

# *Safe Operating during Covid-19* Policy

## Review Summary

Adopted:	<i>September 2020</i>
Review Cycle:	<i>Three monthly</i>
Last Review:	<i>April 2021</i>
Next Review:	<i>July 2021</i>

## Updates

9 – Risk Assessments to be regularly reviewed, frequency to be varied as agreed by ET

13 – Communications directed to Covid Project group

Appendix – Additional Measures – to clarify non-attendance processes will take account of DfE requirements

## 1. Policy Aim and Objectives

### Aim:

To ensure that the risks of Covid presented to students, staff and visitors are reduced to an acceptable level.

### Objectives:

- To conduct all our activities safely and in accordance with legislative standards and in consideration of government guidance
- To provide safe working and learning conditions
- To ensure a systematic approach to the identification of risks and the allocation of resources to control them
- To openly communicate on health safety and welfare

### Statement:

The Trust recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer and provider of services and will provide a safe and healthy workplace and learning environment for all staff, students and such other persons as may be affected by its activities. We will adopt health and safety arrangements under Covid in line with Health & Safety legislation, and in consideration of government guidelines. Good health and safety management will be an integral part of the way that the Trust and its schools operate and will be considered across all work activities and across the wide range of educational activities delivered.

## 2. Key principles

- The safety of students and staff is paramount: this includes their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.
- We are living through a national crisis that is affecting people's daily lives in many different ways. We must be supportive and compassionate towards our communities and colleagues in our response.
- Only by gaining the confidence of our parents, will schools be successful in attracting students to return.
- Education is precious. We must continue to provide students with high-quality and meaningful learning experiences at home and on site and be agile in our approach.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The governance framework and key responsibilities in relation to safe operations are set out in the table below.

	HEADTEACHERS / SCHOOL NOMINATED LEADS	TRUST CENTRAL TEAM	EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM	LGBS	TRUST BOARD
<b>OPERATING PROCEDURES</b>	To prepare and agree detailed school operating procedures and communicate to staff, pupils, parents	To advise on guidance & best practice	May agree key principles for operation	Review, and provide comments / recommendation	Review as part of opening / closing decisions
<b>RISK ASSESSMENT</b>	Complete, agree and approve Risk Assessment for the school. Responsibility for reviewing and updating the assessment.	Provide template RA and support around control measures. Monitor guidance for updates. Seek professional advice as required	Review, and provide comments / recommendation	Review, and provide comments / recommendation	Review as part of opening / closing decisions
<b>OPENING</b>	Prepare RAs and plans for opening and ensure these are in place and communicated to staff, parents, pupils	Review plans and conduct walk round as required	Review RAs and Operating plans and make recommendation to Board	Review RAs and plans and raise any concerns / questions	Board approves opening / closing of schools
<b>MONITORING AND UPDATES</b>	Ensure monitoring systems are in place and updates to Operating Procedures and RAs are communicated to the school and Central Team	May conduct compliance checks to ensure monitoring systems are effective. Raise significant changes with Heads / ELT as appropriate	Request and review feedback at scheduled intervals, or in the event of significant changes, and make recommendations to Heads / Board as appropriate	Receive reports from Heads and provide oversight	Confirmation of monitoring to be provided to Board
<b>CLOSURE</b>	Can confirm temporary or partial closures following PHE direction. Must notify ELT and LGBs. Can request or recommend closure to ELT for other reasons.	May support with wider communications around closure and actions required e.g. deep cleans, IT equipment issues	Can recommend closure for other reasons where not mandated by PHE	Must be notified of PHE closure directive. Must be consulted should closure be considered for other reasons.	Must be notified of PHE closure directive. Can approve closure for other H&S reasons.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	With Central Team, ELT, LGBs, staff, parents and pupils	With Heads, ELT, and wider (non-school specific) e.g. unions, professional advisers, press	With Heads, Central Team, Board and other wider contacts (e.g. local school leaders, Las)	With Heads and Board where required	With ELT

### 4. Legislative and guidance framework

- 4.1. The Trust will operate within the relevant statutory and legislative frameworks, whilst recognising that these may change at short notice. Non-mandatory government guidance must be followed as far as reasonably practical and legal advice will be taken as necessary to manage risks.
- 4.2. The Trust Central Team will regularly review updated guidance and share this with Headteachers and relevant staff.
- 4.3. The Trust will participate in national and local groups and initiatives as appropriate in order to establish best practice and to seek clarity on requirements

## 5. Risk Assessment

- 5.1. A robust Risk Assessment process forms the basis for safe operating protocols. Headteachers are the responsible individual from a H&S perspective for their schools and are therefore responsible for ensuring that adequate risk assessments are completed and that measures to mitigate risks identified are undertaken. A nominated lead may assist with this.
- 5.2. The Trust will provide template Risk Assessments that are updated in line with latest guidance.
- 5.3. Each school will have in place its own site specific Risk Assessment for full reopening and safe operating under Covid. This is a critical document, which must be kept up to date and should be available for staff and other interested parties to review.
- 5.4. The Trust framework for review and approval [see appendix] sets out a process to ensure that the Covid Safe Risk Assessments
  - take account of latest guidance and best practice
  - Are appropriately challenged and updated
  - Have oversight in line with the organisational governance structure
- 5.5. Risk Assessments for specific activities (such as behaviour interventions, after school club operations etc.) must also be updated as necessary to take account of the Covid outbreak. Significant changes to school operations, including the introduction of lateral flow testing, must have a Risk Assessment in place which will be subject to approval in line with ELT direction.
- 5.6. The Trust is responsible for ensuring that results of Covid Risk Assessments are published on the Trust website in line with latest guidance.

## 6. Standard measures

- 6.1. Key considerations from the government guidance and risk assessment process mean that a number of standard measures must be in place. Headteachers have responsibility for ensuring as a minimum that schools support the following:
  - a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
  - robust hand and respiratory hygiene
  - enhanced cleaning arrangements
  - active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
  - reduce contacts and maximise distancing between people school wherever possible
  - minimise the potential for contamination

## **7. School operating plans**

- 7.1. School operating plans sit alongside the Covid Safe Risk Assessment and set out further details of how the measures identified will be enacted. Headteachers are responsible for preparing the school operating plans in consultation with the school Senior Leadership Team and other staff.
- 7.2. Arrangements should be in place so that feedback can be obtained and any concerns raised can be addressed in a timely manner.
- 7.3. Schools should expect that operating procedures will need to be adapted in response to changing guidance or circumstances and manage expectations with staff, parents and pupils accordingly.
- 7.4. Operating plans should also be prepared for partial or full closure situations (see section below) setting out the approach for continuing education.

## **8. Approval for opening**

- 8.1. The Trust Board is responsible for approving the opening of all schools in the Trust after a period of closure and follows a robust process to ensure it is satisfied that schools can open safely. Details are shown in the Appendix.
- 8.2. A recommendation to open will be made by the ELT to the Board on the basis of the operating procedures and Risk Assessments prepared by the Headteachers. The school LGBs will also have opportunity to review the Risk Assessments and provide input.

## **9. Monitoring and reviews**

- 9.1. Schools are responsible for incorporating monitoring of measures into the standard Health & Safety processes.
- 9.2. Risk Assessments should be formally reviewed and signed off by Headteachers on a fortnightly basis, or as otherwise agreed by the ELT.
- 9.3. Monitoring reports should be provided to the ELT as requested and to LGBs as part of the standard operational updates. ELT will report to the Trust Board.

## **10. Confirmed or suspected cases**

- 10.1. To ensure safety for all, it is important that the latest guidance on self-isolation for suspected or confirmed cases is followed.
- 10.2. All sites will have a strict no-attendance with symptoms policy.**
- 10.3. Detailed guidance on the process to follow in the event of suspected or confirmed cases is provided separately. Schools should ensure this guidance and flowcharts are readily available to relevant staff in school and well understood.

- 10.4. The Trust will provide templates for recording details of staff and students who are self-isolating or have tested positive.
- 10.5. The school should have a nominated individual or team responsible for maintain these records. To facilitate this, schools must also keep a record of staff and pupils in each bubble, plus anyone who has had close contact.
- 10.6. Reporting requirements including contact with Public Health England must be made in accordance with published guidelines and actions taken accordingly.
- 10.7. The local public health protection team will liaise with the school if more extensive closure is required due to a suspected outbreak. Note – Any decision on more extensive closures must be taken in conjunction with the local public health team and Trust Executive Leadership Team.

## **11. School closures**

- 11.1. Headteachers must notify the ELT in the event that cases within the school may result in any closure. Within PFI schools, the PFI contract manager should also be informed as soon as possible in order for contractors to plan accordingly.
- 11.2. Where any closure is mandated by a government body directive, Headteachers may confirm the closure and communicate accordingly to staff, parent, and pupils. This must be notified to the ELT and LGB in advance of school community notification.
- 11.3. In the event of a local outbreak, the PHE health protection team or local authority may advise a school or number of schools to close temporarily to help control transmission.
- 11.4. Schools must have contingency plans for this eventuality, which sets out the approach to ensure continuity of education provision, e.g. support for remote learning and any provision on site for vulnerable or key-worker children. This may be incorporated within the School Operating Procedures.
- 11.5. Circumstances could arise where closure may be considered, but not as a result of an external directive. This could include significant levels of staff or pupil absence, limited staffing capacity to support both on-site and remote learning, an assessed emerging risk within the school community. In this situation, Headteachers should liaise with ELT and make a recommendation regarding closure for decision by ELT.

## **12. Staffing matters**

- 12.1. This is a challenging time for all staff, needing to respond to different ways of working and managing their own legitimate health and safety concerns.
- 12.2. Headteachers should ensure that mechanisms are in place to consult with staff and address concerns as required.

- 12.3. Schools are responsible for overseeing and recording arrangements around working practices, bubbles and groups, to ensure that suitable records of contacts are available to assist with any Track and Trace requirements for confirmed cases.
- 12.4. The Trust will ensure that relevant HR policies are regularly updated and communicated, with specific guidance for managers.
- 12.5. A range of resources to support health and wellbeing are also in place and will be regularly communicated to staff.

### **13. Communications**

- 13.1. As circumstances may change rapidly, it is important that communication is timely but also sensitively considered.
- 13.2. The Trust Central Team will provide a range of template communications for certain circumstances, such as known cases in schools.
- 13.3. Schools will be responsible for communicating directly with staff, parents and pupils, on regular matters in relation to operations, e.g. updates to School Operating Procedures.
- 13.4. Schools should notify the Covid Project response group in the event of confirmed cases or potential closures, or any press enquiries for further support.

### **Adoption of the Policy**

This Policy has been adopted by the Trustees of the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. Mulcah'.

**(Chair of Trust)**

**Date: 12.05.21**

## Appendix - School Re-opening after full closure – Risk Assessment and Approval process

The health and wellbeing of our staff and pupils is of paramount importance to the Trust and the Executive Leadership Team, Headteachers and all staff have been fully involved in the detailed planning to re-open in a consistent and safe manner and where risk is mitigated. We have also ensured that LGBs have been consulted on and have confidence in the plans for their school, before the plans are considered and final approval given by the Trust Board to re-open.



### Formal approval process steps

1. Headteachers complete a risk assessment form detailing appropriate risk management measures for their school. This involves discussion and consultation with staff.
2. The Trust Estates Project Manager and PFI Manager supports the risk assessment process with a physical walk-round when requested.
3. Standard operating procedures aligned to risk assessments and health and safety are developed where possible.
4. Each school Risk Assessment is shared with the relevant LGB for approval.
5. The Trust Executive Leadership Team reviews, analyses and challenges each risk assessment to satisfy itself that the Trust has a robust approach to risk management.
6. The Trust Exec then makes a final recommendation to the Trust Board regarding the re-opening and submits the Risk Assessments for further scrutiny.
7. Confirmation of school opening plan is subject to the final Trust approval.

### Additional measures

- The Trust continually follows guidance from the government as it emerges.
- The Trust has taken advice from its legal advisers and insurers.
- Headteachers meet (virtually) to collaborate, share knowledge and support to ensure a consistent and safe approach throughout the process.

- The central team can assist with coordinating the purchase and distribution of PPE to ensure every school has what it needs, as well as providing operating protocol templates.
- Central HR team guidance ensures consistent approaches to staff health, safety and wellbeing, with clear protocols for staff in clinically vulnerable categories or needing to be absent from the workplace for other reasons.
- Staff that are able to come into schools are being fully briefed and supported on protocols and expectations (eg. hygiene, social distancing, cleaning and wellbeing)
- Parents and pupils are being regularly updated and reassured and non-attendance will be managed in line with school agreed processes and latest DfE requirements.

### **Ongoing review & Monitoring**

- Schools have processes in place to collate immediate operational feedback from staff and parents.
- The regular H&S walk rounds and reviews by the school incorporate a check of all Covid-safe measures to ensure these are operating correctly and included in the usual H&S monitoring cycle.
- A scheduled review of the Risk Assessment and operating protocols takes place after 1 week of opening. The Trust Estates Project Manager is made aware of the review. Any significant changes are notified to and approved by the Exec, and the LGBs if appropriate.
- School H&S leads take on going responsibility for monitoring and reporting against the risk assessments and flagging any concerns to school Heads and Trust Estates Project Manager.
- Further scheduled reviews will take place as agreed through the Covid Project Risk Assessment group and updates shared across the Trust schools.