

School Full Opening in September 2020

Corporate Health and Safety Team Briefing Note Safe planning to return to school and coping with any adverse situations

Preamble

The return to full opening for all year groups in September presents focus, challenge and opportunity for the year ahead. DfE have outlined comprehensive guidance in their document [Guidance for full Opening: Schools](#) which sets the requirements and considerations for all educational establishments.

It is recognised that, for valid reasons, there will be wide variation in the application of the guidance across Northumberland. As such, it will take time to develop this into sufficiently detailed risk assessment templates and to build upon the existing documentation.

This briefing note therefore seeks to provide interim direction and to set out how planning should be approached with regard to the health, safety and welfare of pupils, parents, staff and visitors to your establishment.

It is appreciated that there will be further queries in respect of your specific circumstances. If this is the case please do not hesitate to contact the Corporate Health and Safety Team by emailing healthandsafety@northumberland.gov.uk.

Arrangements for the Autumn Term

There will be people who understandably are concerned about returning in September; this is reflected across the country. To mitigate this, the following measures are essential:

- Good communication with staff, unions, parents and students
- Where necessary, stagger start arrangements in the new term introducing specific year groups to school each day.
- Clinically Vulnerable/Extremely Clinically Vulnerable staff - most staff are able to return to work from 1 August. However, a [personal risk assessment](#) should be in place/completed to identify reasonable adjustments. Heads should be flexible in allowing remote working where possible and if any social distancing requirements can't be achieved.
- Clinically Vulnerable/Extremely Clinically Vulnerable Pupils - most children will be able to return to school, following discussion with their specialist consultant, where applicable. Schools ensure [individual healthcare plans](#) are up to date.

Very clear procedures are in place in the event of:

- Anyone displaying symptoms of Covid19 in school - schools should have their own internal procedure in place. A flowchart on the process schools should follow will be available soon.
- Any localised lockdown or partial/full closure of school - plan to be in place to support remote learning/working.

- Any outbreak - advice will be provided directly from the local Health Protection Team. The [County Council Outbreak Plan](#) is also available on the County Council webpage.

Government guidance is contained in Section 5 of the [Guidance for full Opening: Schools](#) entitled 'Contingency planning for outbreaks'. It should, however, be noted that these procedures will only work effectively if all establishments embrace some core principles for reopening as follows:

- A requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements
- Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- Formal consideration of how to reduce contact between persons and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

General Arrangements for Social Distancing and Grouping

Key measures which should be applied within school include:

- grouping children together
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

Social distancing and grouping must be considered as a unified measure, they must not be considered in isolation. However age, ability, individual needs, staffing and physical building layouts will influence the degree of social distancing and grouping in each context. Regardless, schools must strive to achieve a fair balance.

Consistent groups must be maintained to reduce the risk of transmission by limiting contacts. This may be achieved by groups in the main being assigned to specific classrooms/areas and staff travelling to those groups.

Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that are as small as possible and do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate.

Due to decrease in prevalence of COVID-19 and full resumption activities the increase of group sizes (compared to Summer term) is advocated by the guidance. The size of groups is largely dependent upon the establishment circumstance, but all are advised to achieve smaller sizes if possible. The following are suggested:

- Early Years: Steps to minimise mixing where possible
(Note: From 20 July, duty minimise contact and mixing between groups remains, but no specific maximum numbers prescribed)
- Key Stage 1 & 2 - Full class sized cohorts
- Key Stage 3 - Full class sized cohorts (if possible)
- Key Stage 4 & 5 - May require year group sized cohorts to offer a full curriculum.

It must be noted that if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around school, year group sized 'bubbles' may be implemented,

particularly in Secondary Schools. Nonetheless, it is expected that those with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction and sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible.

Further general arrangements to help limit contact and mixing may consider the following.

- Preventing unsupervised time on site, especially before school starts.
- Staggering;
 - Start and finish times (without reducing teaching time).
 - Lesson timings to reduce congestion in corridors and allow safe movement
 - Lunchtimes by year group
 - Managing school transport alighting, queuing and boarding
- Breaktime will be spent in designated areas dependent on the year group cohort. There will be an expectation that all students will spend this time outside unless the weather prevents this.
- Each classroom layout will be altered to prevent students facing one another in close proximity during lessons.
- Layouts will generally adopt front facing and sitting side by side seating positions.

Lesson Planning Movements

The curriculum and timetable should be delivered to ensure the vast majority of students have access to a broad range of subjects. To minimise contact and mixing it is expected that children will stay in their class groups and designated rooms within specific areas/floors/corridors (zoning) as appropriate for the majority of the classroom time.

There will be a small amount of movement permissible to allow access to:

- Specialist teaching facilities
- Option choice lessons
- Any setted teaching groups

Teachers and others such as specialist support staff may move between rooms, groups and locations to facilitate support and the delivery of the timetable. The latter is expected to be more prevalent in the upper key stages. Staff are to take care to try to maintain distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults.

Arrangements for Cleaning Facilities and Personal Hygiene

- Enhanced cleaning throughout the day of all rooms with priority given to any shared spaces, such as practical classrooms (D&T, Science, Food Technology etc), toilets, dining hall and frequently touched areas. Schools should consider any additional resources which will be required.
- Frequent cleaning of shared equipment and classroom based resources used within the bubble group.
- Items shared between different bubble groups are to be cleaned frequently and meticulously and always between use by different bubble groups. Alternatively they may be rotated to allow them to be left unused and out of reach for 48 hours (72 hours for plastics).
- Outdoor play equipment should be cleaned more frequently.
- Enhanced routines for students ensuring they wash hands/sanitise throughout the day.

- Cleaning areas where symptomatic people have been.
- *Revised guidance on cleaning to be issued by the Government prior to the Autumn term.*

Measures elsewhere

Gatherings / Collective worship	Groups should be kept apart, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.
School dedicated transport	The advice to adopt a social distance of two metres from people outside their household or support bubble, or a 'one metre plus' approach, will not apply from the autumn term on school dedicated transport. However approaches are to align as far as possible to the principles within the broader government guidance of full reopening of schools. Schools are to work with the Local Authority school transport team, consider queuing and boarding arrangements and support pupils with appropriate actions where they wear face coverings.
Public transport	Steps should be taken to identify public transport users to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aid staggering of school start/finish (without reducing teaching time). - Encourage users to refer to safer travel guidance for passengers. - Support the Local Authority in managing service provision.
Staff areas, meetings and breaks	Staff to maintain social distancing (where at all possible) with other staff and pupils . This is more achievable in Secondary Schools than those staff working with younger children. Face to face contact within 1m of anyone is minimised. Staff areas such as offices/staff rooms to be set up to achieve this and breaks staggered to reduce the amount of contact.
Supply teachers and temporary or peripatetic teachers (e.g. support staff, sports coaches, after school club teachers)	Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between schools, but school leaders are to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the school where possible. Temporary staff and visitors (see below) will be expected to comply with the school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. Schools may wish to agree longer term arrangements across a broader time period to minimise numbers of contacts.
Educational visits	DfE currently advises against domestic overnight and overseas educational visits. This therefore precludes travel other than that on foot within the immediate local area. In the Autumn term schools will be permitted to conduct non-overnight domestic educational visits. Any visits conducted at this time are to follow usual visit planning requirements through the Evolve system taking into account the Evolve COVID-19 generic risk assessment .
Physical Activity	In addition to maintaining grouping, distancing and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning consideration is to be given to prioritising outdoor sports. Where this is not possible use os to be made of large indoor spaces. Schools are able to work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extracurricular activities

providing satisfactory protective arrangements are in place.

PPE	<p>The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE would only be required where an individual becomes ill and distancing cannot be maintained.</p> <p>Face coverings should not be worn in schools. Arrangements to be put in place should a pupil arrive wearing one - disposable masks to be put into a bin bag in a lidded bin, reusable covering to be placed by the pupil into a bag to take home. PPE for staff only required where identified via a risk assessment or when caring for a symptomatic child and social distancing can't be maintained.</p>
Visitors	<p>Only essential visits should take place during school hours and should take place outside of normal hours where possible and site arrangements discussed prior to the visit. A record should be kept of visitor contact information as this may be needed by the NHS test and trace service or the local Health Protection Team. An visitor audit and form are available for use by the school.</p>
Catering	<p>Expectation that kitchens will be fully open from the start of the autumn term and normal legal requirements will apply about the provision of food to all pupils who want it. School kitchens can continue to operate, but must comply with the guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).</p>
Music/Singing	<p>Increased risk from singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments or shouting. This applies even if individuals are at a distance. Measures should be put in place to mitigate this risk, such as reduced group sizes (max 15), playing outside, positioning pupils back to back or side to side. Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as school choirs or assemblies.</p>
Extra-curricular Provision	<p>Schools should consider resuming any breakfast and after-school provision, where possible, from the start of the Autumn term; although additional time may be needed to get these back up and running.</p>

Further work

1. Updates to follow over the coming days and weeks as further national interpretation of requirements emerges such as Cleapss and [AfPE guidance](#). Further government guidance is expected prior to the Autumn term.
2. Produce revised model schools risk assessment based on government guidance and best practice guidance from the bodies mentioned in 1 above.
3. Continue development of existing Health and Safety FAQ document based on heads queries
4. Presentation for headteacher video conference call (4pm, 15 July)