12th October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Covid19 Safety Update**

(Please read in conjunction with Parent Guide to full Re-Opening)

Thank you for your ongoing support at this time, with just a week to go before half term I am pleased to say that attendance has been growing steadily and so far there has been minimal disruption in our ability to stay open despite growing rates of infection in the community.

We are very safety conscious and in light of rising infection rates we need to regularly review and update our Covid19 risk assessments in order to keep our whole community safe. Although we cannot rule out the possibility of the virus coming in to school, we can limit the impact in terms of infection in school and school closure.

These are worrying times, but I want to reassure you that we will continue with our cautious and considered approach with the aim that we can achieve our core purpose of staying open in order to provide students with physical access to their education and therefore enabling them to reach their full potential. Below are the enhancements we’ve made to our risk assessment commencing this week.

1. Facemasks

We are asking staff across the school to wear the surgical facemasks at all times, and have also given staff who work with our more complex students the opportunity to wear a visor too, although this is at their discretion. Recent advice from Public Health England suggests that best practice for protection from contracting and spreading the virus is to wear both a visor and mask. This is because the visor provides full protection for you and the mask provides protection from you spreading the virus.

Students at our secondary provision, Birch Wood Vale should now wear facemasks on the corridors and when they transition around the building. Students will be supported to put them on and off safely (please see safety video on our website) and have the option of wearing a Sunflower lanyard if they are unable to wear a face mask. Students who are wearing the lanyard will also be issued with an explanation card to give to members of the public in the case where someone asks them about not wearing a mask. We feel this will support some of our students to manage these situations outside of school as part of their preparation for adulthood.

On the whole students have coped well with seeing adults wear facemasks in school and where students have required a different approach we have been able to write that in to their risk assessment and take a personalised approach.

1. Bubbles

At Grange Drive we have been able to keep students in consistent bubbles and successfully used systems of cleaning and hygiene control around shared spaces. Keeping staffing consistent to avoid staff moving between groups has been more challenging due to our requirement to allocate staff according to student’s specific needs. However, due to rising infections rates we have renewed our efforts to keep staffing consistent so that we can keep to the chance of infection across our different groups to an absolute minimum.

At Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House where students have subject specialists to facilitate a secondary curriculum we have worked carefully to ensure that teacher’s remain 2 metres away from students. Lessons are planned with this in mind so that support staff who are part of the class bubble can support with learning more closely as required. Next half term we will be reviewing seating plans so that we have an improved idea of who you child’s close contacts are during lesson times.

We would also like to remind you that students should not be bringing in toys and other items from home wherever possible.

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| --- | --- |
| Student Bubbles- Grange Drive | Student Bubbles- Birch Wood Vale |
| * 1. 1BN/1RS   2. 2HOM   3. 2CD/2MZ   4. 3JD/4MP   5. 5CA   6. 1KL/2PM/3RH | 1. 7LC/7D 2. 8ES 3. 9PB 4. 10AN/11KJ/5PW |
| Ashton House Autism Provision at Burton Road is a complete bubble, but The Den & The Nook students will access some of their options curriculum with 10AN/11KJ & 5PW. They will socially distance from other students where this occurs. |

Our bubble sizes range from 7- 30 students, which is comparatively small against other school settings.

1. Hand Sanitizer and Hand Washing.

We are continuing with clear routines for good hand hygiene including regular washing of hands for at least 20 seconds. We have also invested in hand sanitising points across the school. Hand sanitiser is available in classrooms for students, but is locked away when not in use. We have ensured our hand sanitiser is at least 70% alcohol on advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which states that a higher alcohol content is most effective at killing germs.

1. Meetings

Staff have now been asked to conduct most meetings with staff outside their bubble remotely via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Incidental meetings and those about safeguarding with the leadership team should be conducted at 2 metre distance in a well ventilated room. Unless for a very specific and special reason parent meetings and Annual Reviews will now be conducted remotely. You will receive information about parents evening shortly.

1. Visiting professionals and therapeutic staff

Risk assessments for professionals that work with us in school regularly such as VI support, HI support, SALT, OT, Physio and Music Therapy, have been reviewed so that we can limit the possibility of spreading the virus through contact across bubbles. This information will be updated on your child’s Covid risk assessment where applicable. These updates will be discussed with you by your child’s class teacher or tutor over the next few weeks.

We will only be able to facilitate further outside professionals coming in to school where this is absolutely essential. This is very important at Grange Drive where the children and young adults find it very difficult to socially distance. This is to protect staff and students from unnecessary contact with people outside our community.

1. Abide by the maximum capacity signs on all rooms

All rooms now have maximum capacity signage to support social distancing wherever possible

1. Lunches

Students will continue to eat lunch in their classrooms. Students at all sites will now have access to hot lunches.

1. Teaching and Learning

Where appropriate, we will increase our use of remote teaching via Teams for specialist subject teaching which involves staff crossing sites. This will help students at Birch Wood Vale get used to this style of teaching if they need to self-isolate for any reason.

Teachers at Birch Wood Vale who work across classes will refrain from any unnecessary close contact with students.

Remote Teaching.

1. Our Education Continuity Leads (Pia and Michelle) have been working hard to get things in place in the unfortunate circumstances that you need to self-isolate as a family. Whilst teachers will try to tailor provision to your child’s needs we would like all parents to become familiar with Microsoft Teams as our main platform for sharing school work and providing feedback. Please let the office know if you have mislaid you child’s login details and they will ensure that either Pia or Michelle make contact with you. Pia, Michelle or David Grimes our Network Manager are also available to guide you through setting up and using Teams
2. Staggered Starts and Finishes to the School Day

Thank you so much for your co-operation with this, it has made such a difference to managing contact at these busy times of the day and helps to keep our community safe. We will continue with the existing arrangements next half term whilst infection rates are on the rise.

1. When should your child stay at home?

Please look at the guidance attached.

Our aims next term are to continue to reach out to you using new technology and also to stay open with minimal disruption. We are constantly reviewing the quality of provision in school and still strive to maintain the highest standards of care and education in spite of the challenges in our way. Please do get in touch if you have any questions, your feedback really helps inform what we do.

Have a safe and happy half term.

Yours sincerely

Rosalind Hopkins

Headteacher