

Operational guidance for extending our opening under COVID-19 restrictions

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed day-to-day life, this is true of our nurseries where we have made changes. As we continue to operate under the ongoing relaxation of restrictions, there will be further changes to how our nurseries operate and begin to revert to more normal practice.

Principles

When deciding on and implementing the changes that follow in this document, the overriding principle is to ensure the health and wellbeing of all children in our care. This includes the benefits to children's health and wellbeing of attending a nursery environment. When reading the below guidance please always bear this in mind during this difficult time.

There exists a tension between the immediate risks associated with children mixing and so potentially spreading the virus, versus the longer-term risks associated with children missing out on early education and the impact that this may have. There is also the concern that if parents cannot return to work then this could lead to unemployment and poverty, which is known to have a significant impact on children's health and wellbeing, and their family.

The latest government guidance states that there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus, and that there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus.

As the winter approaches and more respiratory infection begin to circulate in general, there will also be a new tension arising as children might be excluded more regularly if they display symptoms of COVID-19, when they have a different respiratory infection. Due to the ongoing pandemic and government guidance, this will unfortunately result in more children being temporarily excluded and more tests being undertaken, with some children potentially being temporarily excluded multiple times in the coming months.

We appreciate particularly the difficulty this will place on families, as if your child is sent home displaying symptoms but has a different respiratory infection, the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days, or until a negative test result is obtained for your child.

We believe the changes that we are making will enable children to receive the benefits from attending our nurseries, whilst minimising the potential spread of the virus.

It must be stressed however that no matter what changes are made; this cannot completely prevent the spread of the virus if a case is diagnosed within the nursery. We are providing an environment which will minimise any potential spread to reassure all parents/carers.

Code of conduct

Although the document that follows provides a more in depth description of the measures we are implementing, we have also produced a shorter code of conduct document, which outlines the expectations that we have on our staff, and you as parents/carers, to enable us to extend our opening. You must always follow this code of conduct.

General practice

We have instigated several general practice measures as follows:

- Children will be expected to do good, regular handwashing throughout the day. Particularly, handwashing must be undertaken when first entering the nursery
- Our nurseries undertake cleaning throughout the day as and when required, but also at the end of every day. This has been expanded so that cleaning of surfaces, light switches, door handles, and so on is carried out multiple times per day. A cleaning checklist is completed by the management team to record the frequency of cleaning
- There are an increased number of tissue dispensers available across the sites to help us to 'catch it, bin it, kill it'
- Doors and windows are being left open as much as possible to provide extra ventilation, provided this does not present a safeguarding risk
- Resources cannot be moved from room to room unless in exceptional circumstances, and then they can only be moved if they are thoroughly cleaned first
- All soft toys and furnishings have been removed from the rooms
- Some messy play activities are suspended, such as sand play and water play
- All offsite trips and visitors have been suspended

PPE

PPE is currently not recommended to be worn beyond what is normally used such as for nappy changing. Staff will maintain good handwashing practices and only need to use further PPE if a child becomes sick with symptoms of COVID-19 whilst at the nursery.

Face coverings

Parents/carers allowed to visit the nursery in the limited circumstances outlined below do not need to wear face coverings, but you must practice social distancing around children and staff whilst on the premises. If you want or need to use a face covering then you must wash your hands before putting the face covering on, and after use it should be stored in an individual, sealable plastic bag between use. If your face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and instead replaced.

Changes for your child

The changes we are implementing will affect how our day operates, and so your child will notice a difference at nursery. You will not be able to bring your child into the nursery building, some resources will not be available, free flow in and out of the garden will not be possible for example, but they will still be greeted and supported to settle by the staff team, be able to use a vast range of resources, and still have daily access to the outdoors.

These changes are necessary to restrict the potential spread of the virus but will be implemented appropriately and suitably to still provide a fun, safe, educational environment whilst still maintaining that family feeling of all our nurseries.

The biggest question asked is how young children can be expected to socially distance from all others. We do not believe that it is possible to do so, nor do we believe that it is beneficial or materially safer to do so. Additionally, it is not possible for staff to socially distance from young children, as they need continuous close contact and support.

Therefore, our approach is to allow each child to remain in close contact with the children in their age group and staff only, but to be socially distant from the rest of the nursery. This way each child will still get the social contact that they need but will not be exposed to a huge volume of other people. We call our approach the Lodge approach.

Lodges

Each member of staff will be assigned to a room of children to work with exclusively: their Lodge. There may be multiple members of staff per Lodge and is like how normal nursery practice operates. The main difference is that in normal practice, staff will occasionally move from room to room either throughout the day or throughout the week; this will now only occur in rare circumstances.

Each Lodge will stay together for the whole day as much as possible. The Lodge leaders will not socially distance within their Lodge as the children will need support which cannot be achieved at a distance, nor will the children in each Lodge socially distance from each other, so your child will still get the close contact they need.

To enable this to happen, our nurseries will be laid out differently, to provide more clear boundaries between rooms, and the provision of “gardens within gardens”.

Where possible, each Lodge will have their own separate toilet to use. Where toilets are shared between Lodges, children from one Lodge must wait for children from the other Lodge to finish in the toilets before entering. For shared toilets between different Lodges, every time a child leaves the toilets, all surfaces will be wiped down.

Children in each Lodge can continue to eat meals with each other, however as few children will sit at each table as possible and where possible, Lodges will have separate sittings at mealtimes. Children in each Lodge can continue to sleep close to each other on sleep mats but should be positioned in a manner that will reduce any spread of infection, such as laying children top and tail on adjacent sleep mats.

We have developed further operational procedures with the staff team to address how the Lodge system will work in practice from a staffing standpoint.

Learning and development

There is currently a suspension on children being assessed against the learning and development requirements in the regulatory framework. However, it is expected that children will continue to have observations each week completed by their Lodge leaders. The normal process for completing next steps and making observations will be resuming from 28th September 2020.

Parent/carer changes

There are some practical changes that parents/carers will need to consider as follows:

- Parents/carers cannot enter the premises to drop off or collect their child, with very limited exceptions for completely new children on their settling in sessions. The staff team will take your child from you at the door and will support and settle them
- Parents/carers must queue outside the nursery to pick up and collect their child. Tape outside will mark two metre distances to assist with social distancing
- Each nursery will have two entrances – one for parents/carers dropping off children, and one for parents/carers collecting children
- Buggies, scooters, car seats and so on cannot be left at the nursery
- Children cannot bring toys or games with them into nursery. Comforters for sleep times are still allowed but can only be used at sleep times

- Children cannot bring their own bags into nursery. If your child has belongings that they need to bring in, then these will be placed into a fresh disposable paper bag at the start of the day so that you can take your child's normal bag away with you. Please review the contents of your bags and only bring in items that are essential
- Cash and cheque payments are no longer able to be taken
- Only one parent/carer should attend the nursery to drop off your child
- Handovers will not be undertaken due to the restrictions of access to the setting. All information about your child's day will appear on the Blossom daily diary

Contracting COVID-19

Despite all efforts, COVID-19 may still be contracted. The following procedures apply.

Staff members and other children developing symptoms of COVID-19

If a member of staff or another child tests positive for COVID-19, then if they have been either your child's Lodge Leader or a child in your child's Lodge up to two days before they displayed symptoms of COVID-19, your child will be excluded from the nursery for 14 days since either the last date that member of staff was working directly with your child or the other child attended the nursery. Due to the time lag between tests being conducted and results received, some of these days of exclusion will usually have passed before the exclusion is enacted.

If your child develops symptoms whilst excluded, you should get your child tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible by either ordering a home test kit or visiting the nearest drive-in test centre. If they test positive for COVID-19 they will instead be excluded for ten days from when they first displayed symptoms, or until they feel better, whichever is later. The other members of your child's household should self-isolate for 14 days since your child developed symptoms.

If your child develops symptoms whilst excluded and tests negative for COVID-19 or is not tested, they will continue to be excluded for 14 days since either the last date that member of staff was working directly with your child or the other child attended the nursery.

Your child developing symptoms of COVID-19

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 whilst at nursery, then they will be excluded from the nursery for ten days since their symptoms started. Your child will be cared for on a one to one basis by a member of staff who will be wearing full PPE until you collect them. Your child will be reassured during this time and kept safe.

You should get your child tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible by either ordering a home test kit or visiting the nearest drive-in test centre. If your child tests negative for COVID-19 then they can return to nursery as soon as they feel better. Proof of a negative test will be required before your child can be readmitted to nursery.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19 then they will continue to be excluded from the nursery for ten days since their symptoms started, or when they feel better, whichever is later. The other members of your child's household should self-isolate for 14 days since your child developed symptoms.

At all times, please keep us informed of your child's situation as we will need this information to be able to advise the rest of our children and staff about what to do next.

Someone else in your child's household developing symptoms of COVID-19

If a member of your child's household develops symptoms, then your child, along with your whole household, must self-isolate as per the current guidance or until the person with symptoms receives confirmation that they have a negative COVID-19 test.

Contact tracing

If your child is told to self-isolate for 14 days by a Clinical Contact Caseworker then your child will be excluded from the nursery for this period of time.

Fees

A 25% discount will be applied to any fees due for childcare sessions that cannot be taken up because of the exclusion periods outlined above. **In the instance where your child has displayed symptoms of COVID-19, this discount is only applicable provided your child has undertaken a COVID-19 test and the result of this is shared with the nursery.**

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