

# Shepherds Down School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Happy New Year. I hope you had a good Christmas, even if you could not celebrate it as you might like.

I am sure many of you are worried about the rise in infection levels that has occurred over the past two weeks. This has meant that we will need to make some further adjustments to our risk assessment and practice to ensure that we are doing all we can to keep children as safe as possible.

Firstly, we have made the decision that staff will wear masks or face coverings at the start and end of the day and we request that you also wear a mask or face covering when dropping off or collecting your child from school. Staff will also wear masks or face coverings when moving around corridors at key times in the school day when more than one class could be transitioning e.g. lunchtime. However, within the classroom and during activities within the school day masks will not be worn as it is important for children to see adults faces and feel able to interact as normal. We will not be asking children to wear masks and will be providing some visuals and a social story to support children's understanding of this change if appropriate.

For at least the next two weeks we are further reducing visitors to school. This will include Art Therapy, Music Therapy and also EHCP reviews which unfortunately will need to be held virtually for the time being – more details to follow.

We will also be trying to ventilate rooms more, which is believed to be effective in minimising any potential transmission. Therefore, it would be useful to ensure that your child has more layers on than they might normally e.g. thermal vests/under layer, fleece etc. This does not need to be school uniform at this time.

In addition, we will continue to have the following precautions in place:

- Children in their own class with a consistent staff team
- As far as possible close contact is limited to those children and staff within the class group.
- Classes are part of a bigger social 'bubble' of 2 - 3 classes, depending on the cover arrangements needed. There will be some movement of staff between the classes in these 'bubbles' e.g. for PPA cover, covering part time staff, lunchtime cover and absence cover but not beyond these bubbles.
- Any child or staff member with possible symptoms will be immediately isolated, sent home and expected to get a test.
- The child or staff member and their household should remain at home until the outcome of the test. If the test is positive the child/staff member will need to remain at home for at least 10 days from the start of their symptoms, and the rest of their household will also need to isolate for 10 days.
- Public Health will be contacted if there is any suspected case and their advice will be followed – this is likely to be the isolation of the rest of the class first and larger 'bubbles' if there is more than one case.
- If a child on the bus was to test positive then all the children on this bus would also need to isolate for 10 days



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- Classes organised to provide as much space as possible and children sitting opposite each other will be avoided.
- The number of children in the dining hall reduced and many classes eat in their own class.
- Use of inside communal spaces e.g. soft play, is timetabled and sanitised between each class group
- Playtime rotas in place so that only 2 'bubbles' will be on the playground at the same time and equipment is wiped down before the next children use it.
- On entering school and at every transition children are supported to sanitise their hands.
- In each class surfaces and regularly touched objects are cleaned and disinfected at each transition.
- All staff and children wash their hands thoroughly at every transition
- Handles and frequently touched surfaces around school are cleaned regularly during the day.
- Resources that will be hard to keep clean are removed for the moment
- Transitions around school are staggered to ensure there is not any mixing of classes apart from passing in the corridor
- Sharing of resources such as pencils is minimised – each child has their own labelled stationery resources
- Activities involving large groups, such as assemblies, and going off-site have been stopped

We would ask that you continue to:

- Remain vigilant to any symptoms of coronavirus with your child or anyone in your household and keep your child away from school and seek a test asap.
- Keep your child at home if anyone in the household is getting a test, until the result is known
- Keep school informed of any changes in your child or other members of the household's health, especially in relation to coronavirus symptoms
- Keep your child at home for 10 days if you are informed by school that one of the adults or children in your child's class or 'bubble' (depending on the advice from public health) has tested positive for COVID 19
- Keep your child at home if they are unwell, even when it not in relation to COVID 19 – to limit spread of infections of any kind at this time, especially as we have limited cover options within 'bubbles'
- Ensure that your child is not having close contact with anyone outside of their household/childcare bubble, in accordance with the current government guidance for Tier 4, to reduce the risk of transmission
- If you are dropping or picking your child up please arrive after 9:10am and 3:10pm to minimise congestion. Please wear a mask and observe social distancing whilst waiting and when talking to staff. Please do not come into school when picking up or dropping off your child – this enables us to limit the visitors within school at this time.
- Ensure your child has sufficient clothing to keep them warm in a ventilated classroom.
- Model good hand hygiene at home with your child

Unfortunately, due to the number of staff who are not able to be in school during this period our staffing in classes is extremely tight and we are restricted with cover options as we are trying to avoid movement between bubbles of staff. We do not have the capacity to cover unexpected absence in many of our classes and therefore it might be necessary to close a class at short notice. We will obviously try to avoid doing this, and always look for alternative options, however if the staffing levels are not safe and there is no alternative we will close the class. I would not expect this to be for more than a day, as this will give us more time to put a plan in place. We are

reviewing staffing at the end of every day at the moment and will contact parents as soon as possible the day before if this is going to be necessary.

We have had three members of the school community test positive over the Christmas break, however all these members were symptomatic outside of the 48 hour window when school was last open and there has been no need for any further action.

I know how worrying many of you are finding this situation and I understand the concerns you may have and the decision some parents have made to keep their child at home during this time. This is your decision to make, however, please keep me informed of your plans and let me know if there is any information I can provide or if you want to discuss any of your concerns. We are constantly reviewing our risk assessment and practice in light of the National Guidance and will let you know of any changes as soon as we are made aware.

Thank you all for your support and understanding during this very difficult time and also for continuing to follow all this advice and enabling us to keep children and staff as safe as possible. As always, I am available via email or phone to talk through any concerns or worries or just to explain/discuss some aspect of the risk assessment further.

Take Care

Debby