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# drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust

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## **COVID-19 POLICY**

### **Phase 5 School Opening**

**March 2021**

## Trust Vision

drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust has been established through a shared belief that lives can be transformed by what goes on in schools. We believe that the process of teaching and learning shapes futures. To this end, our vision is to give every child learning experiences that excite them and give them the power to begin to shape their own lives.

*All pupils achieve the highest standard of educational outcomes regardless of circumstances or background.*

## Policy Purpose

This Coronavirus (COVID-19) Policy sets out the measures the Trust is actively taking from March 2021, following a full review of its risk assessment processes in light of the government announcement that all schools will re-open fully to pupils from 8 March 2021.

The Policy supports the Trust's *Phase 5 School Opening Strategy* to respond to the government guidance for full opening.

The ongoing focus for Trustees and Senior Leaders remains the same. This is to:

- keep pupils, staff and families as safe as possible through the Covid-19 pandemic and the full return of all pupils to school
- continue to mitigate the spread of coronavirus through preventative measures
- sustain healthy and safe school workplaces for all attending school
- have regard to safeguarding and on-line safety for those pupils learning from home
- respond responsibly and transparently in implementing all health and safety precautions in line with HSE Guidance and government requirements
- ensure Trust policies, procedures and protocols are effective in the current situation
- work with parents to safely support and encourage full school attendance for all children
- work with parents to support those who may be anxious about their child returning to school
- ensure the health and personal data of pupils and staff is treated with high confidentiality and sensitivity.

The Policy will be reviewed and updated as further guidance is received from central government departments (DfE, DCMS, Cabinet Office), Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive. It will be updated as soon as practicably possible.

## Scope

The Policy applies to all Trust staff working in schools, the central office or working from home for whatever reason. All staff are required to read the Policy to ensure the Trust collectively and uniformly responds to the ongoing challenges the pandemic presents. The Policy should be read together with the Trust's Infection Control Policy.

## Policy elements

### Key health and safety measures

#### *A SAFE ENVIRONMENT – SAFE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES – A SAFE WORKFORCE*

Protecting the health and safety of children, staff and families remains the Trust's paramount and overarching concern. Two testing principles have been set for all decision making during the pandemic period:

- The safety and welfare of pupils, staff and families will always be the paramount principle for all planning
- Trust schools will organise themselves in ways that are compatible with minimising spread of the virus.

As schools open to all pupils these principles have been reviewed and added to:

- The safety and welfare of pupils and staff remains the Trust's paramount principle for all planning whether attending school or learning from home.
- Schools will continue to organise themselves in ways that are fully compliant with the strengthened Public Health England **System of Controls** which recognises the current new variants.
- Schools will keep the HSE Hierarchy of Controls under constant review.
- Schools will have robust monitoring systems in place to ensure controls are effective.
- The Trust and its schools will make decisions that best protect the needs of local communities, in line with advice from local public health teams and will act at pace as and when required.

Throughout all planning processes the Trust will adopt a **TEST-LEARN-REVIEW** approach to ensure changes or adaptations to processes and arrangements can be made quickly.

## Trust actions

Here are the main steps the Trust will continue to take:

- follow relevant **national and local guidance**, including from government, Public Health England, local authorities and unions/teacher professional organisations and with a continued focus on full compliance with the **Public Health England System of Controls**.
- keep the **HSE Hierarchy of Controls** under constant review.
- Review all risk assessments and carry out further detailed and appropriate **risk assessments** as part of the Trust's *Phase 5 School Opening Strategy*. These will continue to cover risks posed by premises, and working/learning conditions e.g. physical distancing and the safe composition and staffing of groups of children and will now include identified risks associated with all children returning to school. Advance planning on how to implement arrangements will take account of the most recent guidance in order to draw out potential issues and help minimise risk.
- ongoing and transparent **communication with all staff** on plans, providing guidance and establishing protocols on the measures that have been agreed and adopted. Information will be communicated to staff regularly and immediately following any changes by the most appropriate means e.g. email, video conference, online training with further brief updates provided afterwards e.g. notices, further emails, verbal briefings. Through these communications Trust leaders will encourage staff to raise questions or concerns and to share helpful ideas and feedback e.g. Trust Staff Survey February 2021.
- teacher/workforce **teacher professional associations and workforce unions will be advised** of the Trust's *Phase 5 School Opening Strategy* and Risk Assessment. The Trust recognises the importance of union engagement, particularly when planning requires any changes to terms and conditions and in order to demonstrate that health and safety requirements have been met under the Trust's statutory duty of care.
- **respond to all statutory duties of care**. These duties arise under the following legislation:
  - Sections 2 and 3 of the Health & Safety Act 1974
  - Regulations 3 and 8 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999

- Regulation 4 of the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- Regulation 4 of the Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Regulation 7 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Trustees will engage directly with all Phase 5 planning and will sign off finalised arrangements. This engagement will help ensure understanding, enable valuable trustee input on proposals and ensure **effective governance continues** throughout the pandemic period.
- consider staff **working hours, workload and personal circumstances** for example, childcare arrangements, dropping own children at school, caring responsibilities, health/vulnerability considerations.
- continue to provide a high quality **Remote Learning Programme** for those children who are required to learn from home.
- ensure effective **safeguarding for all children** whether attending school or learning from home with a particular focus on the needs of the most vulnerable children.
- support staff who are considered to be vulnerable i.e. CEV, CV and staff who are pregnant.
- Ensure the twice weekly **LFD Testing** programme works effectively for staff.
- encourage pupils, families and staff to use modes of transport that **reduce exposure to others** e.g. walking, scooting or cycling, where possible when they attend school. Continue to prohibit all non-essential work travel.

### **Assessing the work/learning place for the full return of pupils**

A wide range of specific measures will continue to minimise the risk of cross-contamination in the work/learning place as all pupils return from 8 March 2021:

- **Entry/exit to school** - as children enter school a number of entry screening checks and processes will continue to be followed by all schools and physical distancing will be maintained by children, staff and parents. Parents will continue to be encouraged to wear face coverings.
- **Ventilation** - where security and safety allow, doors and windows will be left open so there is less touching of handles etc. and greater ventilation. The temperature of classrooms will be monitored to ensure they do not become too cold and children will be encouraged to wear their uniform with additional layers as appropriate.

- **Systems for moving around school** - depending on the assessment of individual school buildings, one-way systems may be utilised for moving around buildings.
- **Staggered start and end times** will remain under review to take pressure off peak entry/exit to school buildings whilst maximising teaching time.
- **Re-organisation of timetable** – this will enable pupil groups to remain discrete and avoid the mixing of pupils across groups
- **Access to site** - staff will be requested to stay on the school site for the day in order to avoid exit and re-entry during the day. All visitor/contractor entry to the school site will continue to be monitored carefully and require the authorisation of the headteacher.
- **Enhanced cleaning regimes** across all areas including outdoor areas and equipment.
- **LFD Testing (twice weekly) for staff** and for visitors on entry to school i.e. supply teachers, contractors as appropriate.

**The general work/learning space.** Careful consideration will be given in ongoing risk assessments to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that physical distancing between adults and adults to children is continued. Desks and worktables will be front facing and appropriately spaced as far as is possible. The planned curriculum will aim to ensure children continue to be out of doors as much as is possible, particularly as the weather improves.

**Toilets and kitchens.** Sensible limits will be imposed on the number of children/adults allowed to enter these spaces at the same time e.g. by staggering lunch times. Staff will be encouraged to bring their own food and the safe use of coffee machines, fridges etc will be an ongoing consideration.

**Meetings between staff.** The risks around time spent in more confined spaces mean that staff will continue not be encouraged to meet together unless this is essential. If meetings are deemed essential, rooms will be arranged to respect the physical distancing guidance. Travel for non-critical school business will be prohibited.

**Third party visitors to school sites.** Visitors to school sites will not be allowed without the prior authorisation of the headteacher. The headteacher is responsible for assessing the risks around third parties entering the school site, and aware of the Trust's obligation to ensure their health and safety and awareness of **the System of Controls**. Essential visitors will be requested to comply with the school's Covid-19 entry protocols in support of the System of Controls e.g. hygiene requirements, seating, social distancing, no hand-shaking etc.. Appropriate

protocols for deliveries and collections will be established by each school to reflect individual context e.g. location on entry points and school office etc.

**First aiders/fire/evacuation/lock down marshals.** Arrangements for first aid provision and fire/evacuation/lockdown will be kept under review and new arrangements made as required for the return of all pupils to school. Training will be provided for staff if necessary to ensure safety, cover and confidence around any new arrangements.

### **Cleaning regimes and focus on personal hygiene**

As pupils return to school cleaning regimes will be kept under review with a focus on key touchpoints e.g. equipment, handles, buttons, switches etc. Enhanced personal hygiene and cleaning protocols will continue to be robustly enforced to minimise the risk of cross-contamination. These are outlined in the Trust's Phase 5 Infection Control Policy and support the **System of Controls** including:

- adequate volumes and positioning of hand washing and sanitiser facilities
- good hygiene routines encouraged and promoted at all times
- good respiratory hygiene *catch it- bin it- kill it*
- effective, regular cleaning of all resources including keyboards and phones
- work/learning spaces regularly deep cleaned, particularly hard surfaces that are frequently touched
- PPE equipment provided as appropriate e.g. in isolation rooms, for intimate care
- promotion of face coverings by parents at school gates and staff as they move around school

### **Amendments to Trust policies and procedures**

In March 2021, the Trust conducted a full review of all covid-related Trust policies and procedures. **The Covid-19 Addendums added to the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Behaviour Policy** have been reviewed. Other policies have been reviewed with associated Covid 19 protocols developed as necessary. The original policies have not be changed as the associated protocols cover off any changes to policy and procedures to cover this next phase of the pandemic. Protocols have been established to cover:

- Health and Safety (Duty of Care)



- Remote Education
- Pupil Behaviour
- Risk Assessment for identified pupils e.g. SEND, pupils with medical conditions
- Staff homeworking arrangements
- Managing Covid-19 symptoms at school protocols for staff and pupils
- Absence and attendance
- Recruitment and induction of new staff
- Staff CPD
- Staff Code of Conduct

## **Staff wellbeing**

The Trust remains fully committed to ensuring that all staff feel safe and confident whether working in school or from home. The personal health and situation of individual staff will be sensitively considered and kept under review as the pandemic progresses and all pupils return to school. Staff continue to be encouraged to raise any concerns they may have with their headteacher in the first instance.

As the Trust has a number of CEV, CV and pregnant staff, separate risk assessments have been created for individualised use and these will remain under review as part of the Phase 5 School Opening Risk Assessment. In the particular circumstance that a staff member is unable to attend work, they will be expected to work from home at the direction of their headteacher/line manager.

Gong forwards, if there are insufficient staff available to attend for work and this is considered to be a significant risk to the provision of a safe environment for children, the Trust will make the decision to temporarily close the school and will advise parents accordingly. Such a decision will be signed off by the Trust CEO and would always be an absolute last resort.

## **Staff Health and Safety - the legal landscape**

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 sets out the Trust's main obligations. The Trust takes these requirements very seriously. These are summarised in the following table and are overseen by the Trust's Director of Estates and reported regularly to the Trust Board.



### **Trust Obligations for Staff Health and Safety**

Obligations:

- ensure staff are provided with training, information, instructions and supervision which allows them to work safely and keep themselves safe
- keep all places of work under the Trust's control well maintained to ensure they are safe to work in and have safe routes for access and exit
- provide safe working environments with adequate facilities for welfare at work
- provide and maintain safe equipment and systems of work
- ensure that equipment and substances are safely used, handled, stored and transported
- prepare and regularly revise the Trust's health and safety policy, and inform staff of its existence and of any changes to it

There are also a number of regulations and approved codes of practice the Trust follows which cover specific aspects of workplace health and safety including:

- obligations to carry out risk assessments to identify health and safety risks to staff/others and take steps to remove or minimise any risks
- obligations to provide staff with information on any identified risks, the preventive/protective measures taken, and procedures in the event of an imminent danger to those at work and who is responsible for implementing them
- the requirement for and use of protective equipment

Additionally, the Trust owes a common law duty to staff to safeguard their health, safety and wellbeing. This encompasses obligations to provide:

- a safe place of work
- safe resources and equipment
- competent staff
- safe systems of work
- appointment of an officer responsible for assisting with compliance with health and safety legislation. This is the Trust's Director of Estates.

## **Working from home - staff**

The Trust is aware it has the same health and safety obligations to anyone who is required to continue to work from home e.g. self isolating, CEV, pregnant staff. In order to fulfil these obligations, the Trust will:

- implement measures for keeping in touch and monitoring wellbeing
- monitor the type of work being undertaken and working hours
- consider whether the work can be done at home safely
- consider whether any control measures should be put in place in order to protect homeworkers
- ensure home workers have the appropriate equipment

The longer an individual is required to work from home the more risks may require monitoring. It will be important that in the event of prolonged periods of homeworking, if the Trust requires a staff member to use display screen equipment it will:

- ask the staff member to undertake display-screen and desk-risk assessments
- ensure the staff member take breaks from their display screens
- provide guidance and/or training on best practice and how to identify risks within their own environment

All policies and procedures with regard to health and safety issues have been fully reviewed and revisited in the *Phase 5 School Opening Strategy* and associated Risk Assessments. Furthermore, the Trust has considered that it may also become vicariously liable for the wrongful acts of its staff if committed in the course of their employment – meaning the Trust may be liable if the health of a member of staff is damaged due to a colleague's disregard of health and safety rules.

The health and safety risks arising from Covid-19 primarily arise from person to person contact, transmission through close proximity to infected individuals and surface transmission. This means it is vital that the Trust ensures all staff are well briefed and trained on the strengthened **System of Controls** and that the Trust continues to monitor and review the steps it is taking to minimise the risk of the virus entering its premises.

## **The process of managing the Trust's Phase 5 School Opening Strategy and Risk Assessment**

The Trust's process for reviewing Covid-19 planning continues to follow the **Test-Learn-Review approach referred to earlier**. This involves a repetitive stepped monitoring cycle

### **Step 1 – Ongoing risk assessment**

The Trust and its schools will carry out thorough Phase 5 School Opening risk assessments in response to the government announcement of a full return to school from 8 March 2021. The risk assessments will give consideration to the risks posed by bespoke features of school buildings/Trust offices, daily school routines for pupils and also for those learning from home and then take measures to minimise identified risks. Every possible measure will be taken to eliminate the risk of the spread of Covid-19.

**In relation to school sites the following measures will remain under constant weekly review in line with the System of Controls and reported (by exception) to the CEO and Trust Board through each school's Risk Register.**

- **Cleaning** – increased regularity and focus on high touch points such as door handles, equipment etc. Where health and safety regulations allow, doors, windows left open.
- **Hygiene facilities and routines** – hand sanitiser, hand-washing facilities, anti-bacterial wipes for surfaces and equipment, guidance for using toilets so physical distancing can be maintained
- **Physical distancing** – 2m physical distancing between adults by using markers, barriers, screens, signage etc.
- **Signage clear** - demonstrating that most recent government guidance has been followed e.g. *Catch it – Bin it – Kill it*
- **Disposal of waste** meets government guidance requirements
- **Site entry (staff)** -the number of times staff can enter and exit premises established and, where practicable, one entry and one exit point designated and used
- **Staff only spaces** - limiting the number of people who are able to enter confined spaces within school premises (e.g. stockrooms, copying rooms, toilets, kitchens, staff rooms). Consideration given to whether it would be

appropriate to close off spaces which are too small to accommodate physical distancing 2m measures (e.g. small meeting rooms)

- **Site entry (visitors)** - prohibiting non-essential visitors to school premises and only permitting essential visitors e.g. supply teachers. Also ensuring protocols and the System of Controls are explained before entry, limiting visiting times, maintaining records of visitors. Headteacher approval sought for entry of any external visitor
- **Minimising risk** – considering how operations which involve pupils/adults can be undertaken in a way which minimises risk, e.g. postal/courier deliveries and collections, catering
- **Avoiding cross-contamination** e.g. implementing a one-way system to minimise cross-contamination as appropriate

**In relation to children and staff the following measures will remain under constant weekly review and reported (by exception) to the CEO and Trust Board through each school's Risk Register.:**

- **Safeguarding** arrangements for pupils learning at school and from home
- **Pupil access and engagement** with remote education when self-isolating
- **Feedback from parents** re:school opening arrangements
- **Welfare support arrangements** for the most vulnerable pupils
- **Use of space in school** to support 2m physical distancing e.g. proximity of tables, desks, work-stations, staggering of break/lunchtimes
- **Use of PPE in school** - provision and continued availability/resourcing of personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used in isolation rooms and for intimate care
- **Face to face contact in school** - minimising of in-person meetings. If necessary, measures implemented so that 2m physical distancing can be maintained. Ensuring meeting rooms are well ventilated and equipment is not shared.
- **Safe handling of documents** - minimal handling of hard-copy documents including post and parcels
- **Use of shared staff facilities** – regular consideration of whether use of certain facilities should be limited, e.g. kitchens, fridges, beverage machines, crockery

- **Implementing system of controls for permitted visitors and LFD testing (as appropriate)** to school premises e.g. handwashing, no-contact greetings and physical distancing at all times
- **Support for vulnerable staff** – vulnerable staff identified and personalised with bespoke arrangements put in place in response to assessed risk (two week review) e.g. clinically extremely vulnerable individuals will continue to work from home.

## **Step 2 – Devise, revise or update appropriate policies and practices**

Trust policies and practices have been reviewed in March 2021 and will remain under constant review going forwards. New operating protocols have been and will continue to be established to ensure policies meet System of Controls requirements i.e. the MUSTS. For example,

- where new staff/pupil data is collected e.g. testing data, all GDPR/data protection issues will be considered
- reviewed expectations of individual pupil behaviour in light of full return to school and the **new covid-19 variants**. This will ensure a clear process for supporting pupils who may find physical distancing difficult and whose resultant behaviour creates a personal risk and risk to others
- Teacher professional associations and staff unions will be engaged and advised of the Trust's Phase 5 School Opening Strategy and Risk Assessments and ongoing communication will be established
- **Staff Impact Assessments** to ensure schools have appropriate staffing levels to remain open safely
- Schools will follow the reporting arrangements set out in **Public Health England System of Controls, HSE Hierarchy of Controls** and Trust procedures .
- Clear mechanisms through which employees can raise questions or make suggestions are established and staff are aware of these mechanisms.

### **Step 3 – Consult, train and communicate with staff**

The Trust is aware of its statutory obligation to consult with staff about its Risk Assessments and the health and safety measures proposed. The Trust takes this obligation seriously and recognises that it is ongoing. The Trust will work closely with school leaders to:

- devise appropriate training for staff as the situation develops and new information must be communicated
- support staff to deliver an appropriately balanced curriculum as all pupils return to school the
- provide ongoing professional CPD programme for staff
- hold return to work briefings for individual staff, particularly those who may be returning after illness or anxious about coming into school etc. to ensure health and safety measures are covered
- display health and safety communications and reminders in key places, e.g. at hand-washing points, at entrances and exits, in toilets

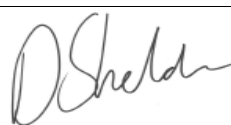
### **Step 4 – Monitoring and evaluation**

All plans will be continually monitored and evaluated, particularly in light of updated guidance. This will take place at a range of leadership levels i.e. headteacher, Trust leadership team, Trust Board.

Senior leaders will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the System of Controls, and Trust policies and procedures making adaptation through added protocols as necessary. A Trust process will be used through which staff can make suggestions for improvements and/or raise concerns at any point in the monitoring cycle .

### **Policy monitoring and review**

The CEO and Trustees will review this Policy at every meeting during the Covid-19 Pandemic to ensure it reflects the Trust's current situation and that any new or changed government guidance is fully adhered to.

<b>Monitoring and review</b>	CEO Trust Board
<b>Links</b>	Phase 5 School Opening Strategy and Risk Assessment Phase 5 Principles for action Staff Code of Conduct Policy Risk Management Policy Health and Safety Policy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures – Covid-19 Addendum Behaviour Policy Addendum Infection Control Policy
<b>Staff responsible</b>	CEO, Executive Director of School Improvement, School Leaders
<b>Committee responsible</b>	Trust Improvement Board Trust Board
<b>Date approved</b>	March 2021
<b>Review date</b>	Ongoing throughout Covid-19 pandemic
<b>Sign off by Chair of Trust</b>	 <span style="float: right;">Date: March 2021</span>

## Change Management

Issue No.	Change date	Change description
1.0	June 20	Initial release
2.0	July 20	First review and update
3.0	Nov 20	Review and update
4.0	Jan 21	Review and update (National Lockdown)
5.0	Mar 21	Review and update (School Opening)