

Birch Wood School Parents Guide to Full Re-Opening

AUTUMN 2020

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## Birch Wood School Parents Guide to Full Re-Opening

I hope you have all managed to enjoy the summer with your children. We are delighted to be welcoming our students back to Birch Wood for the Autumn Term 2020. Back in July we sent everyone via email a personalised transition to school plan which detailed when your child’s first day of school will be. In addition to this your child’s form tutor or class teacher will be in touch on Monday 24th August to discuss your child’s return to school and update their individualised Covid19 Risk Assessment in consultation with you. Please let us know if this day is not convenient for you and we will try to contact you at an agreed time.

The staff team at Birch Wood has been working throughout the break to consider all the measures we will be taking to ensure as safe return as possible for all children and young people to school. We have paid close attention to the government guidance [(www.g](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-)o[v.uk/government/publications/guidance-](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-) for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special- schools-and-other-specialist-settings) and also our own understanding of our student’s individual needs to develop our Risk Assessments. The government guidance outlines that education setting leaders are best placed to understand the needs of schools and communities, and to make informed judgements about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures

needed to manage risk. Therefore, we have aimed to strike the right balance to enable us to open school fully, whilst at the same time keep everyone as safe as possible.

I am now able to share the following details with you, which outline from beginning to end what school will be like when your child returns.

# Preparing for school:

* Children should bring their lunch boxes (if not having school dinners), a water bottle, coat, a sun hat, sun cream (if you wish). These can now be brought in a school bag. Children will be able to refill water bottles in school.
* Toys from home, should **not be brought into school.**
* Any medication taken home before school closed, should also be brought back in.

# Arrival to school

We ask that one parent or family member comes onto the school site if they are bringing their child to school. However, do let us know if you need another family member to be with you to assist with your child. **The information below re start times excludes transition arrangements/times that have been made between the class team and families for new starters.**

### Grange Drive

* Students travelling by LA transport will arrive at 9.00am and finish school at 3.30pm
* Students being transported by parents will arrive at 9.30am and finish at 3.00pm

### Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House Autism Provision- Burton Road Site

* Students travelling by LA transport will arrive at 8.50am and finish school at 3.20pm
* Students being transported by parents will arrive at 9.10am and finish at 3.00pm

We ask that students are kept in vehicles until we come out to collect them as this will avoid crowding at the entrances. Where students and parents are asked to wait outside they will be supported to stand 2 metres apart using floor/fence markings to support. If you bring your child to school and require a slightly different start or finish time please let us know, we aim to be flexible to support your needs. We may adapt beginning and end of day arrangements once we have tried them out in practice, so please let us have your feedback.

# Entrance to school

### Grange Drive: Students will access school through 3 different entrances:

* 1BN/1RS- Will enter through the EYFS Gate to the left of the building and go straight into the EYFS/KS1 playground.
* 3JD, 4SP, 5CA- far right hand gate
* All other groups through main reception

### Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House Autism Provision- Burton Road Site

All students will enter through the large gate on to the playground but enter the buildings through different points as follows:

* 7DP & 7LC- Atrium Door 1
* 10AN- Atrium Door 2
* 8ES, 9PB, 11KJ, 5PW- New entrance in to the back lobby giving direct access to the stairs.
* Autism Provision- Through main entrance to Ashton House

There are hand sanitiser stations on all entrance points and also hand sanitiser in all classrooms. Students will be requested to sanitise or wash their hands on arrival to school. Hand sanitiser in classrooms will be locked away when not in use by staff or students to avoid the risk of student’s swallowing it. Staff will be issued with a small hand sanitiser bottle with clip to be attached to their lanyard.

# Removal and storage of face coverings

We know not all students will wear facemasks on transport, but for those that do we will be sending some guidance home on how they should remove and store their facemasks, it will outline the following:

Start of Day:

1. Keep your mask on until you get to your classroom.
2. When walking into school, remember your new personal space.
3. Use the antibacterial gel by the doors to clean your hands before you go in to school or touch your mask.
4. When you get to your classroom, go straight to your own desk, still wearing your mask.
5. When you get to your desk, you can take off your mask, carefully and put it in the bag provided and put it away.
6. You will be asked by a member of staff to wash your hands using soap and water.

End of Day:

1. You will be asked by a member of staff to wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Carefully take your mask out of the bag.
3. Put your mask on and then put the empty bag in your tray.
4. Use antibacterial gel to disinfect your hands
5. Keep your mask on until you get home

# Student Bubbles

In welcoming all children and young people back this autumn, the government have also asked schools to minimise the number of contacts that a student has during the day as part of implementing the system of controls outlined in this guide to reduce the risk of transmission.

Therefore, at Birch Wood students have been organised in to consistent bubbles to avoid unnecessary mixing of people in school, which may help reduce the spread of infection and the need to close the whole school in the incidence of a confirmed case in school.

As outlined in the school transport letter, these student bubbles are not supported by local authority transport, so student’s may mix with other children or young people outside their bubble on buses and taxis. As a result, we would still pay careful attention to the other contacts students have in the event of a confirmed case. However, we have concluded after much deliberation that it is better to take every precaution where we have the power to do so, as the guidance also establishes that it isn't an 'all-or-nothing' approach – as such the student bubbles will still bring benefits if implemented even partially.

The government guidance also establishes that there are no firm rules on group sizes, although special schools typically have much smaller class sizes than mainstream settings. Whatever the size of the

bubble your child is in, they will be kept apart from other groups where possible. In addition, where children are able to understand social distancing they will be encouraged to keep their distance within groups.

Student Bubbles- Grange Drive

* 1. 1NS/1RS
  2. 2HOM
  3. 2CD/2MZ
  4. 3JD/4SP
  5. 5CA
  6. 1KL/2PM
  7. 3RH

Student Bubbles- Birch Wood Vale

1. 7LC/7D
2. 8ES
3. 9PB
4. 10AN/11JK/5PW

Ashton House Autism Provision at BWV is a complete bubble

Staff can work across different groups in order to deliver the school timetable, but where possible we have facilitated consistent staff groups. Where possible staff should keep their distance from students and other staff as much as they can (ideally 2 metres apart). At Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House students will stay in their form classroom for most lessons with subject teaching staff moving around to teach them. Some staff will also be wearing different elements of PPE, please see below.

Specialist staff such as School Nurse, Health and Wellbeing Officer, SALT, EP and Music Therapist will wear PPE or maintain 2 metres social distance.

# Use of PPE

All staff at Grange Drive will wear either a surgical facemask or face shield when working with students, it is now optional to wear gloves and a plastic apron. This is because in most classes there are children who are medically vulnerable and who require very close proximity working. We will review this position at half term. Every effort will be made to support children who may find face coverings difficult and consider if a transparent face shield or face covering is more tolerable. However, the use of face coverings is now common in the wider community and we view this as an opportunity to further prepare many of our young people where appropriate for the world around them.

At Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House some staff will wear either a face covering or face shield for their own personal health reasons or if they are working with young people who find social distancing more difficult. These decisions have been determined by individual staff and student Covid19 Risk Assessments. Your child’s form tutor will advise you which staff are wearing facemasks.

# Site Management & Cleanliness

Careful consideration has been given to the premises and how they can be best used to keep consistent groups of children together throughout the day, and to keep the groups apart from each other. Additionally, the use of communal spaces is to be managed to limit the amount of mixing between groups as much as possible. Staff and students will only use their designated classrooms and not visit other classrooms unnecessarily. Therefore;

* Staff and student groups will remain consistent wherever possible
* Outdoor play areas will be accessed on a rota basis and in some cases be sectioned off in to zones for specific groups use to avoid students mixing with different groups
* The gym, immersive room, soft play and hydro pool will now be open but have restrictions on capacity and individualised room risk assessments to reduce the risk of Covid19
* Rebound equipment will be cleaned down with disinfectant wipes after use.
* Students will be diverted from walking on the corridors except if absolutely necessary. There will be a keep left policy with appropriate signage including ‘give way’ signs.
* There will be clear warning signs and symbols around the school to act as reminders
* Windows will be open where possible to ensure ventilation

### Whilst in school- cleanliness:

* All soft toys, cushions and blankets have been put away so they are only accessible for staff to use with students. When they are used they will be taken to the laundry for cleaning after each use.
* Any toys or resources that cannot easily be cleaned have been removed.
* Seating plans, including front facing desks will be used (only) where applicable
* Rooms will be laid out to provide the safest teaching spaces in terms of distance from teacher at Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House.
* All classrooms are equipped with soap, water and/or antibacterial hand gel, handtowels, disposable tissues, disinfectant wipes and bins with lids.
* Cleaning our hands more often than usual. We have developed routines to help children understand when and how to wash their hands, helping them to understand they should wash them thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or using hand sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
* We will help our children understand good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach and ensuring a good supply of tissues and bins (with lids) throughout the school.
* Surfaces and door handles will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes after each activity- staff will clean as they go.
* Bin lids will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes when tissues are disposed of in them and at regular intervals in the day.
* We have employed an additional cleaner who will be in school cleaning communal spaces midway through the day

# School Uniform

Normal School uniform is to be worn each day; government guidance is that parents should not be expected to wash uniform every night.

# School Lunches

School meals will be available on our return; at Grange Drive students will queue to collect their lunches with staff and will be spaced up to 2 metres apart. Students will return to eat their lunches in their classrooms. At Birch Wood Vale & Ashton House lunches will be packed lunch style for the first half term. Lunches will be delivered to classroom bubbles and eaten in class. Those that normally bring sandwiches from home will still be able to do so.

# PE Sessions

PE kit is to be kept at home and students can arrive at school wearing PE kit on the days they are timetabled to have PE. All PE Equipment will be cleaned and sanitised in between bubbles and groups. Class teachers will be in touch to let you know the day this is to be worn for each individual class. There will be more information about PE at Birch Wood Vale and Ashton House sent out separately.

# Equipment

Classroom-based resources like books and games can be used and shared within a group. We will clean them regularly, as we do for frequently touched surfaces. However, students still shouldn't share individual and very frequently used equipment like pencils and pens. Therefore, all of our students will be provided with named individual equipment for their own use. These are to stay in school and not be taken home. We encourage students at Birch Wood Vale & Ashton House to bring a personal pencil case, but this will need to stay in school each day and not travel between home and school.

Any resources shared between groups, such as sports, art and science equipment, will be either:

* Cleaned frequently and meticulously, and always between groups using them; or
* Rotated so they can be unused and out of reach for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different groups

We will avoid unnecessary sharing, especially where it doesn't contribute to pupil education and development.

School reading books can be taken home, but must only be used by one student and unused for 48 hours before being passed on. Wherever possible they will have a plastic cover which can be cleaned with a disinfectant wipe.

# Attendance

As the School is fully open then the government attendance rules now apply again. However, the government also outline in their guidance that coproduction and consultation with families is crucial. Therefore, we will work closely with you to address any concerns you have or anxieties our students may have around school attendance.

# Before and After School Clubs

Unfortunately, these are suspended at present as we are not able to maintain student bubbles and facilitate them, we will review this at October half term.

# Contact with the school office and staff

Visitors (including parents) to the School site can only do so with an appointment; we will have track and trace procedures in place, with a clear record of all visitors. For all enquiries we ask that you use

the office email, the advice and support email ([adviceandsupport@birchwoodschool.co.uk](mailto:adviceandsupport@birchwoodschool.co.uk)) or telephone to talk to us. Site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they will.

# Responding to a suspected case of coronavirus in school

If your child begins to show coronavirus symptoms, we will contact you and ask you to collect them as soon as possible. Whilst they are waiting to be collected, they will be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff who will wear PPE. They will be cared for and given plenty of reassurance. Once the child has left the premises we will ensure areas they have been in are disinfected and any PPE and other waste is disposed of safely.

All staff and children who are attending school will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario, although we appreciate this is not possible for all children and young people who may not tolerate a test well. Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to school and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. If the child or staff member tests positive, parents/staff must notify us immediately. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect other children and staff in school. The rest of the child’s immediate group will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. We will also map out any other contacts, so every case will have an individualised approach based on their unique circumstances. At present direct contact with a confirmed case would require a period of self-isolation even if there is negative test result.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the school, Public Health England’s local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise us on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases, a larger group may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. Every case will be addressed on its individual dynamics. If we work together and observe the guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce the risk of transmission, we will be doing everything possible to prevent the closure of the whole school.

In light of the above we ask that parents and carers ensure we have up to date emergency contacts and consider where these may need to change, for example if previous emergency contacts are in a shielded group.

# Assemblies

Sadly, we will not be able to have group gatherings such as assemblies and shows. However, we will be continuing to create our virtual assemblies and online celebrations that have been so popular.

# What learning will look like and The Recovery Curriculum

While our aim is to have all children and young people back to school in the autumn, will also need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how we will ensure continuity of education. Additionally, where a student is unable to attend their setting because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we aim to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. We have appointed 2 of our teachers to be ‘Education Continuity Leads’, Michelle Walker and Pia Dulucchi will be co-ordinating our ‘virtual classroom’ offer alongside David Grimes our Network Manager, which is aimed at ensuring education can continue in the event of more school closures or partial lockdowns. We will be providing extra training for staff and parents on how to utilise the ‘Virtual Classroom’.

Our teachers fully understand that children will be returning at very different points in their learning and development and will be tailoring the curriculum to meet these needs. Teachers will be sending you an overview of the curriculum that will happen for this term, which will take into account that students may need extra time in specific areas to support their physical or academic development, whilst ensuring they have a broad and balanced curriculum. We will review each stage with you throughout the year. Parents meetings and Annual Reviews will still occur but as socially distanced events or remote meetings if preferable. We have appointed an academic curriculum recovery teacher- Catherine Mitchell and designated specific time for other staff to work individually or in small groups with children to provide extra support with core skills such as literacy and numeracy to help retrieve any skills that may have now need a little extra work. We are also working on developing our extended day offer after the October half term.

We recognise that children and young people will need a period of adjustment when they return to school this term and we have already begun work on our ‘Recovery Curriculum’, which will focus on supporting our students’ fundamental wellbeing against potential feelings of anxiety, trauma and bereavement due to the impact of the Coronavirus. Part of this work is exploring how you and your child are feeling about returning to school. Julie Pettie our PHSE and Student Support Team Lead will be co-ordinating this work and is available to discuss our approach with you if required. We have analysed the results of the survey you completed last term and have begun planning to address your child’s needs and concerns where appropriate. Thank you for your input and help to inform our next steps for the academic year 2020-21.

# Educational Trips and Visits

In the autumn term, the government have said we can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. These trips should include any trips or placements connected with a student’s preparation for adulthood (for example workplace visits, travel training etc.). This will be done in line with protective measures, such as keeping children within their consistent group, and the coronavirus secure measures in place at the destination. Our Educational Trips and Visits Policy has been updated to reflect this.

We will continue to make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support delivery of the curriculum. All our risk assessments are being updated to reflect Covid19 safe activity and to ensure trips can be done safely.

1. Care

We will do everything we can to help students adjust to these changes, although staff aim to maintain all of the precautions in place, they will manage this in a sensitive way and will still be there to offer comfort and physical support to all our students, particularly younger or more sensitive children.

If possible, please talk to your child about school and why it might be a little different when they come back. Look out on our website and Facebook page for additional support materials to help them adjust, such as Birch Wood specific social stories, videos and student guides about different aspects of returning to school. Staff are on hand to support and to answer your questions as and when they arise.

Our Family School Link Worker- Sarah Allridge will be happy to help as will your child’s class teacher.

I hope that this guide has given you the information you need to understand what arrangements we have made to enable children to return to us. We are looking forward to welcoming the children back

and I hope that you are assured that we have taken all possible steps to ensure safety for all in our settings. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know. Our full site Risk Assessment will be published on our website next week.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Yours Sincerely

Rosalind Hopkins Headteacher