due to doctors appointments or if a child becomes unwell.

Parents / carers will be asked to provide up-to-date contact information to ensure that the school can communicate effectively with everyone who is affected by the new arrangements.

As secondary schools start to re-open – initially to provide face-to-face support to pupils in year 10 and year 12, and later to other year groups – they will also send out clear instructions to parents and pupils about the arrangements for attending school.

2.22 PUPIL ATTENDANCE

2.23 Many parents / carers are concerned about sending their child to school. Government guidance states that children who are in the year groups identified for the phased return to school can attend school unless the pupil has been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable¹ due to pre-existing medical conditions and have been advised to shield. These children are not expected to attend school and they should continue to be supported at home as much as possible.

2.24 If a pupil lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, it is advised they only attend school if:

2.24.1 stringent social distancing can be adhered to; and

2.24.2 they are able to understand and follow those instructions.

2.25 Therefore parents / carers must notify the Headteacher at their child's school if they believe their child lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable at which point the school will undertake a risk assessment. If following the risk assessment the school concludes that the above conditions cannot be satisfied, those children will be asked not to attend school and will be supported to learn at home. This will be kept under review as new guidance is issued by the Government.

2.26 Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A small minority of children will fall into this category, and parents / carers should follow medical advice if their child is in this category and must notify their child's school about any medical advice which the school needs to be aware of if the medical advice confirms that the child can attend school. If a pupil lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, the Guidance states that they can attend school.

2.27 In addition, pupils and parents / carers **must not** enter a school if they or anyone in their household are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus or have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. At the time of writing this policy, the NHS website lists the main symptoms as follows:

2.27.1 a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature);

2.27.2 a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual);

2.27.3 loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

The NHS website states that most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms. Stay at home, apply for a Test, and follow the self-isolating guidance while awaiting the result. Parents, staff, and children are all eligible for Tests.

2.28 Until the DfE confirm otherwise, attendance at school for the time being is not compulsory. Our schools will be required to complete an attendance register and the Guidance requires schools to contact parents to find out why a pupil is not attending school and to discuss how, and when, a pupil can be re-integrated into school again. Parents / carers can change their minds if they initially decide not to send their child to school when the school reopens for their child's year group but they must contact the Headteacher at the school to notify them if they subsequently decide to send their child into school.

2.29 We recognise that children have been out of school for a long time in very difficult circumstances. We will therefore ask parents / carers to inform us about any particular issues, anxieties or concerns they have about their child which we need to know about in order to help them to safely reintegrate into school, for example, concerns about physical or mental wellbeing or issues relating to behaviour or your domestic circumstances which could impact on your child. School communications to parents will explain how parents / carers can notify them about any such concerns in a confidential and secure manner.

2.30 In order to keep to the 2-metre rule, parents and pupils are encouraged to walk to school where possible or cycle if it is safe to do so. Parents / carers and, where appropriate, pupils should ensure they comply with the recommendations on transport to and from education or childcare setting (including avoiding peak times).

2.31 The DfE's guidance recommends that staff, children and learners do not wear any type of face coverings or face masks and instead other measures – such as distancing, limiting numbers of contacts, cleaning and hygiene – should be used to control the spread of the virus. The Guidance also states that face covering should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

2.32 Please see individual schools' Risk Assessments and Plans for full details of how they will endeavour to keep everyone safe, and what will happen if someone falls ill at school.

2.33 COMPLIANCE

2.34 It will take some time for pupils and parents to adjust to the new measures and arrangements that we are putting in place to keep our school community safe when our schools re-open. We will take reasonable steps to educate and remind our school communities about what they need to do which will include posters around the school site, verbal reminders, staff directing pupils and parents as appropriate, signage, regular communications and information on school websites.

2.35 We will also take additional steps to support younger pupils who are less able to understand the reasons for many of the changes as well as vulnerable pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, especially where their needs are such that they may struggle to cope with a school day and building layout which is unfamiliar to them. We will work with parents / carers and local authorities to put in place strategies to help children with special educational needs to re-integrate back into school.

- 2.36 We are also relying on all members of the school community to ‘play their part’ to help us to keep the school safe for everyone. The various measures that are being introduced are an integral part of our health and safety responsibilities. If a parent has a particular concern about any of the measures introduced by schools, they should contact the Headteacher at their child’s school.
- 2.37 Younger members of the school community and some children with special educational needs will require significant direction from members of staff and, where appropriate, parents / carers to help them to understand and comply with the new arrangements.
- 2.38 Pupils who do not comply with the ‘staying safe rules’ will be reminded by staff about the rules and what they need to do in order to comply with them. However, if:
- 2.38.1 a pupil repeatedly breaks the staying safe rules;
 - 2.38.2 a member of staff is satisfied that a pupil has deliberately broken the staying safe rules;
 - 2.38.3 a pupil breaks the staying safe rules in such a way that, in the member of staff’s judgement, puts others at risk,

then, depending on the circumstances and taking the pupil’s age and special needs (if relevant) into account, a school is entitled to deal with the matter as a disciplinary issue under its Behaviour Policy and the Behaviour Policy Addendum – which has been specifically written for present circumstances and has been approved by the Board of Directors. Therefore, this policy is expressly amending our schools’ behaviour policies to take the staying safe rules into account. Members of staff are expected to exercise their professional judgment and act reasonably if they are responding to any such behaviour or conduct. Any sanctions that are applied will be reasonable, proportionate, and fair and, for the avoidance of doubt, may include a fixed term or permanent exclusion.

- 2.39 Our schools’ behaviour policies will be further modified if any of the sanctions cannot be applied due to the measures in place to keep our school community safe.
- 2.40 We also require parents / carers to follow the procedures that we implement in order to safely manage visitors on our school site and to comply with the rules where relevant, for example, by not sending pupils to school if they or anyone in their household is showing coronavirus symptoms or has come into contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. We ask parents / carers to set a good example to our pupils when they attend school by following our rules. All families should also comply with any ‘lockdown’ restrictions that are in place from time to time in order to minimise the risk of the virus being transmitted in school.
- 2.41 If a pupil comes to school and they or the adult with them is displaying symptoms of coronavirus or we reasonably believe that they or someone in their household has tested positive for coronavirus or has come into contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, the pupils will be sent home. This will not be classified as an exclusion but will instead be a measure being taken by the school to manage health and safety.

2.42 LEARNING

- 2.43 Staff, pupils and parents all wish to ensure that children adapt quickly to being back at school. Although our schools will aim to give lessons as best they can, the Government have said that schools are not expected to provide a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’

when they re-open and the initial priority will be to ensure that everyone is safely reintegrated back into school. It will take some time for staff and pupils to adjust to their new learning environments and, in some cases, staff will be teaching a new group of pupils. In addition, teachers will need time to assess pupils' progress and development following the school closures and many pupils will need time to adapt to being in a school environment again.

- 2.44 For these reasons and in order to comply with the measures being put in place to reduce the risk of the virus spreading in school, it is likely that timetables and lesson plans will change during this period and it is also likely that teachers will need to implement different learning strategies from those the pupils may be used to. Our schools will need to adapt to a new way of learning as in some cases the usual equipment and resources that teachers normally use might not be available in order to comply with DfE guidance and to reduce the level of cleaning required.
- 2.45 It is also likely that many pupils will struggle with their mental health because of the impact of the coronavirus. Our schools will encourage parents / carers to have an open dialogue with teachers so that our staff have enough information to support pupils as they return to school. Where appropriate, schools will discuss with parents / carers whether pupils will benefit from additional support from external agencies. Pupils should also be encouraged to talk to a member of staff if they are struggling with mental health issues.
- 2.46 Our schools' safeguarding policies will continue to apply as schools re-open to pupils. There is also an Addendum to each school's Safeguarding Policy which has been prepared for these specific circumstances and approved by the Board of Directors.
- 2.47 As regards the year groups that have not yet returned to school, staff will use reasonable efforts to continue to provide online learning resources for those pupils. As the main focus will be on safely reintegrating the pupils who are returning to school, it is possible that staff availability for online learning will be affected but schools will try to continue to offer online support where possible.

3. STAFF

3.1 RETURN TO WORK AND ABSENCE

- 3.2 This Staff procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service. Some parts may apply to workers and contractors. Insofar as a relevant provision does apply to workers and contractors this will be expressly stated.
- 3.3 When a STCAT school is open to any pupils, the Board of Directors expect all employees (and workers) who have been asked by their Headteacher to return to school do so, and to work when the school would normally be open (or otherwise, in accordance with their contracts, or as directed by the Headteacher).

This will not apply to employees and workers who are at the relevant time:

- 3.3.1 working from home and it has been agreed by the Trust that they continue to do so;
 - 3.3.2 extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding;
 - 3.3.3 clinically vulnerable and have been advised by a medical professional to shield;
 - 3.3.4 self-isolating in accordance with Government guidelines because they or someone in their household is displaying symptoms of COVID19 and have communicated this to the Headteacher;
 - 3.3.5 on furlough leave;
 - 3.3.6 support staff on annual leave;
 - 3.3.7 on sick leave;
 - 3.3.8 on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave;
 - 3.3.9 on any other leave of absence that has been agreed and/or authorised by the Headteacher in writing in advance.
- 3.4 It is natural that some staff will be worried about coming into school. We are working in an unprecedented context. Headteachers, local governors and the Board of Directors all take the wellbeing of our staff very seriously and will comply with legal obligation and all government up-to-date Guidance to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all our staff. Schools will also provide training for staff on any new rules and practices. Each school's Risk Assessment and Plan give details on the steps they are taking to ensure the health and safety of staff and pupils in the new 'reopened' environment and to provide staff with a safe working environment. These measures will be kept under regular review.
- 3.5 All staff who are covered by the exemptions at 3.3 are expected to return to work when the exemption/s cease/s to apply to them (for example when they complete the mandatory period of self-isolation) if they have been asked to do so.
- 3.6 The Board of Directors acknowledge their duty of care to employees. Any return to work whether on site or remotely will be on the basis set out in this guidance and school plans, and employees returning to work will be expected to comply with these and to observe the restrictions set out therein. They will be deemed to have accepted these on the

understanding that the Trust will not be responsible for any harm or loss suffered by employees not complying with this guidance or beyond what is expected.

- 3.7 Government advice is that staff do not need to wear a face covering or any other PPE for protection in schools except for: nursery staff who may have to undertake intimate care of children and the 'named person' in each school who will care for a child with symptoms prior to that child being sent home. School Plans set out exactly what will happen if a child or adult falls ill at school.
- 3.8 The use of PPE in these specific circumstances does not relieve employees from their personal responsibility to comply with the guidelines set out in this guide and in their school's Plan – and in particular with regard to guidance as to frequent hand cleaning (alcohol based or hot soapy water).

3.9 ABSENCE REPORTING

- 3.10 All employees are expected to comply with the school's Absence Reporting Procedure and must report their absence from work in the usual way. A failure to do so will be treated as an unauthorised absence and appropriate action may be taken under the school's Absence Reporting Procedure. The Board of Directors do, however, recognise that, in the case of sickness absence, obtaining GP letters and/or a Statement of Fitness for Work (FIT note) may take longer than usual during the current pandemic. Our schools will, therefore, be willing to be flexible in this regard. If you experience difficulties in providing the required documents/FIT notes within the usual timescales set out in the school's Absence Reporting Policy, you should discuss this with the Headteacher as soon as possible and without delay. You should nevertheless report your absence in a timely manner and provide the necessary evidence as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 3.11 Employees who do not attend work when required and/or fail to report their absence and/or their absence is not for an authorised reason this will be treated as unauthorised absence and may lead to non-payment of wages and disciplinary action. However, the Board of Directors understand that some employees may be anxious about returning to work. We wish to work with those employees to alleviate their concerns. In the first instance we encourage those who have concerns about returning to work to discuss them with the Headteacher or their line manager.
- 3.12 No employee, worker or contractor should attend school premises unless specifically instructed to do so by the school.

Self-Isolation, Testing and Shielding – All Staff and their Family Members

COVID-19: Self-isolation and Testing

- 3.13 The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste. If any employee, worker or contractor or anyone in their household displays any symptoms of COVID-19 the first thing they must do is stay at home and get health advice by calling 111, which is likely to include applying for a Test. Do not go to A&E or attend your GP surgery. You must ensure that you comply with any health advice given to you and with the current government guidelines on self-isolating. If you experience symptoms of COVID-19 whilst on school premises you must follow the steps laid out in the school Plan.

- 3.14 The health and safety of our staff and pupils is paramount. If any employee, worker or contractor or anyone in their household displays symptoms of COVID-19 they **must not** attend school premises and must report their symptoms to the Headteacher as soon as possible so that the situation and any risk can be managed.
- 3.15 The Board of Directors will not tolerate the health and safety of any of our staff or pupils being placed at risk. Attending school premises when you have COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, or when you have been advised to self-isolate, failing to report your symptoms as required by this policy or failing to follow the latest government advice on self-isolating will be treated with utmost seriousness and in the case of employees may amount to misconduct resulting in disciplinary action being taken against you.
- 3.16 It remains the responsibility of all staff (including workers and contractors) to report any symptoms of COVID-19 to their Headteacher or Manager in order that the appropriate form of action can be taken: e.g. self-isolation for 7/14 days and, if necessary, ensuring appropriate cover during the period of absence. An isolation note can be obtained from NHS 111 to cover the period during which you are self-isolating.
- 3.17 It may be possible for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 but feel well or are self-isolating because someone in their household has symptoms, to work from home on alternative duties. The School cannot guarantee that home working would be available to you but the Headteacher would be willing to discuss this with individual employees should it become necessary. While some year groups are still not allowed in school, involvement from home in remote learning for pupils will be a possibility for teaching staff.
- 3.18 Where a member of staff (including workers and contractors) reports symptoms of COVID-19 and/or self-isolates, in order to comply with its duty of care and for potential contact tracing, the school may need to disclose to staff, parents and pupils that there has been a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Please refer to individual schools' Risk Assessments and Plans on this point. The school will not disclose the name/identity of the affected staff member or any personal data relating to that individual unless the relevant GDPR exemptions apply or the individual has given consent.
- 3.19 In light of the unprecedented situation, any period of absence due to self-isolating will not be taken into account when considering individual staff absence records and in any subsequent absence management process that may be initiated by the School.
- 3.20 All critical/key workers, including education and childcare workers, who are displaying COVID-19 symptoms are eligible for a free test. This can be booked online via the government booking site. There is no obligation on the school or Board of Directors to provide staff with COVID-19 tests.
- 3.21 All staff (including workers and contractors) have a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions or omissions at work. e.g. by not coming to work when they have symptoms of COVID-19 or when they have been advised to self-isolate. All employees also have a duty to cooperate with any preventative steps taken by the school. Any breaches in this duty may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.
- 3.22 The Board of Directors expect all staff (including agency workers and contractors) who are returning to school premises to comply with and promote the latest government guidelines, as well as the school's Health and Safety Procedures as set out in the Health and Safety Policy and the School's Risk Assessment and Plan. Staff should also ensure that they follow any updated government guidance or the school's or Directors'

reasonable instruction that may be given from time to time, so as to ensure the health and safety of staff and pupils. Failure of employees to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken. In the case of agency workers and contractors, failure to do so may result in the termination of their contract.

- 3.23 We expect all staff (including workers and contractors) to work with us to ensure the health and safety of our staff and pupils. If you see someone not complying with this policy, any updated government guidance, or the school's or Directors' reasonable instruction that may be given from time to time, staff are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the Headteacher or your Manager, in confidence, so appropriate action can be taken.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

- 3.24 Government advice remains that those individuals who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable should 'shield', but recent guidance says:

3.24.1 They may leave their house for exercise, and meet one other person beyond their own household, outside, always keeping the 2-metre distance rule.

3.24.2 They must strictly avoid contact with anyone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough and/or loss of or change to the sense of smell or taste.

- 3.25 Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should have received a shielding letter or advice from their GP telling them to shield. All employees and workers in receipt of such a letter or advice from their GP will be required to provide the Headteacher or Manager with a copy of the shielding letter or equivalent FIT note/letter from their GP, in order to allow the school to manage their absence from work appropriately.

- 3.26 If you live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, the government guidance makes clear that other than the clinically extremely vulnerable person the rest of the household do not need to start shielding themselves, but they should do what they can to support them in shielding and to carefully follow guidance on social distancing. The school will work with those employees who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable to reduce or eliminate any risk caused by their return to school premises.

- 3.27 Where employees do not wish to shield themselves or any family member when advised to do so, and express a desire to return to work – that is, to attend work notwithstanding the potential risk to themselves and family members, they do so at their own risk and no responsibility will be accepted by the School or the Board of Directors for any consequences of that decision. The school may require the employee to undertake an appropriate risk assessment, including obtaining an Occupational Health report prior to their return, and the Headteacher can insist that they work from home.

- 3.28 In light of the unprecedented situation, any period of absence due to shielding by those staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable will not be taken into account when considering individual staff absence records and in any subsequent absence management process that may be initiated by the school.

Clinically vulnerable

- 3.29 Some people, including those aged 70 and over, those with specific chronic pre-existing conditions, and pregnant women, are clinically vulnerable.

- 3.30 Unlike the clinically extremely vulnerable, those who fall into the clinically vulnerable group have not been advised to shield but are nevertheless considered to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. As restrictions begin to ease, this group who are clinically vulnerable should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household and to adhere to distancing rules.
- 3.32 Any employees and workers who are clinically vulnerable and who have also been advised by their GP not to leave their home (i.e. to shield) will be required to provide the Headteacher/Manager with a copy of the shielding letter or equivalent FIT note/letter from their GP, in order to allow the school to manage their absence from work appropriately..
- 3.33 In light of the unprecedented situation, any period of absence of clinically vulnerable staff who are shielding on medical advice will not be taken into account when considering individual staff absence records and in any subsequent absence management process that may be initiated by the school.

Sick Pay

- 3.34 In order to qualify for statutory sick pay (SSP) and contractual sick pay in accordance with employees' terms and conditions and the Trust's Absence/Sick Leave Policy (sick pay) you must be an employee or worker and absent from work due to incapacity. Contractors do not qualify for SSP or contractual sick pay under the Trust's policies but may do so under their own employer's policies.
- 3.35 For COVID-19-related absence, sick pay is available to those employees and workers who are self-isolating or shielding from the first day of absence, provided that they meet all other eligibility requirements and have not exhausted their entitlement to sick pay. Employee sickness absence must be reported to the school in the usual way and appropriate evidence provided.
- 3.36 Term-time-only workers who become sick outside of their contract will not be entitled to sick pay as they are not an employee during those weeks. Such workers should refer to their terms and conditions of employment for further information about sick pay entitlements.
- 3.37 Any queries relating to pay during COVID-19-related sickness absence should be directed to the Headteacher.

Childcare

- 3.38 The Board of Directors recognise that some staff have childcare responsibilities. We are committed to supporting staff with child/ren to allow them to return to work and/or continue working if requested to do so.
- 3.39 Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response have been able to access schools and educational settings for their children throughout the current pandemic. Critical/key workers include those who work in education and childcare. The current Government advice is that whilst many parents working in critical sectors may be able to look after their child/ren at home, attendance at schools and educational settings is strongly encouraged. Furthermore, from 1 June 2020 the Government asked nurseries and other early year providers, including childminders, to begin welcoming back all children. If a member of staff's child/ren is/are in one of the year groups that have returned or are due to return when schools partially reopen, this should assist with their childcare needs. If their child/ren is/are not in one of these year groups, then they will still have

access to school and educational settings as child/ren of critical workers. All these measures should allow you to return to work.

- 3.40 If you do not consider the various childcare provisions available to you as a critical/key worker to be adequate to allow you to return to work when requested to do so, you should discuss this with your Headteacher to explore what other options may be available to you.

Health and Wellbeing

- 3.41 The Board of Directors recognise that the coronavirus outbreak may have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties to some of its employees. We encourage all employees who are affected to raise this with their line manager or Headteacher so that appropriate support can be provided.

- 3.42 It is important that employees and workers try to maintain a work/life balance insofar as possible, particularly those working from home. You should schedule regular 'catch-ups' with your team and line manager and discuss any concerns you may have about your health and wellbeing with them. The school will continue to offer support and assistance to those who require it and can advise staff on where to find any further support if they should need it.

- 3.43 If any member of staff becomes concerned about a colleague's health and wellbeing, they should bring this to the attention of the Headteacher, in confidence, so that appropriate support and assistance can be offered.

- 3.44 Employees who are shielding and/or working remotely should also have regular 'catch-ups' with their team and line manager for updates on any changes. This will also enable the manager to ask about their health and wellbeing and offer support if appropriate.

- 3.45 The school will manage the return to work of those employees returning from sick leave, whether their sickness absence was COVID-19-related or not, in accordance with the Trust's (CES) Sickness Absence Policy, and will conduct return to work meetings and make Occupational Health referrals as necessary.

3.46 FLEXIBLE WORKING

- 3.47 All employees have a legal right to request flexible working, provided that they have worked for the school or Trust for 26 weeks.

- 3.48 If an employee requires flexible working to assist with returning to work, they should discuss this with their Headteacher and refer to the Trust's Flexible Working Policy on making a flexible working request. For teachers, given the fixed needs of a school curriculum and timetable, any possibility of flexible working, if available and approved, would most likely be limited to part-time work or a job-share.

ANNUAL LEAVE

- 3.49 Annual leave for employees will continue to accrue in the usual way during school closure, including during shielding, self-isolation, and furlough leave.

CONTRACTORS

- 3.50 The school's relationship with its contractors and any return to school premises will be primarily governed by the contract for services between them and the school.

- 3.51 All contractors who have been asked to return to school premises are expected to comply with this policy insofar as it applies to them particularly in relation to Health and Safety, Risk Assessments and Self Isolating.
- 3.52 The school is under no obligation to provide work to self-employed contractors or to pay them for any period during which they are not providing services to the school.
- 3.53 Contractors who employ staff may benefit from the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Self-employed individuals may be able to seek relief through the Government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The [School/Trust] is under no obligation to assist contractors with the CJRS or SEISS schemes or to provide them with any advice or guidance in relation to them.

VOLUNTEERS

- 3.54 In order to limit the number of people on site at any one time, no volunteers are to attend school premises unless agreed in writing in advance by the Headteacher.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY LEAVE

- 3.55 Employees who are pregnant and have been advised to shield should provide a copy of the shielding letter or equivalent FIT note/letter from their GP, in order to allow the school to manage their absence from work appropriately, which may include working from home on alternative duties if possible.
- 3.56 Pregnant employees should continue to notify the Headteacher of any scheduled antenatal appointments in the usual way so as to ensure accurate record keeping.
- 3.57 Your maternity leave will start as planned in accordance with the provision of a MATB1 certificate and/or upon the birth of your baby if it is earlier than expected. If you wish to change the date when your maternity leave is due to start you must give 28 days' notice to the Headteacher with the new proposed start date.
- 3.58 It is not possible to delay your maternity leave until the current pandemic is over. The Board of Directors will closely monitor any changes in legislation that may alter this position.
- 3.59 Support for pregnant employees will be provided in accordance with the Trust's employment policies and relevant risk assessments.

DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- 3.60 The law and the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures still apply during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes while social distancing and lockdown measures are in place.
- 3.61 The Trust's (CES) Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures apply to employees only. They do not apply to workers or contractors.
- 3.62 Schools have an obligation to deal with grievances promptly and without unreasonable delay. Similarly, disciplinary matters cannot be left unaddressed, particularly where the allegations relate to serious misconduct or safeguarding issues.
- 3.63 Any disciplinary or grievance procedure at this time will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's (CES) Disciplinary or Grievance Procedure. However, some adjustments to

that procedure may be necessary, such as extending the usual timescales to accommodate staff absences and dealing with the matter in such a way as to abide by public health guidelines around social distancing. This may involve but is not limited to conducting investigations remotely and/or via video/telephone conference. The right to be accompanied to a formal disciplinary or grievance meeting by a colleague or trade union representative will still apply, albeit your chosen representative may need to participate remotely.

- 3.64 Where a pre-existing disciplinary process was suspended due to school closure, sick leave or shielding, the intention of the school is to resume that process as soon as possible after school has reopened or you return to work. In the case of sickness absence or shielding the intention is to resume the process when Occupational Health confirms that you are able to participate whether remotely or otherwise. It is not in the interests of the employer or employee to leave a disciplinary process unresolved indefinitely. However, some adjustments may be necessary, including but not limited to: restarting the process again where the original investigator is not available to continue with the process due to furlough, shielding or self-isolating; and/or conducting the investigation/hearing remotely by video or conference call.
- 3.65 If an employee is currently suspended from work as part of a pre-existing disciplinary process, their suspension will continue. The school will aim to keep the period of suspension as brief as possible, taking into account the current COVID-19 crisis. We reiterate again that suspension is not a disciplinary sanction and will be kept under regular review.
- 3.66 Employees who have an issue, problem at work, or grievance are encouraged to raise this with their line manager in the first instance as most issues are capable of an informal resolution. If an employee wishes to raise a formal grievance, they should follow the Trust's (CES) Grievance Procedure.
- 3.67 Employees who require adjustments to allow them to participate in a formal process should notify the Headteacher as soon as possible.

3.68 SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

- 3.69 The school will continue operating the Trust's (CES) Sickness Absence Policy which applies only to employees. However, as is the case with the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, some adjustments to the procedure may be necessary to take into account the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 3.70 As set out earlier, any absence associated with self-isolating or shielding will not be taken into account as part of any sickness absence management process.
- 3.71 Where a pre-existing absence management process was suspended due to school closure or shielding, the intention of the school is to resume that process as soon as possible. In the case of sickness absence or shielding, the intention is to resume the process when Occupational Health confirms that you are able to participate whether remotely or otherwise. However, it is also possible that particular circumstances at the time, related to the pandemic, might necessitate a delay.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 3.72 All employees are expected to maintain high standards of teaching, behaviour, and performance at work irrespective of the COVID-19 situation.

- 3.73 Employees who were being 'performance managed' prior to school closure will be contacted by the Headteacher to discuss resuming the process when they return to work and when appropriate support and supervision can be provided. The school proposes to take the following approach:
- 3.74.1 the process will resume from where it stopped at the point of school closure (e.g. if the process was two weeks into an eight-week plan, it will resume at two weeks).
- 3.74.2 targets may need to be revised to account for changes in duties. Any such change will be discussed with the member of staff.
- 3.75 You should refer to the Trust's (CES) Capability and Appraisal Procedures for more information on how the Trust manages employee performance. Any policy procedure which had been begun before lockdown will continue to apply when school reopens, albeit some adjustments to the policy may be necessary to account for the COVID-19 situation.
- 3.76 Annual appraisals and pay reviews may not take place at the normal time.

PROBATIONARY PERIODS

The Board of Directors recognises that employees who are in a contractual probationary period and/or whose probationary period was due to end during the period of school closure are facing some uncertainty at this time.

- 3.77 The Directors believe it to be important for those employees to be given an opportunity to complete their full probationary period at work and for their performance during the probationary period to be assessed fairly.
- 3.78 In the circumstances the approach that the Trust proposes to take is to extend the probationary period by the following:
- 3.79.1 the period of closure when the employee was not at work; and
- 3.79.2 any period of self-isolation or shielding (if applicable).
- 3.79 The affected employees will be issued with letters on their return to work with a revised end date for their probationary period. The letter will make clear that the extension is due to the COVID-19 crisis and not because of any concerns relating to performance or otherwise.
- 3.80 The school believes this approach to be fair in all the circumstances as it will ensure that no staff member is deprived of working during their full probationary period or of having their performance assessed fairly.
- 3.81 Nothing in this policy shall prevent the school from exercising its right to extend probation further where there are concerns about an employee's performance. All probationary periods are considered to be continuing until the employee receives written confirmation from the school that they have successfully completed their probationary period. This is the case even where the 'end date' of the probationary period has passed.

DATA PROTECTION

- 3.82 In an effort to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and in order to help safeguard staff, pupils and others against the risks caused by the virus, the school may

need to collect and process information from staff and their household members that would not typically be collected. For example, we might process data about the health status of our staff and individuals living in their household; the results of any COVID-19 testing; locations within the school premises that members of staff have visited – for contact tracing purposes within school. The data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection/Privacy Policy and we will only do so where the school has obtained consent or where an exception under the GDPR or related legislation applies.

3.83 All schools and the Board of Directors will comply with their legal obligations and the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

3.84 If you have any concerns about how your data is being collected or processed please contact the Local Data Protection Officer for the school or the Trust DPO.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.85 We reiterate that the Board of Directors is an equal opportunities employer and service provider. We are committed to supporting our staff and pupils at all times, and especially at this unprecedented time of COVID-19. All staff and pupils will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

4. LOCAL GOVERNORS (LACs), DIRECTORS, AND SCHOOL PROCEDURES

4.1 In order to comply with the Guidance regarding social distancing and minimising social contact, the Board of Directors and local governors will not hold face-to-face meetings until the Board is satisfied that meetings can safely be held in person. In the interim, the Directors and local governors will continue to carry out their functions remotely, for example, through video conferencing.

4.2 Directors and local governors should not attend any of the schools until further notice. If there is a specific reason why a director or local governor is required to attend the school, then they must follow the relevant school's procedures for managing visitors on site.

4.3 COMPLAINTS

4.4 The Trust Complaints Policy will continue to apply except as varied below:

4.4.1 An additional 10 working days will apply to all the timescales specified in the policy and, where necessary, the school reserves the right to extend the timescales further for individual complaints and will inform the complainant if the timescales are being extended.

4.4.2 If a complaint panel hearing is requested by a complainant, the panel will not meet face-to-face and will instead arrange for it to take place remotely, for example, by using video conferencing.

4.5 EXCLUSIONS

4.6 Schools will continue to comply with the DfE statutory exclusions guidance when they are partially or fully re-opened. In order to comply with social distancing requirements and in accordance with the latest advice provided by the DfE, the relevant body will review exclusions by using remote access, for example, video conferencing technology (where appropriate) as review meetings will not be able to take place in person.

5. VISITORS

5.1 This section of the policy applies to visitors who may attend the school site for various reasons (other than parents / carers who are attending the school site to drop off or collect their child from school in which case they should follow the information provided by their school). People who would normally visit the school site in the school day includes social workers, therapists / third parties who are working with pupils, consultants, trade union representatives and parents collecting children for appointments or because they are unwell.

5.2 In order to comply with the guidance regarding social distancing and minimising social contact, the number of visitors to any of the school sites should be kept to a minimum and visitors should only attend the school if it is necessary to do so. Where possible, other ways of communicating with the school should be considered including contacting schools by email or telephone. If a meeting is required, these should be carried out using video or telephone conferencing facilities where possible.

5.3 If a person's attendance on the school premises is unavoidable – for example, delivery drivers, refuse collection, postal services, parents who are dropping off or collecting pupils

from school outside of the usual school hours – they must abide by the particular school's procedure. Each school will have specific visitor protocols which will include details about which entrance to use and how they should report to the school where relevant (in accordance with our safeguarding protocols). As identified in their Risk Assessment, the school will implement measures to minimise the level of contact with any visitors, including the number of surfaces visitors have to touch. The school will also ensure that surfaces that visitors are likely to touch are cleaned on a regular basis. In the case of visitors or organisations who attend a school site on a regular basis, schools will agree protocols with them to enable them to attend safely if necessary.

- 5.4 All visitors to school premises must comply with the relevant school's visitor reporting protocol. Failure to comply with the protocol may lead to the person being asked to leave the school premises.
- 5.5 Please also refer to the 'Contractors' section of this policy.

6. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- 6.1 All children and young people who are subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have been included within the definition of "vulnerable" used by the DfE and have therefore, subject to the outcome of individual risk assessments, been able to attend school where their needs cannot be met safely in the home environment, or they are a child of a key worker.
- 6.2 On 30 April the Secretary of State for Education issued a Notice which amended the absolute duty of Section 42 so that from 1 May a local authority has now to use "reasonable endeavours" to discharge the duty. Government documents advising on 're-opening' of schools from 1st June reiterate this amendment.
- 6.3 On 15 May 2020 the Government updated its Guidance to provide that for all children and young people who are subject to an EHCP, attendance at school is expected where it is determined, following a risk assessment led by the child's home local authority, that their needs can be **as safely or more safely** met in the education environment. An update on 26th May suggested that risk assessments should be maintained, that parents should be involved in them, and that they should incorporate the views of the child or young person. Schools will continue to monitor updates from the government in this area.
- 6.4 Our schools have considered – and will amend and adapt from experience and in accordance with government updates – what, if any, special safety requirements, additional to those for children without EHCPs, might need to be put in place. This has been done, and will continue to be done, on an individual basis, with schools considering factors such as:
 - 6.4.1 Children likely to abscond;
 - 6.4.2 Children who require intimate care;
 - 6.4.3 Children who may have a tendency to spit or drool as part of their condition;
 - 6.4.4 Children with ASD who require routine, and who become distressed about any changes that have not been clearly explained or they do not understand;
 - 6.4.5 Children who receive therapies as part of their specified provision in school.

- 6.5 For children with ECHPs who are not currently attending school (or who are not attending school on a full time basis), a discussion will need to take place between the parents, the home local authority, the health commissioning group (where relevant) and the school to establish and clearly record what provision will be available for the pupil, so that everyone is clear about what can and cannot be provided when the child returns to school. This will also need to be kept under review, recognising that the needs of the pupil may change over time – particularly in the current circumstances – as may the availability of key staff or specific provision.