

## Operational guidance for continuing our opening under COVID-19 restrictions

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.

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 restrictions on daily life continue to be eased, the level of transmission and cases across the country will continue to increase. Children will continue to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 from other illnesses, and regardless of the likelihood that any symptoms are COVID-19 related, the ongoing self-isolation guidance remains unchanged at this time.

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
- 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 are kept in each room
- A limited amount of messy play activities are suspended
- Parents/carers can only enter the nursery for limited reasons

## Immunisations and teething

If your child has a temperature of 37.8°C or above and the suspected reason for this is a recent immunisation or they are teething, then they do not need to get tested for COVID-19 and do not need to self-isolate. If the side effects of an 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 temperature is because of an immunisation or teething rather than being a symptom of COVID-19 is made by the nursery management team.

## Carbon Dioxide monitors

Carbon Dioxide monitors are at each nursery and are used across the nursery in different rooms to assess the adequacy of ventilation. Where ventilation is not adequate, additional windows or doors will be opened to make suitable improvements.

## 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 circumstances outlined in this document, as well as permitted visitors for essential purposes, must wear face coverings and must keep a safe distance from children and staff whilst on the premises.

Parents/carers must wear a face covering when dropping off and collecting children unless exempt. Parents/carers are also asked to keep a safe distance from the door or gate so staff can maintain a safe distance from you. 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.

## 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 be limited, and there is limited mixing of groups 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.

Our approach is to only allow each child to remain in close contact with the children in their age group and staff, and to maintain a safe distance from the rest of the nursery as much as possible. 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: their Lodge. There are multiple members of staff per Lodge, and this is like normal nursery practice. Lodge leaders will give children the support which they need and so not keep their distance from

them, nor will the children in each Lodge socially distance from each other, so your child will still get the close contact they need.

Where possible, each Lodge will have their own separate toilet to use. Children in each Lodge can continue to eat meals with each other. Children in each Lodge can continue to sleep close to each other on 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.

### **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 exceptions for new children during settling in sessions and parent/carers visiting the nursery for a show round. Parents/carers must wear a face covering and must keep a safe distance from all staff and children in those exceptional circumstances. 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, keeping a safe distance between each set of parents
- The nursery will have two entrances where necessary – one for parents/carers dropping off children, and one for parents/carers collecting children
- 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
- Handovers will be limited due to the restrictions of access to the setting. All information about your child's day will appear on the Blossom daily diary
- All nursery events involving parents/carers are suspended until further notice, this includes outdoor events

### **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.

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 testing method carried out at test centres 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). 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, you will be informed of this positive case. Your child will not need to self-isolate unless they then subsequently develop symptoms of COVID-19.

#### 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.

You should get your child tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible by either ordering a home test kit or visiting the nearest 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 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 only self-isolate if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, or if they do not have symptoms, only if they are over 18 and have not had two COVID-19 vaccinations at least two weeks before your child's symptoms began. However, each other person aged over five in the household should take a lateral flow test each day for seven days after the positive result was obtained.

Your child can return to nursery sooner than the usual ten-day self-isolation period if they have a negative lateral flow device test result on the sixth full day after symptoms began or received the positive test result (whichever is earlier), and then again on the seventh full day, with these two tests occurring at least 24 hours apart from each other. Proof of both negative results with times taken will need to be shown before your child can return to nursery at this earlier time.

If your child was due to have visits as part of the room transition process at this time, this will be paused until what would have been your child's ten-day self-isolation period ends.

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 only they must self-isolate. It is recommended that all other people in your household, including your child, takes a PCR test but this is not mandatory. Your child can continue to attend nursery even if they do not take a PCR test, or whilst waiting for the test result to be returned.

Everyone in your child's household who is aged over five should also take a lateral flow test each day for seven days after the positive result was obtained.

If your child was due to have visits as part of the room transition process at this time, this will be paused until what would have been your child's ten-day self-isolation period ends.

### 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 available 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 for your child. You must book a PCR test either at a test centre or via a home test kit. If you 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.

### **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 and will self-isolate following any positive results.

### **Holidays abroad**

If, following your holiday abroad, your child is required to enter quarantine, then nursery fees will still be due in full.

### **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 we do not anticipate it, if it is found to be the case that parents/carers have knowingly ignored the guidance issued around COVID-19, such as sending a child into nursery with COVID-19 symptoms, or with a positive COVID-19 test result, 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 any costs incurred such as if a potential outbreak subsequently begins and necessitates the closure of part of the nursery and therefore fee refunds.

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