



COVID-19 School Operational Policy

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Revised 22 June 2020

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Introduction

In line with government guidelines, Stormont School implemented a phased return to school from Monday 1st June and has reopened in September with an amended mode of operation (Open). This amended mode of operation is expected to remain in place until such time as the school is operating in a fully open, safe and secure environment with no COVID-19 related restrictions.

A full return to include the provision of extra-curricular activities, trips away from site and visits from other providers to site may take many months and the ongoing operation will require patience, resilience and considerable effort to ensure the school environment is safe, at all times.

The school recognises that during this period:

- Our core obligation is to ensure “so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of employees and the safety of non-employees”.
- We hold the prime responsibility for ensuring the safety of, first and foremost our pupils, but also and as importantly:
 - Staff and volunteers;
 - Parents and guardians;
 - Guests and visitors;
 - Contractors and delivery services.

Ultimately, all need to know that the school is a safe environment in which to operate and learn.

This Phased Return to School Policy is based on the following school documents:

- General School Risk assessment.
- Analysis and Planning Guidance
- Specific Risk Assessments for Departments, Year Groups, Classes and Activities when these become relevant in due course.

Planning the mode of operation

Good planning and management has been fundamental to the success of the phased return and will continue so to be for ongoing operations. Effective planning and consultation with all stakeholders including insurers, governors, teachers, support staff, parents, pupils and contractors is essential. The level of detail is enormous and will involve all staff in ensuring this policy is implemented and complies with the strict rules set out in the school’s risk assessments and plan.

COVID-19 points of contact

The COVID-19 point of contact for the school is the Head and their main responsibilities are:

- Reading and assessing daily government, DoF, PHE and member association bulletins.
- How information is passed and key messages and issues highlighted.
- Liaising with SLT and the planning team to ensure messaging is clear, regularly updated and authorised for communication.
- Maintaining a complete record of all COVID-19 documents, publications and communications.
- In liaison with the planning team, co-ordinating with all staff including support staff and contractors the new and / or revised measures and their implementation.
- Daily lesson learned debriefs including changes to risk assessments, safety plan, SD and hygiene rules, extra training that may be required and if rules were adhered to and the control measures sufficient.

The COVID-19 Planning and Advisory Team (CPAT) will communicate regularly and meet when required to review matters or as changes are required. The CPAT will consist of:

- Head;
- Head of Pre-Prep;
- Bursar (and Clerk to the Governors);
- Caretaker;
- ICT Network Manager;
- Marketing, Admissions and School Administrator.

Return to school

Government advice in the summer term suggested that the return to school from 1st June should include:

- Nursery, Reception, year 1 and year 6;
- Where possible, key worker and other vulnerable children in priority groups;
- In addition, where the school has the capacity to do so, some additional face to face time can be arranged for pupils in other years from no earlier than 15th June.

The school was able to open up to Year 2 and in a more limited way to pupils from Years 3, 4 and 5, which gave all pupils some access to school before the summer break.

Since September, the school has been open to all year groups with a gradual phasing of drop-off and pick up times over the first few days. The timetable was prepared over the summer to meet the needs of three distinct bubbles in the school and this is allowing the delivery of a wide curriculum, with some restrictions.

The return to “fully open” is likely to transition, if the conditions are safe, with the following modes of operation being deployed when necessary:

- Fully Closed No one on site except security and maintenance staff as required.
- Open R Teaching is all achieved remotely.
- Open K Key staff in school. All other teaching remote.
- Open T In transition: all teaching being led remotely, with supervision and support for relevant groups on site.
- Open Business as usual: with caveats – no visitors or trips.
- Fully Open Business as usual: no travel or trip restrictions.

Risk assessments

The school is required to carry out a series of risk assessments directly addressing hazards associated with COVID-19 and operating safely. As Stormont School has more than 50 employees the outcome of the COVID-19 risk assessments will be published on the school website.

Assessing COVID-19 is particularly complex as the outcome of the many and varied risk assessments for one group within school e.g. departments, year groups, classes and activities will have an impact on other groups e.g. teaching staff, support staff, visitors and contractors and pupils of other age groups. Therefore, it is key that each element of the risk assessment complements all the others to ensure risks are identified and properly mitigated across the school.

Risk assessments will require daily revision and should include but not be limited to:

- Social Distancing (SD) and other hygiene rules communicated, understood and applied.
- Staff and pupils reminded and checked to ensure they are complying with hygiene and SD rules.
- Whether there are sufficient supplies of hygiene materials and are they well placed around the school.
- Whether there is sufficient PPE equipment available to staff.
- Has the cleaning regime been regularly re-assessed and, if necessary, revised?
- Identifying precautions for keeping shared equipment (e.g. keyboards, pens and other resources) clean.
- Are high-risk areas being regularly monitored for hygiene?
- Are SD rules different for various activities (play, lunch and classroom work) and locations (classroom, playground, transit routes) and have all adhered to these SD rules?
- Removing where possible soft toys, furnishings and items that are hard to clean.
- Is the re-allocation of indoor and outdoor space working?
- Are any changes to the staggered drop off times needed?
- Are all the hazards in the risk assessments properly mitigated and regularly re-assessed?

The school is responsible for:

- Updating Safeguarding, code of conduct and medical policies and procedures so staff and pupils feel safe.
- Regularly accessing Government advice, which is assessed, recorded, communicated and applied.
- Communicating changes for review by governors and communicating to staff, pupils and parents.
- Informing and consulting insurers about the plans for re-opening and / or the amendment of plans.
- Revising the policy for those wearing (or not) PPE.
- Updating emergency procedures, fire drills and assembly points.
- Re-assessing effectiveness of access control measures and details of visitors (where allowed) are recorded.
- Planning for school events including plays, concerts, parent and teacher meetings etc.
- Preparing contingency plans for the transition to full opening (or re-closing).

Space management

The following must be considered as part of the planning and risk assessments:

- Contact and mixing are minimised.
- Maximum use of outdoor spaces.
- Altering classroom layout with desks spaced apart (ideally 2m where possible).
- Changing timetables so assemblies, breaks, lunch, playtime, drop-off and pick-up times are staggered where possible.
- Small consistent groups (bubbles) of pupils (can be more than one class or year group).
- Pupils to remain in “bubbles” at all times during the day with a minder or own set of teachers / assistants.
- “Bubbles” stay away from other people and groups.
- Where possible in and out routes are identified in buildings.
- Spaces such as halls and dining areas are used exclusively by different groups at a time and at reduced capacity.
- Groups are staggered through the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Relevant risk assessments should refer to specialist medical issues noting the importance of GDPR rules:

- Who has pre-existing medical conditions and are they fully declared?
- Have all vulnerable pupils, parents and staff been identified and recorded?
- For those tested positive for COVID-19 is it recorded (for elimination purposes)?
- Who has come into contact with anyone tested positive to COVID-19?
- Who has been sent home with COVID-19 symptoms (a cough, high temperature or shortness of breath)?

Throughout the risk assessment process, the needs of more vulnerable staff and pupils have been taken into account (more information is appended to this document).

New school rules

The following additional school rules are now a requirement for all pupils:

- SD rules for activities such as play, lunch time and classroom work and for drop off / pick up, playground and transit routes around the school.
- Hygiene rules (if not already enforced and supervised):
 - “Catch it, bin it, kill it”.
 - Wash hands for 20 seconds”
 - Before arriving at school and immediately after arriving at home.
 - At every break.
 - After all visits to the toilet and before / after meals.
- Rules for breaks, lunch and hydration.
- Content of packed lunch including allergen rules, when required.
- Minimise all contact and mixing outside your class “bubble” during breaks.

During the phased reopening and through to the October half-term, temperatures of pupils were taken during morning registration. This practice is not being continued in line with recent advice from Public Health England.

Planning for incidents/ emergencies

Stormont School recognises that plans need to be revised to respond effectively to health and safety incidents and other emergencies that might occur during the COVID-19 era. Where relevant, the CPAT should ensure that emergency procedures are agreed for:

- Fire.
- Accidents and injuries.
- Infection during school hours, pupil isolation and return to home procedures, and follow-on procedures for cleaning and communications.
- Other emergency evacuation.
- Security.
- Severe weather that limits pupil's learning, exercising or playing outside.

Inclusion for people with a disability

Stormont School will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where possible to ensure that people with a disability (mobility, visual and hearing impairment, medical conditions and hidden disabilities) are protected in terms of temperature testing, hygiene solutions and emergencies.

During school

During the course of all operations, there will continue to be a focus on the implementation, effective management and monitoring of staff, pupils and the environment. This will include:

- Ensuring communication channels and messaging are working and regularly reviewed and updated.
- Systems to communicate with parents and staff that have not returned to school for fear of infection.
- Robust feedback and reply system to ensure best practice and two-way communications for pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Registration throughout the day including temperature or other health checks in line with advice/guidance.
- Transit spaces (corridors), social zones (car parks, common rooms, playgrounds) supervised for SD rules.
- Ensuring different age groups and class "bubbles" are supervised throughout and timetabling, length of the school day and exposure to other age groups is monitored and safe.
- Enforcing rules / procedures for hygiene standards for staff and pupils. Regular breaks for washing hands etc.
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures – staff supervision and PPE, vehicle flow, in and out routes, parking, parents remaining in vehicles and SD outside gates and entrances.

All staff, pupils, parents, visitors and contractors (where allowed) will be given a COVID-19 written brief before arriving at school and a verbal induction as they enter school for the first time on:

- Safeguarding, code of conduct, Health and Safety policy and their COVID-19 updates.
- SD and hygiene rules.
- Key contacts and locations (including isolation and first aid areas).
- Communications protocols and reporting procedures.
- Pinch points, site hazards and agreed control measures.
- Site specific instructions: speed limits, drop-off and pick-up, parking areas etc.
- Emergency arrangements (including contingency plans).
- Any specific clothing, nametags, PPE for certain groups such as visitors and contractors.

Appendix: Vulnerable Staff and Pupils

This appendix considers any members of staff or pupils who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying health issues or who fall under higher risk groups.

Pupils and Staff

It is of paramount importance that the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils from BAME communities and those with underlying health issues at Stormont are carefully considered. The control measures listed throughout the risk assessment will be important mitigating factors for all members of the school community, but especially so for the staff and pupils from BAME or vulnerable health backgrounds. It is also recognised that these individuals may have increased levels of anxiety around the return to school and may require additional support and/or advice on specific concerns. They may also not be able to return to school due to the risks caused by these health factors. The school will provide support for those affected wherever possible and will make reasonable adjustments in specific circumstances to mitigate risk to individuals further, under its “Duty of Care” considerations, should this be necessary.

BAME Community at Stormont

Analysis by the Office for National Statistics found the risk of death involving COVID-19 among some ethnic groups “significantly higher than those of white ethnicity.” The Department for Education guidance states that schools should be “especially sensitive to the needs and worries of BAME members of staff, BAME parents and BAME pupils” given the higher risk. This appendix takes into account the physical and mental health of BAME staff and pupils, where working together is paramount.

The school has noted the key points raised in an NHS Confederation BME Leadership Network Briefing, as well as taken advice from medical professionals working on research into the emerging evidence of the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on people from BAME backgrounds. The briefing considers the evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and health and care staff and, while it does not give specific evidence of the effect on children, it provides a background to the suggestions made and steps taken to mitigate risks to Stormont’s BAME families and staff members in our community.

Key points

- Emerging evidence suggests that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate effect on people from BME backgrounds.
- Some BME groups are at higher risk of certain diseases and conditions – this may suggest an increased likelihood of adults developing COVID-19.
- Co-morbidities and socio-economic status are being put forward as possible explanations for the high number of people from BME backgrounds affected, but it is important not to assume that correlation equals causation.

Further Considerations

Covid-19 data continues to be gathered and inform understanding about the disease, but an important study of 8 children in London was published in an article in ‘The Lancet’ (May 2020). This gives details of what was an ‘unprecedented cluster’ of children who developed a rare hyper-inflammatory, multiorgan ‘Kawasaki’ type disease associated with Covid-19. Whilst this is a very small number of children compared to the total number of children who

have caught Covid-19, this clinical picture potentially represents an additional phenomenon affecting previously asymptomatic children with Covid-19 infection. Of note, all these children are from a BAME background (predominantly from Afro Caribbean) with other factors being male gender and obesity.

Other Underlying Health Conditions

A small number of staff and pupils present with further underlying health conditions. This information has been obtained for the individual member of staff or parent (in the case of a pupil), via a health declaration exercise conducted by the school, which is repeated at appropriate intervals. Government guidelines have changed since the lockdown in March 2020 and unless there are cases where individuals are clinically extremely vulnerable, it is considered that the provision of suitable SD rules and other measures make it safe for children to attend and staff to work in schools. Such guidelines continue to be monitored and should there be a further change the school will adapt its approach and procedures accordingly.