



CORONAVIRUS RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN – MARCH 2022

Key information and protocols including aspects of operational guidance following the return of pupils on 28 February

Summary

The School's Risk Management Plan has been updated to take account of changes to the public health controls which were initially introduced by the Government in March 2020 and to the additional measures required by The Department for Education ("DfE") as amended at various points since that time. It includes aspects of "Operational Guidance" into which it has now been folded in the DfE's approach.

On 21 February, the Prime Minister announced the Government's plan for "Living with COVID-19". That document explained that the majority of public health measures that had been introduced to tackle and contain the spread of COVID-19 were to be removed from 24 February.

The Government's stance is now to encourage people to take individual responsibility for managing their health and the potential impact of any illness on others in the same way as they would with other infectious conditions such as flu or norovirus.

Most particularly, it is no longer a legal requirement for individuals who are infected with and suffering from coronavirus to self-isolate although people "are encouraged to do so" in order to reduce the likelihood of passing on the virus to others. This change from statute to guidance applies equally to schools for which no different or additional instructions have been issued.

Schools are no longer expected to facilitate the twice-weekly asymptomatic testing of staff and pupils and will not be issued with further supplies of testing kits for distribution. Testing for coronavirus is now the responsibility of individuals who need to obtain their own testing kits if they wish to assess their condition.

Whilst there has been a change in the formal approach to living with coronavirus in its current form, scientific advisors have highlighted concerns that "the virus has not gone away" and suggested that further mutations and variants are likely to evolve over the coming months.

Therefore, the School will retain some of the practical measures and practical facilities that have been installed over the last two years, both to maintain an enhanced hygiene regime around the site and to ensure that if preventative measures need to be reinstated at some point, suitable facilities can be reactivated promptly where they remain in place. This means, for example, that:

- the additional sinks and handwashing facilities will remain in the Quad;
- dispensers of hand sanitiser will stay in place around the buildings;
- staff are advised to continue to maximise the ventilation of teaching areas.

The DfE's "Schools COVID-19 Operational Guidance" has been restructured following the announcement of the Government's "Living with COVID-19" plan and is summarised below within the measures that will continue at Ermysted's. Given the removal of almost all restrictions, some facets of the information may seem obvious given the "return to normal", but have been included below for clarity, certainty and the avoidance of doubt.

Risk Assessment

The School will continue to comply with health and safety law and maintain proportionate control measures for the protection of staff and pupils and to monitor and respond to any changes in public health guidance.

Contract Tracing

Responsibility for identifying close contacts was removed from schools in autumn 2021 and its management passed to NHS Test and Trace.

Schools may continue to be asked by health protection teams for assistance in the identification of close contacts in the event of a significant local outbreak of coronavirus, just as they might with any other infectious disease. It is possible that public health professionals may recommend the introduction or reinstatement of additional preventative measures in extreme circumstances, but currently this is not anticipated.

Face coverings

The official DfE guidance states that "Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in classrooms or communal areas"..."Staff and pupils should follow wider advice on face coverings outside of school, including on transport to and from school". This information has been shared with parents and pupils.

Control measures

A number of measures that have been introduced over the last two years are recommended to be continued as a matter of best practice:

- Frequent washing of hands on arrival at school and throughout the day. Pupils should continue to be encouraged to use the sinks in the Quad on arrival and before lunch as well as making use of the hand sanitiser dispensers around the site throughout the day.
- Tissues and pedal bins will remain in each classroom to support the "catch it, bin it, kill it" mantra.
- Although most staff will not need additional PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, supplies will continue to remain available in the Medical Room where pupils may also be asked to wear a face covering during treatment at the discretion of the staff providing First Aid.
- The School will continue with the enhanced cleaning regime and additional staffing resource throughout the day.

- Maintaining increased ventilation in teaching environments and communal areas is still considered to be a significant factor in mitigating the transmission of coronavirus. Staff are encouraged to continue to keep windows and doors open wherever possible to facilitate this.

Travel and quarantine

Whilst widespread restrictions on travel to and from the United Kingdom have currently been removed for adults who are fully vaccinated and for children, all staff and pupils must continue to comply with any specific variations relating to individual countries and respond to changes or restrictions that emerge.

Remote education

During the period of closure in 2021, the School delivered a full programme of tuition on line. Subsequently, pupils who have been self isolating have been invited to join lessons remotely.

This provision will not now continue as a matter of routine and any pupils who are isolating whilst suffering from COVID will be expected to catch up with work on their return to the School, just as they would if absent for any other reason.

The School will retain the capacity to reintroduce remote education for individual pupils if appropriate or to respond more widely in particular circumstances such as guidance from public health authorities.

Pupil wellbeing and support

The School's Pastoral Team will continue an enhanced focus on monitoring pupils for evidence of emotions such as anxiety, stress and low mood which have become more prevalent during the pandemic.

The School has increased its provision of counselling support to pupils during the pandemic as mental health has become a matter of greater concern among young people, and will continue to arrange access to whatever support is considered to be appropriate.

School workforce

Any staff who test positive for coronavirus will be advised to follow previous guidance and isolate to avoid the risk of infecting colleagues. The period of self-isolation remains up to 10 days with staff advised to take lateral flow tests on day five and day six to allow for an earlier return if the results of those tests are negative. No other special measures will remain in general for employees concerning self-isolation or the management of confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Exceptions will continue where any staff have different individual advice from their doctor or other health professional. Anybody who qualifies for separate consideration should discuss their circumstances in confidence with the Headmaster.

Similar separate considerations apply to pregnant staff and again anybody to whom this may apply should discuss their circumstances in confidence with the Headmaster.

School meals

The School will continue to make provision to support any pupils who qualify for Free School Meals who are unable to attend the School site during term time as a result of illness.

Educational visits

Educational visits can and have resumed and all trips proposed must be subject to risk assessments as normal.

Assessments should also reflect any public health advice or domestic requirements of any international destination.

General guidance on educational visits abroad must also refer to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice and the guidance on international travel before booking and travelling to make sure that the school group meet any entry and in country requirements especially in relation to vaccinations.

All educational visits must be reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that adequate financial protection is in place, most particularly through either the School's insurance cover or any bespoke policy that might be arranged for a particular trip, in order to avoid any inappropriate financial expose to the School.

Extra-curricular activities

All extra-curricular activities can resume as normal subject to any constraints concerning the broader operations of the School as outlined above.

Clubs, drama productions, concerts, sports fixtures etc can all resume without any continuing restrictions on numbers or interaction between pupils for different schools.

Peripatetic teaching staff, external sports coaches etc can return to the School site and work with School has operated for much of the last two years. The measures and precautions have pupils in the same way as historically.

The School's Duke of Edinburgh Award programme has been reinstated with planning well-advanced for expeditions in the coming months. There is currently no need for any continuing mitigations or restriction on the programme's activities.

Alarms and emergencies – including consideration of revised evacuation protocols

In the event of an evacuation, staff and pupils should exit buildings via the nearest available safe route. The assembly point has reverted to the grounds in front of the School.