

## Operational guidance for continuing 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 we begin to move into the summer, and the vaccination programme continues with rapid speed, the level of transmission and cases across the country will continue to reduce.

However, children will continue to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 from other illnesses, and regardless of the diminished likelihood that any symptoms are COVID-19 related, the ongoing self-isolation guidance remains unchanged. This will unfortunately continue to mean 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 ten 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 as per the latest 'hands, face, space, fresh air' guidance, provided this does not present a safeguarding risk – this includes all offices and kitchens, with windows left open to ensure a flow of air can continue
- 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
- A limited amount of messy play activities are suspended, such as sand pits
- Parents/carers can only enter the nursery for limited reasons
- Visitors to the nursery for support, educational or maintenance purposes are permitted
- All offsite trips and outings to both outdoor and indoor venues are permitted, however if the place to be visited is used frequently by members of the public, such as an outdoor play area, then all equipment is to be cleaned before use. If social distancing between the trip participants and members of the public cannot be maintained, then the trip will either be ended or cannot go ahead

### **Immunisations and teething**

If your child has a temperature of 37.8°C or above and the suspected reason for this is because they have had a recent immunisation, then they do not need to get tested for COVID-19 and do not need to self-isolate. If the side effects of the immunisation mean that your child is too unwell to attend nursery, then they should not attend nursery until better.

The judgement as to whether the high temperature is because of an immunisation rather than being a symptom of COVID-19 is made by the nursery management team.

Teething is not considered to cause a high temperature in the current guidance, so if your child is teething and develops a temperature of 37.8°C or above, then they will need to get tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate until a negative test result is obtained.

### **PPE**

PPE is currently not recommended to be worn beyond what is normally used such as for nappy changing, except for face coverings. Where staff cannot maintain social distancing from each other within the nursery, they will be required to wear a face covering.

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 later in this document, as well as permitted visitors for support, educational or maintenance purposes, must wear face coverings and practice social distancing around children and staff whilst on

the premises. 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.

Parents/carers must also wear a face covering when dropping off and collecting children and must stand two metres from the door or gate so that staff can maintain social distancing from parents. For younger children who are unable to walk from parents/carers through the door or gate, these children can still be handed over as normal.

People medically exempt from wearing a face covering will not be required to wear one.

### **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 like normal nursery practice. The main difference is that staff will only change Lodges 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 have clear boundaries between rooms to ensure that children remain in their Lodges, and garden access will be limited to one Lodge at a time.

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. 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

The normal process for completing next steps and making observations resumed in September 2020. However, in some circumstances next steps and observations may be temporarily paused. For example, if most of a Lodge and their staff were to be sent home to self-isolate, the remaining skeleton staff might not undertake next steps and observations on the remaining children during this period of self-isolation.

### **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 can bring their own bags into nursery, but parents/carers must ensure that only essential items are packed and that no toys or games are brought in from home. Comforters can be supplied in bags
- 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

### **National and local lockdowns and the tier system**

Should a national or local lockdown be enforced in any of our childcare delivery localities, we will follow the advice and guidance issued and update parents/carers accordingly.

When a tier system is in place which restricts activities permitted, our nurseries will follow the guidance depending on which tier each nursery is located in. At the current time, nurseries can remain open as usual in all tiers, with no change in any guidance around day-to-day practice.

Children can continue to attend nursery whether they are attending nursery in a higher or lower tier compared to the tier level in which they reside, however parents/carers of these children should spend as little time as possible dropping off and collecting at the nursery.

### **Types of tests**

There are two types of test for COVID-19. The first is the long-established testing method carried out at test centres across the country and can also be ordered online through home

testing kits. These are polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests and are the most sensitive and accurate method of testing for COVID-19. These tests are only undertaken for those who do have symptoms of COVID-19.

The second type of test is obtained from a lateral flow device (LFD), and is now provided for large groups of people, such as through workplace testing programmes, or school home testing programmes. Although these tests are done at home, LFD test kits usually come in bulk packs of multiple tests, rather than just the one test provided in the PCR home test kit ordered online as specified above. These tests are only undertaken for those who do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

In the below guidance, where we refer to getting tested, this exclusively refers to a PCR test, not an LFD test. Further guidance around lateral flow devices follows later in this document.

### **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 ten days since the day after the last date either 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 the day after they first displayed symptoms, or until they feel better, whichever is later. The other members of your child's household should self-isolate for ten days from the day after 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 ten days since the day after the last date either 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 from the day after 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 from the day after their symptoms started, or when they feel better,

whichever is later. The other members of your child's household should self-isolate for ten days from the day after 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 ten 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.

### **Lateral flow devices**

As specified earlier in this document, lateral flow device (LFD) testing is now available for large groups of people. These tests are only to be undertaken for those who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, as it is intended to be used to help prevent those who have COVID-19 without realising it from infecting others.

Therefore, if your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is not suitable for you to undertake an LFD test at home with your child to ascertain whether they are COVID-19 positive or not. You must book a PCR test either at a test centre or via a home test kit. If you do decide to undertake an LFD test then your child will still not be allowed to attend nursery until the self-isolation period has ended, regardless of the LFD result. Only a negative PCR test result following the display of COVID-19 symptoms can end your household's self-isolation period.

### **Staff home testing**

All staff who work in registered early years settings such as our nurseries are now eligible for twice-weekly testing via an LFD test. Our staff are all offered the opportunity to take part in this programme, testing all asymptomatic staff members for COVID-19, to help reduce the potential spread of the virus.

If a member of staff tests positive from this testing programme, the usual self-isolation rules above apply, so if the member of staff works in your child's Lodge, your child will be required to self-isolate as a close contact of the staff member.

A PCR test will also be arranged for the staff member to confirm the positive result from the LFD test – if the PCR test subsequently tests negative, then your child's self-isolation will end immediately. However, if the PCR test is also positive, then the self-isolation period continues as before, starting from the last contact two days before the staff member took their LFD test.

## Holidays abroad

As travel restrictions continue to be relaxed and families can once again go abroad for holidays, we anticipate more families will be doing so. However, if, following your holiday abroad, your child is required to enter quarantine, then nursery fees will still be due in full.

We advise parents to check <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england> for information about which countries are on which list for quarantine rules.

## Attending multiple settings

If your child attends another early years setting, such as a childminder or another nursery, then their attendance at this other setting will not prevent them having access to our nurseries. Children are only permitted to attend one of our settings, and so cannot use more than one of our sites. The only exception to this is if your child's usual nursery cannot accommodate your entire booking request, in which instance your child can use one of our other nurseries to enable your full booking pattern to be met.

## Deliberately ignoring guidance

Although in a significant minority, within our networks we have heard of some other nurseries where a parent/carer has ignored the COVID-19 guidance and sent their child to nursery despite a member of their household testing positive. This has then led to this child also testing positive and necessitating the closure, or part thereof, of a nursery.

Although we do not anticipate this scenario to occur, if it is found to be the case that parents/carers have knowingly ignored the guidance issued around COVID-19, then your child's place at the nursery will be immediately suspended until the pandemic is over.

Fees will still be due as per our normal notice period. We will also seek financial compensation from you for the costs we have incurred from paying staff in full whilst they have been unable to work, as well as the discounts we have had to apply to all affected parents who have been unable to attend the nursery. Finally, in the most extreme of cases, we will be required to report any deliberate non-compliance to the authorities, who may issue a fine.

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