



Grange Drive



Birch Wood Vale



Autism Provision

BIRCH WOOD SCHOOL OPENING GUIDANCE AUGUST 2021

WELCOME BACK!

I hope that the summer holidays are treating you and your family well and that there has been time to relax, have fun and catch up with family and friends, as well as time for some adventures. This guide is designed to answer all your questions about the beginning of term and how we will continue to manage Covid19 in school based on the latest government guidance. Please do get in touch if you have any further questions. In the meantime we are really looking forward to the beginning of the academic year 2021-2022!

Rosalind Hopkins- Headteacher

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Birch Wood School Opening Guidance August 2021

The advice from the Department for Education is that as the coronavirus (COVID-19) becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people’s education. Therefore, our priority is to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all students as the evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

Risk Assessment

In order to keep everyone safe we regularly review and update our risk assessments, treating them as ‘living documents’ so that we can respond as the circumstances at school and with public health advice changes. Our risk assessments are reviewed as part of our ongoing monitoring schedule. Claire Wood- Assistant Head is the Key Lead for this risk assessment and works closely with Lou Bedder- School Manager with regards to Covid Safety on site.

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)

Most clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are advised, as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone, although if you would like to discuss your child’s needs in more detail or have concerns about people in your household, please contact us for an individual approach. In some cases, it may be necessary to conduct an individual risk assessment for your child in light of Covid. A very small number of young people under paediatric or other specialist care have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend, if this applies to your child, we will provide a risk assessment and look at any alternative ways we can support your child’s education provision

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all children of compulsory school age, and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school.

Where a child is required to self-isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19 in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by Public Health England (PHE) they should be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where they are unable to attend because they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code I (illness).

School attendance is tracked closely in school by Claire Wood – Assistant Head. Sarah Alldridge our Family School Link Worker, is also available to discuss any concerns families may have about attendance.

Remote Education

Where a student has been advised to isolate for any reason and therefore is unable to attend because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we will be able to offer them access to high quality remote education. This will be co-ordinated by Michelle Walker our 'Education Continuity Lead' who will work with your child's class teacher and subject teachers where applicable. Additional systems are also in place to keep in contact with students to support their access to remote education. We recognise that many of our students may not be able to access remote education without adult support and so will work collaboratively with families and put in place reasonable adjustments so that our students can successfully access remote education appropriate for their level of need. We will also work with other outside agencies including health and social care to help ensure student's needs are met within their EHCP, including any other welfare needs. We aim to work in partnership with families to achieve the best outcomes, even under more challenging circumstances families may be facing at different times. Our 'Education Continuity and Remote Learning Policy' can be found on our website.

Annual Reviews

Families will be offered annual reviews to be conducted in person or remotely depending on your preference and what is most supportive of everyone's engagement. Annual Reviews are overseen and quality assured by Tom Bradley Hewell- Assistant Head & SENDco, who is available to discuss any additional questions you may have about them. It is important to us that assessments and reviews continue to ensure that the child or young person, and their parent and carer, is at the centre of the process and can engage with the process in a meaningful way.

Protection Measures

Mixing and 'bubbles'

The DfE are no longer recommending that it is necessary to keep children and young people in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that bubbles will not be required by the DfE in schools from the autumn term. Whilst we recognise this will enable flexibility in curriculum delivery, we feel a slightly more gradual approach to stepping down from protection measures is required to help reduce the risk of exposure to more vulnerable students. Therefore, we will be operating the following larger bubbles for the first half term only, when this will be reviewed as part of our ongoing risk assessment.

Bubbles August-October:

- Birch Wood Vale & Ashton House= 1 bubble
- Grange Drive EYFS & KS1 & KS2= 1 bubble
- Grange Drive KS3, KS4 & KS5= 1 bubble
- Grange Drive all Autism Provision Classes = 1 bubble

Tracing close contacts and self-isolation

As a school we will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. We will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. We are advised that as a school we may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case or their parent to identify close contacts.

As per the government advice Individuals are **not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19**, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- they have taken part in, or are currently part of, an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, they will be:

1. Contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case
2. Advised to take a PCR test. As stated, if this is negative, they do not need to isolate

Birch Wood School requests that in the following circumstances parents contact the school; please make us aware if:

- a. you or your child are living with someone who has Covid 19,
- b. you have been in close contact with someone with Covid19, OR
- c. where your child who attends Birch Wood has tested positive for Covid 19

In such circumstances, please contact Lou Bedder, School Manager who is our Health and Safety Lead within in school via email: bedderl@borchwoodschool.co.uk

This will enable us to take the necessary steps to protect some of our most vulnerable students and also support track and trace in the rare case it will be required. We will register all students every lesson at BWV to help track student contact. At BWV students will also sit in seating plans in all lessons.

Therefore, children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend school, and have been identified as a close contact, should continue to attend school as normal.

Recap

- **We will not be asking close contacts to isolate unless they are requested to by NHS track and trace.**
- **We do encourage close contacts to have a PCR test when they have been in close contact with a confirmed case either at home or school as per government guidance.**
- **We will continue to let parents know if their child has been in contact with a confirmed case.**
- **We may need to change our approach in the case of an outbreak in school and will work closely with Public Health England in such circumstances.**

Please note, 18-year-olds will be treated in the same way as children until 6 months after their 18th birthday, to allow them the opportunity to be fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults, and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Face coverings

At Birch Wood School staff will continue to wear a surgical facemask for the first half term, unless exempt. This is as a precaution until all students have settled back in to school life and testing of staff and secondary aged students has been completed. We will review the situation at half term and providing levels of infection within our school community remain low, we will remove this safety measure after the first half term. We will also consult families on changes to this precaution at the time.

The DfE has stated that face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas. However, the government has also stated that Headteachers are best placed to establish what safety measures are right for each school due to the uniqueness of every setting. As a special school, with both vulnerable children and adults we hope this graduated approach to lifting safety measures in school will help maintain our good track record of low infection rates within school.

Secondary aged students may still be requested to use facemasks on public transport and dedicated transport to school or college. Please discuss this with your child's driver and escort where applicable.

Birch Wood's Control Measures

- We will maintain enhanced cleaning regimes as per risk assessment, including regular cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, twice per day).
- Ensure good hygiene for everyone:
 - This will include good hand hygiene as per our risk assessment. Students will be encouraged to wash hands regularly and use hand sanitiser which will continue to be available at regular points in the school
 - The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach will be in place with use of extra bins in classrooms
- We will keep occupied spaces well ventilated

- Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

If a student already has routine care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Additional PPE for COVID-19 is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when performing [aerosol generating procedures \(AGPs\)](#).

Public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

- When someone develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test they should not come into school
- The DfE advises that if anyone in school develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, they will be sent home and they should follow public health advice.
- If a student is awaiting collection, they will be asked to wait away from other students in a well ventilated, designated space with a member of staff wearing appropriate PPE. This room will be cleaned after they have left.

Asymptomatic testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. As children and young people will have potentially mixed with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school students and post-16 students will be offered 2 onsite lateral flow device (LFD) tests, within the first week back, on their return in the autumn term.

- At Birch Wood we are requesting that as many secondary age students as possible are tested at home before they come in to school on Wednesday 25th August. **If possible, please do the test and complete the form in the link below before 4pm on Tuesday 24th August** as this will really help with our administrative processes. This is to prevent students mixing before a test has occurred. Please complete the form in the link below when you have tested your child. Your support with this will really help the smooth running of school at the beginning of term.
 - <https://forms.office.com/r/MUsP2upWgm>
- We will only test your child in school on the two days back if they have not been tested at home on Tuesday 24th August.
- New students will be sent a consent form separately; we will only test your child if you complete a consent form or have completed one at Birch Wood last academic year.
- If you have previously consented and now wish to withdraw your consent for in school testing please email Lou Bedder bedderl@birchwoodschool.co.uk
- We will aim to complete a second test in school as per government guidance for all students where parents have given consent, although if your child prefers there is an option for this also to be done at home.

- We will not be having a phased return (apart from students with pre-agreed transition arrangements, such as in EYFS) to school due to the issues this may create for some families with child care and transport.
- Secondary age students should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.
- Staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed.

We recognise that self-swabbing may cause significant concerns for some children and young people with SEND. Birch Wood will retain minimal testing capacity on site so we can offer testing to students and families who are unable to test themselves at home.

Testing is voluntary and no child or young person will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.

Confirmatory PCR tests

- Staff and students with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the [stay at home guidance](#). They will also need to [get a free polymerase chain reaction \(PCR\) test to check if they have COVID-19](#).
- Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.
- If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the individual can return to their setting, as long as the individual doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Those with a negative LFD test result can also continue to attend school or college.

Start and Finish Times

- All sites will return to their normal start and finish times for all students from the beginning of term:
 - Birch Wood Grange Drive 9am- 3.30am:
 - Parents who bring their child to school will be invited to wait in the gym until a familiar staff member comes to collect their child.
 - Those students arriving by LA transport in EYFS, KS1, 2CD, 2MH and all autism provision classes- will enter via the main reception door (*not the EYFS playground*)
 - Those students arriving by LA transport in 2HOM, KS3, KS4 & KS5- will enter via the far right hand side of the school
- Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House 8.50-3.20- Students should enter via the playground gate where they will be greeted by staff

If you have any further questions, please do contact school where a member of SLT or your child's class teacher/form tutor will be happy to speak to you.

Many Thanks