

11.1 Safe Operating Procedures- COVID-19

(Last updated 30 October 2020)

Introduction

It is important that everyone complies with the latest Government guidance on Coronavirus.

We have developed these Safe Operating Procedures based on guidance from the Department of Education and the National Institute for Health Protection specifically for Early Years. It is important that we adapt our everyday practices to ensure that we continue to offer the staff and children a safe environment. Hygiene and social distancing remain the two key elements of infection prevention and control. If any symptoms are displayed, families must be alert and self-isolate for the safety of everyone.

Compassionate leadership is at the heart of this nursery and we will do everything we can to be honest, open and to communicate with you. There will be a lot of anxieties and we acknowledge that it is OK to feel worried and that COVID-19 and the lockdowns have had an impact on everyone.

Everyone involved in the day to day running of the nursery will receive appropriate instruction and training on how to operate under the terms of the Safe Operating Procedures.

We aim to work in partnership with parents and trust that everyone understands and follows these Safe Operating Procedures.

The key principles of these procedures are:

1. Any child, staff member, parent or visitor with coronavirus symptoms must not attend nursery and must isolate at home
2. Increased cleaning processes are in place, throughout and at the end of the day
3. Children and staff members will be socially distancing as far as possible
4. Each day children will stay in their 'bubble' and not mix with children from the other 'bubble'.
5. Arrivals and departures will be staggered and children will be dropped off at separate entrances
6. Parents will not come on site or visit the classrooms unless this is explicitly arranged with the Nursery Manager or deputy e.g. in the event of a child being distressed
7. The process for settling in sessions will be managed away from the other children or outdoors.

Attendance

Children and employees are welcome to attend nursery but must not be displaying any coronavirus symptoms, the most common being a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of taste and smell. There is some suggestion that a rash or sickness and diarrhoea can also be symptom; but these have not been confirmed.

It is important that you seek medical advice if you are unsure.

It is important that children do not attend nursery if unwell for their own wellbeing and for the safety of others. Children will not be accepted into nursery if they have been given Calpol/Paracetamol or any other medication that can mask fever symptoms after 4am on their day of attendance.

If anyone is experiencing any symptoms they cannot return to nursery until they have completed the required isolation period and be symptom free or have achieved a negative test result (proof will be required). Prompt exclusion is essential to preventing the spread of infection. Children and employees who are classed as clinically vulnerable should follow their medical advice before attending nursery.

Drop off and collection of children

Parents are asked to drop off and collect their children at designated entrances and not to enter the nursery. Whilst parents are waiting, it is important to maintain social distancing by keeping a distance of two metres apart. It is preferable that only one parent carries out drop off and collection and that a face mask is worn where possible.

Temperature and symptom monitoring

Routine temperature testing is not recommended as a reliable method for identifying coronavirus. Parents and employees should follow the most up to date NHS guidelines; in particular those relating to high temperatures and/or a new continuous cough.

Travel to nursery

We know it is impossible for most families to walk to nursery because of the distance. It is better not to share transport and to travel by car, bike or walk. Face coverings have been advised by the Government for use on public transport.

Travel outside of local area

If you travel internationally or to an area of the UK under local COVID restrictions, then you must isolate accordingly or have a negative result before returning to nursery. Please check the guidelines that are in place at the time for clarification. This is to ensure every possible protection factor is in place for the staff and the children in our care. While we understand the practicality of this may seem difficult for some; we will continue to put the safety of everyone first and this is a precautionary measure that we have chosen to have in place. The only exception to this is if you have already quarantined for 14 days after your arrival back into the UK.

Implementing social distancing

It is very difficult to avoid a level of physical interaction with young children and it is important to have their wellbeing at the centre of everything we do. If a child is in need of a hug, then it would not be fair to deny them this. To help with social distancing the children will be grouped into two groups (bubbles), the baby and toddler children will form one bubble and the preschool will form the second bubble. Children will not be allowed to mix between the two bubbles whilst at nursery. Staffing will stay as consistent as possible and staff will not be mixing between the two bubbles; this allows continuity for the children but also minimises cross contamination between bubbles. Social distancing will also apply to coat pegs, seating arrangements and sleeping.

Classrooms and key groups

We operate two bubbles within the nursery. The preschool staff and children form one bubble and the babies and toddlers form the second one. The babies and toddlers are together as sometimes we need to move staff between these rooms to ensure our ratios are maintained. Sometimes, these rooms tend to merge at the start and end of the day to prevent staff lone working.

Within their bubble, children are split into smaller groups and work with their key person throughout the day. This minimises interactions further as children are kept in small consistent key groups. Each bubble has their own designated areas both indoors and outdoors. Children will have access to a full range of activities that are considered safe at this time and their learning will not be affected by the pandemic.

Mealtimes

- Children will eat in their rooms.
- The practitioners will serve the children.
- No food will be eaten out of shared platters or containers.
- The children will need to bring in their own, named, drinking cup to keep in nursery. We will take responsibility for cleaning this daily ready for the next use.

Employees

All employees will undergo training on the new Safe Operating Procedures, with emphasis on good hygiene practices and maintaining social distancing. Staff will also have to read the most recent risk assessment and become familiar with the procedures the nursery is implementing.

Fire drills and lockdown practice

If we have to respond to a fire or emergency lockdown, we will continue to manage social distancing, as far as possible. The safety of the children and employees will always come first.

Wellbeing

We know that this is a very unusual and worrying time for everyone. It is very important that at the forefront of this heightened awareness of safe operating procedures, we do not forget that care and consideration must be taken of the need to ensure that everyone within the nursery community feels

safe and secure. We will try our best to create a normal nursery environment and hope that you will bear with us.

We will concentrate on building secure attachments and we will continue observing and assessing the children. We may struggle to carry out lengthy face to face handovers as we want our team to spend time with the children, playing and building their relationships. We will of course speak with you immediately if we have any concerns about your child.

If you have any concerns that you wish to raise, then please either email the nursery and discuss with the manager or ring to speak to your child's key worker.

Settling in sessions/transitions

Parents may enter the nursery for the purpose of settling-in sessions, if not doing so would cause a child distress. Where possible settling in sessions will be conducted outside to reduce the risk of cross infection. It is important that social distancing continues to be maintained and face masks are worn by visitors. The manager or deputy will give further guidance on the day.

We will aim to organise groups of children who are due to transition into a new classroom, so they can transition together. However, some children who were due to transition might need the reassurance of the family group they were part of in order to feel safe and secure and parents might prefer them to stay within a particular age group. If you have any questions or concerns in regards to your child moving rooms then please speak with the nursery manager or deputy- they will be able to help with this.

Visitors

Visitors to the nursery will not be encouraged unless it involves a safeguarding issue that cannot be resolved by telephone. Interviews or meetings will be conducted via video conference using the Microsoft Teams or Zoom App. There will be no parents' evenings for the time being, nor any other mass events such as graduations, fairs, or stay and play sessions.

Visitors to the setting will be required to complete a visitor questionnaire and also sign in the visitors book in the foyer as well as signing up to the NHS Track and Trace system using the QR code printed on the front door.

We will keep a log of all visitors and monitor children's attendance, so should we have a positive case in nursery we will be fully aware of who we need to contact.

Nursery show-rounds

Prospective parents should make use of the nursery website and our Facebook page for information relating to the ethos and organisation of the nursery. There are videos showing the nursery and also the activities that take place. The Nursery Manager will be able to give you all the information you require.

Contractors

Any contractors to the nursery will be reminded of National Institute for Health Protection guidance prior to entering the building. Where possible any necessary works will be carried out at the weekend to minimise contact with the children and staff.

Health, hygiene and safety

Reducing the spread of the virus

It is recognised that good hygiene and cleaning practices will significantly reduce the spread and transmission of the virus as well as everyone being alert to the symptoms. Doors and windows will be opened as much as possible and children will spend a lot of time outdoors in the fresh air.

Cleaning

An enhanced cleaning schedule has been implemented throughout the nursery which is effective during the day and at the end of the day. Communal areas, door handles and shared facilities are regularly cleaned. The nursery manager and deputy will be responsible for recording these cleaning schedules.

The rate of hand washing must be significantly increased. Everyone, including children, must wash their hands on arrival at nursery. When no wash basins are available, sanitiser will be available. There will be regular opportunities for hand washing throughout the day.

Use of Tissues

The children will be supported in age-appropriate ways to understand the steps they can take to keep themselves and others safe and this includes sneezing into a tissue (or their arm if immediate) and then to dispose of the tissue. Staff will familiarise children with the “Catch it, bin it, kill it” mantra by showing and repeating when necessary.

Toileting

The children will be taken to the toilets and supervised. Hand washing signs will be displayed to ensure hand washing is thorough and the practitioners will talk to the children about why we are washing our hands. Children will be encouraged to sing through the “Happy Birthday” song twice to ensure they have washed for long enough.

Risk assessments

All risk assessments will reflect the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Certain activities will be adapted or removed to reflect this risk e.g. the use of sand in the setting or trip and outings.

Items from home

If your child requires a comforter e.g. soft toy or blanket, please bring it in a bag and then take home at the end of the day. We would prefer no toys or comforters to be brought into nursery but do understand that this could cause distress.

Resources at Nursery

Toys and resources that are difficult to clean will be removed, including cushions and soft toys. The children will only share toys and activities within their bubbles. We will aim to sanitise items at the end of each day or before their next use.

Responding to a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19

A child

If a child is displaying coronavirus symptoms whilst attending the nursery, they should be collected as soon as possible and isolate at home in line with NHS guidance. The child must be tested and receive a negative result before they are able to return.

Whilst waiting to be collected, they will be isolated from others in a designated area either the snug room or outside. An employee will stay with them and will wear PPE to ensure they are protected.

If the child becomes very unwell, we will follow our normal emergency procedures and call 999.

The isolation area will be cleaned once the child has been collected.

A member of staff displays symptoms

In the event of an employee developing coronavirus symptoms whilst at nursery, they will leave work as soon as possible and isolate at home in line with NHS guidance. They will be required to have a test before they return.

PPE Equipment

Government guidance is that PPE is not required for general use in nurseries to protect against COVID-19 transmission. Hand washing, effective cleaning and social distancing are the most effective measures. As per normal, gloves and aprons will be used for nappy changing and when administering first aid. Wipeable, aprons will be worn at mealtimes when staff are preparing and serving food.

Reporting, testing and tracing

Everyone is now eligible for a COVID-19 test, should they display coronavirus symptoms.

Any suspected or confirmed case must be reported to the nursery manager or deputy as soon as possible. If a positive result is confirmed, the practitioners and children associated with that bubble must self-isolate for 14 days before returning to nursery. Positive tests will be reported to the National Institute for Health Protection and Ofsted by the nursery manager or deputy.

The nursery manager or deputy is responsible for contacting the National Institute for Health Protection if a case is confirmed or if a symptomatic person is admitted to hospital, a possible case refuses testing, there are a cluster of possible cases/unexpected increase in absenteeism or a suspected case has a definite link to a confirmed case.

If there is reasonable evidence that a positive diagnosis was caused by exposure at work, this will be reported to RIDDOR.

If someone in your household, or someone you have close contact with, is contacted by track and trace and told they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, you will need to isolate even if you have no symptoms.

Nursery Fee's

If your child is isolating

If your child is unwell and has been told either to isolate or take a COVID test then the nursery is unable to waiver the cost of the childcare you will be missing. This is because we still remain open and are still providing a service to other parents and will need to meet our overheads.

If the nursery contacts you and we tell you that you must isolate because we have a positive COVID case in the nursery and your child's bubble must isolate, then there will be no charge for any missed sessions and your child will be able to return as normal after the set period.

Prioritising children

In the eventuality our local authority area should move into tier 3, 4 or possible 5 or the nursery does not have sufficient staffing, then we may need to prioritise which children can attend nursery. This may also be the case if the government force another lock down or insist vulnerable workers must stay at home for their safety. Priority will be given to:

- vulnerable children and children of critical workers
- then 3- and 4-year-olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to reception in September 2021
- followed by younger age group

We hope this does not become the case and we need to prioritise, but if sessions are missed because the nursery was unable accommodate a child then parents will not be charged for any missed sessions and their place will still remain available at the nursery for when they are able to return .

A lock down may mean that some of the nursery staff are unable to work due to isolation, this may affect our capacity to staff the nursery fully and safely. If this is the case then we may have to reduce the nursery day from 7.30am to 6pm to 8am till 4pm. In this eventuality, Should this be the case, we will of course give as much notice as we can so you can make adjustments to work patterns if necessary.

Further guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

