

POLICY FOR THE RE-OPENING OF PORTLAND PLACE SCHOOL From 1st January 2022

Approved by:

Date: 05/01/2022

Next review due by: 19/04/2022

Reviewer: David Bradbury

Introduction

This Policy outlines Portland Place School's response to the UK Government's guidance on school operations as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. This policy follows the guidelines for the reopening of schools in England, which have been revised recently by the UK Government and the Department of Education. This edition of the policy pertains to the full reopening of Portland Place School from 10th January 2022 for all years, in line with the government publication of 2nd January 2022. It will be revised, by the due date given above in light of any changed or additional guidance from government.

The procedures set out in the Appendix are subject to change if there is further advice and guidance from the government, and the relevant medical and educational authorities, issued in due course. The school will remain open unless directed to close by the Government or the Local Authority or by the Governors of Alpha Plus.

If the school is closed, for example due to further lockdown measures announced by the UK Government, the school will endeavour to stay open to support the children of critical workers (as defined by the government) and vulnerable children depending on advice at the time. If the school is unable to be open for these children, these children will be supported remotely or redirected to where alternative provision can be found.

What is Covid-19 / Coronavirus?

The following is based on information provided by the World Health Organisation and by the UK Government.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus called SARS-Cov-2. The data published to date suggests that most people infected with this virus experience only mild to moderate illness and that they recover without requiring any special treatment. But the data also suggests that those aged 70+, and those with underlying medical problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer, are more likely to develop a serious illness.

It is clear, from the advice published so far, that the most effective way to prevent and slow down transmission of this virus, and therefore create the circumstances where the likelihood of catching this virus in our schools is either low or very low, is for the staff and children to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and to understand how it spreads from one person to another. In particular, we are advised to ask staff and children to protect themselves and others from infection by washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using an alcohol-based rub frequently, and to do this not less than 6 times a day and before eating or drinking anything. We are also advised to tell our staff and the children not to touch their face if possible without washing their hands with soap and water first, as described above.

Other than by touch, the virus causing COVID-19 is also known to spread through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. So we will explain to our staff and children the importance of practising respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow or into a tissue which must then be disposed of carefully – “catch it, bin it, kill it”).

At the time of writing, there are no vaccines or specific treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available.

www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

Legal framework

This policy meets the Government guidance set out in:

Schools COVID-19 operational guidance (2nd January 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance>

This is supplemented by:

Testing measures to ensure young people return to classrooms (3rd January 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/testing-measures-to-ensure-young-people-return-to-classrooms>

Contingency Framework: Education and Child Care Settings (August 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011704/20210817_Contingency_Framework_FINAL.pdf

Context of the school and projected situation (spring term 2022)

Portland Place School will have approximately 175 students on roll aged between 10 and 16. Year group sizes will range from 8 (Year 6) to 45 (Year 10).

A normal weekly timetable for students in consists of 30, 55-minute-long lessons. Additional time is allocated to registration/PSHE (30 minutes each morning). The school day starts at 8:30am and ends at 3:45pm with extra-curricular activities taking place between 4pm and 5pm

The School campus consists of three buildings – 56-58 Portland Place (PP), 143 Great Portland Street (GPS). Specialist teaching facilities for Science, Drama and Art are located in GPS, for DT in both sites and for Music in PP only. IT facilities are available on all sites. There are catering facilities in GPS. Classroom/lab capacity varies from 16 -20 across the campus. PP has two distinct entrances/exits. GPS has one entrance/exit. GPS has narrow corridors on each floor with a wide, open stairway connecting the floors. There is no outdoor space on any site. Larger space in each site are the Drama Studio (GPS), Dining Room (GPS) and the Hall (PP).

Through the lockdowns of the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, all students had the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive online facsimile of their 'normal' timetable with staff running lessons via Zoom and Teams supplemented by work issued through Firefly. In addition to this, the school maintained its rewards system and online wellbeing. Form tutors and Heads of Year had regular contact with their students. Counselling support remained available for those already accessing it before lockdown and was extended with drop-in sessions for students. Learning support continued for those students who required it and extended to some students who found online learning very challenging. Individual or small group mentoring sessions were provided weekly for all students. The participation rate has been very high with a robust process for following up on both absentees and apparently present but reluctant participants in lessons.

An offer was made to parents who are key workers for their children to be in school and uptake was good in the second lockdown. Likewise, to those students with an EHCP or otherwise considered vulnerable.

A limited selection of extra-curricular activities continued with online individual instrumental lessons and conversational languages tutorials. Some new online activities were run including a 7-day film challenge and a monologue competition.

Students, parents and staff were given the opportunity to feedback on the online educational experience and a high proportion took the opportunity to do so. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and helped to inform the improvement of the offer and to disseminate best practice of remote working.

From September 2021 the majority of staff have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with many being fully vaccinated with two doses. Vaccines are being rolled out for teenagers through the autumn of 2021. It is anticipated that by the end of 2021 the large majority of staff and students will be fully vaccinated.

Booster jabs became available during the latter half of the autumn term with an accelerated roll out in light of the Omicron variant appearing. The majority of staff have now had their booster jab as well.

A plan for re-opening has been devised on the basis of the following principles:

- That the School could re-open in a way that prioritised the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and family members;
- That it met the expectations of Alpha Plus Group senior leaders, the School's leadership, the students, their parents and staff in the quality of educational experience offered and complied with Department for Education advice;
- To establish key operating procedures and parameters for returning to a larger-scale re-opening later in the year that would help to build confidence and foster good will in all key stakeholders.

Risk Assessment

A detailed risk assessment for reopening has been seen and approved by governors and the CEO of Alpha Plus Group.

Planning assumptions

- In-school contact will be arranged on the basis that it passes a threshold of educational benefit in complementing the online teaching;
- The threshold of educational benefit may be determined in terms of academic or pastoral benefit or a combination thereof.
- There is no longer a requirement or expectation to bubble students.

Year groups

Years 6 and 7 will total approximately 40 students in January 2022. They are mixed for registration and form time and for PE. They are all based in the PP buildings with Year 6 having their own dedicated classroom.

Years 8 will have approximately 23 students and 9 will have approximately 40 students in January 2022. They have separate lessons throughout. Both year groups are based in the PP buildings for registration.

Year 10 will have approximately 45 students in January 2022. They have separate lessons throughout though setting and options mean groups mix across the curriculum. They will be based in our GPS building for registration.

Year 11 will have approximately 35 students in January 2022. They have separate lessons throughout though setting and options mean groups mix across the curriculum. They will be based in our GPS building for registration.

After moving out of HH students now use both sites extensively through their working week.

System of controls

This is the set of actions schools must take in line with the guidance from government. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection' and are outlined in more detail in the sections below.

Prevention:

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school;
- 2) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual. Students will be instructed to do so at each break in the day and whenever they use a bathroom. Hand sanitiser will also be available in every classroom, reception and student access point;
- 3) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach;
- 4) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). This is likely only when a student or member of staff develops symptoms of COVID-19 and requires supervision until collected.

Response to any infection:

- 1) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process;
- 2) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community;
- 3) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice. This may include reinstating more stringent procedures in school in line with Risk Assessment for 2020-21.

Roles and responsibilities

Headmaster is David Bradbury with overall responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and updating of this policy.

All staff are responsible for understanding and implementing this policy where relevant to their role in school, and for seeking clarification through line management of any aspects on which they are unclear.

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Deputy DSL is David Bradbury, mobile 07387 108980, david.bradbury@portland-place.co.uk

Risk Assessment is the responsibility of all staff within this framework developed by the Headmaster along with SLT and advice from APG.

The monitoring of the implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the SLT.

The site team is supervised by Vicki Bromley, Finance & Operations Manager.

Teaching and learning

From September 2021 this returns to normal with no further expectation of social distancing in classroom. From January 2022, face coverings will be recommended to staff and students in all parts of the school, classrooms and open spaces. Sharing of materials will be minimised with disinfectant available in each room to clean items that are shared. Ventilation wherever possible will be encouraged.

SEND

The Assistant Head (Student Support) maintains regular contact with parents and students of our most needy students, including those with EHCP.

The SEND teams also provide ongoing CPD to staff on adapting teaching and learning to better support dyslexic students and those with other SEND.

Attendance

Full attendance by all students is expected each day as per normal.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be subject to monitoring and review on a regular basis to reflect any internal change, legislative and regulatory requirements and to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained.

Procedures

See Appendix 2: government guidance on infection and Appendix 3: Physical adaptations of school space.

Staff training

All existing staff have previously been provided with the following on-line training from the Virtual College: <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/courses/prevent-covid-19-free-training>

All staff have been provided with detailed information and posters are displayed throughout the school, e.g.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

New staff will be expected to provide evidence of having previously completed this training, or to undertake the online training in week beginning 10th January through the Virtual College, or other appropriate online portal (e.g. EduCare). Certificates to be filed with the by Friday 14th January.

Controls

Certain subjects present additional challenges by the practical nature of the work – Art, Design Technology, Music, PE and Science.

Art and Design Technology

Wherever possible students do not share tools and equipment. At the end of each lesson, any items used are cleaned with disinfectant wipes before being stored away. Large single items, e.g. standing drill/saw, to be cleaned after each use.

Music

Vocal ensembles, woodwind and brass instruments potentially increase the risks of transmission by requiring more breathing out.

These activities will take place in larger, well ventilated spaces and not in individual music practice rooms.

PE

Fixtures will be resumed in line with the Westminster and ISA leagues and using their safe practice guidelines. Face coverings will be required when travelling by minibus to PE sessions or fixtures.

Science

We recognise and accept the key role practical plays in the effective learning of science. In experimental work, as far as possible, each student has their own set of apparatus for use and that any shared resource is cleaned using disinfectant wipes between each use.

Remote learning

From the experience of 2020 and 2021 during the wider lockdowns, Portland Place School put in place very effective measures for remote learning using Firefly, MS Teams, Zoom, Hegarty Maths, Showbie and Century Tech. Should the need arise again during the academic year 2021-22 we know we can very effectively transition back to remote learning.

Should a student have to spend an extended period away from school, having contracted COVID-19 or for other reasons, they can continue with their education remotely through the tools listed above. The only element that will not be routinely available is the face-to-face Zoom contact.

Appendix 1: Guidance for staff

All staff are expected to be in school and working their regular hours, 08:00 – 17:00 as per contracts of employment. Those considered extremely critically vulnerable and previously advised to shield, are expected to return to work. Should there be a local outbreak requiring a response from the school, the school will adapt roles and expectations for staff in this group on a case-by-case basis to ensure they can work with appropriate safeguards. This can include remote working in extreme cases.

Staff will be encouraged to walk or cycle to school wherever possible. The area around the school has adequate cycle storage space for staff to use.

Appendix 2: Government guidance on infection

The school will follow the government guidance in the instances of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases. That guidance is given in:

What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/test-results/positive-test-result/>~~See DLD COVID-19 Policy~~

Appendix 3: Physical adaptations of school space

Key points

- All students on arrival either tap in or manually sign in via Entrysign;
- All staff to tap in or manually sign in via Entrysign;
- Lunch will be one-hour and operate as two services;
- Single file on stairs and recommend minimum one step free in between people;
- Additional duties for staff supervision to monitor students;
- Classrooms, staffrooms and staff offices will be supplied with hand sanitiser (pump dispenser) and disinfectant (wipes).
- Cleaning of all buildings by JR&Co;
- Signage to be displayed including but not limited to:
 - “Catch it, bin it, kill it” posters clearly evident;
- Room 2 to be used as a medical (isolation) room if needed – sign to be displayed accordingly – with access to toilets nearby;
- Anti-bacterial pump dispensers to be strategically placed throughout the buildings;
- Anti-bacterial pump dispenser placed inside main entrance at each building;
- PPE – masks and gloves – available for staff and students who wish to continue to use them whilst travelling to/from school;
- Perspex screening to remain in offices where previously installed.

To be actioned once open

- Daily - Site team to top up anti-bacterial stations at the end of each day.
- Daily – Weather permitting, windows should be opened in rooms being used – site team to check at the end of each day and close windows.