

Our approach to welcoming and supporting pupils and learners to return to our schools and college in September 2020

Ambitious about Autism, and our Schools Trust, run TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College serving around 300 children and young people across London and the Home Counties.

During this challenging and rapidly changing time we are guided by our values, mission and by information, advice and guidance for education providers issued by the Government, Public Health England (PHE), the Health and Safety Executive and other key bodies. When taking account of this guidance, our first consideration is the safety and well-being of our pupils, learners and staff.

On 2 July 2020 the Government published [guidance](#) to support the return of children and young people back into full time education from September. The guidance was aimed at both mainstream and specialist settings, with additional [SEND specific guidance](#) published at the same time. Both pieces of guidance are continually updated by Government and we take account of these updates.

What has changed in relation to the new guidance?

The latest guidance to school and college leaders sets out the plans to safely return all children and young people to education in September 2020. There is a focus on 5 key areas:

- Public health advice to minimise the coronavirus risks;
- School and College operations;
- Curriculum, behaviour and pastoral support;
- Assessment and accountability;
- Contingency planning for local lockdowns;

We have planned around these key areas to ensure a safe return to learning at school or college for all our pupils and learners. We are doing so in a transparent manner, giving timely information to our pupils/learners, their families, our key partners and our staff.

Our key principles

Since the end of March our schools' and college's decision making has been guided by a set of principles. We have adapted these principles¹ as the situation and Government guidance has changed. This update is based on the latest Government guidance to prepare for all children and young people returning to education in September. Our key principles are:

- We will continue to put the safety of our pupils, learners and staff at the forefront of all we do;
- We will continue to follow Government guidance and keep our position under review;
- We will continue to ensure that each pupil/learner has an individualised, updated, Covid-19 risk assessment;
- Pupils and learners will learn in 'bubbles' with the same staff assigned to these bubbles, where possible;
- Pupils/learners and staff will not always be able to social distance within bubbles because of the support needs of our pupils and learners;
- Staff with peripatetic roles (e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist) will need to work in a few bubbles. We will ensure we minimise the number of contacts these staff have;
- When outside of these bubbles, staff will practise social distancing of 1m plus;
- We will work in partnership with placing local authorities and parents and carers on an ongoing basis;

¹ Version 2 was published on 12 May and Version 3 on 8 July.

- We will work hard to have a 'settled September' to support transition back to the settings for pupils, learners and staff. To achieve this, we will have phased returns for all our pupils and learners.

Running a 'Covid-secure' school or college

The Government's guidance is clear that:

"While coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, this means making judgements at a setting level about how to balance and minimise any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience for children and young people."

The measures we have put in place to ensure our schools and college are 'Covid-secure' include:

- Having risk assessments in place for pupil/learners, staff and buildings;
- Having the correct levels of trained staff in place to meet pupils/learners' needs safely;
- Ensuring pupils, learners and staff who have Coronavirus symptoms (or someone in their household that does) stay at home and follow Government guidance;
- Having robust hand-washing and respiratory hygiene in place;
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements;
- Engagement with the NHS track and trace system. This means that if a person has tested positive for Coronavirus within a 'bubble', pupils, learners and staff in that 'bubble' may be asked to self-isolate.
- Practicing social distancing when possible;
- Having the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) in place as needed.

The pupils and learners who attend our settings need specialist support tailored to their needs. They thrive in settings with a positive and supportive culture that prioritises their needs, safety and wellbeing, where the environment has been adapted and staff are trained and skilled in meeting their needs. They need personalised support to enable them to adapt to changes in routines or environment.

Our staff also benefit from a positive and supportive culture, experienced and competent leadership, a safe and secure environment and opportunities to learn and develop.

This is our priority as we welcome and support pupils, learners and staff back to their school and college. Things will be different, as we continue to manage the risks posed by Covid-19, but our values and aims remain the same.

Face coverings

Guidance on the use of face coverings and masks in public life continues to evolve and we will continue to monitor this carefully. We currently have no expectation that pupils or learners should wear face coverings or masks in our settings. However, if they want to we will support them to ensure this is managed correctly. Our staff have face coverings/masks available to them and guidance on when and how to use them.

Advice for parents and carers

Alongside the guidance published for schools and colleges, the Government also published advice for [parents and carers](#).

We ask all parents and carers to work with us to balance the risks of managing Covid-19 alongside returning all pupils and learners back to education in September.

- If your child is unwell with Coronavirus symptoms (or someone else in the household has Coronavirus symptoms) or has been directed to self-isolate (e.g. through NHS track and trace), they must not come into school or college;
- If your child develops Coronavirus symptoms or is unwell at school or college, you must collect them as soon as possible;
- Pupils and learners who are of compulsory education age (aged 5 to 18 years) must attend their education settings during term-time and it's the legal duty of parents and carers to ensure they attend;
- Where pupils/learners are not able to attend their setting, due to clinical and/or public health advice, the school or college will support their parents/carers to provide learning and support virtually;
- Parents/carers should plan their holidays within school and college holidays and avoid absences during term time. In planning holidays, parents/carers are asked to note the [Government's travel guidance](#) on potential quarantine requirements for entering other countries and returning to the UK. Your child or young person will not be able to attend school or college during a quarantine period.

We recognise that this pandemic has turned the world upside down for many of our pupils/learners and their families and routines and arrangements have been disrupted significantly which will have caused anxiety and distress. The transition back to full-time education may be causing further anxiety. Our schools and college will listen to concerns and work in partnership with pupils/learners and their families to put in place strategies to support a successful return to education.

Processes in our schools and college from Sept 2020 in relation to symptomatic staff, pupils and learners

In September 2020 all children and young people are expected to return to full-time education. It is important that there is a well thought out process in place should a pupil/learner or member of staff present as symptomatic of Covid-19. Since March 2020, when lockdown was first announced, our schools and colleges have put processes in place around the management of risk relating to this. The processes set out below might vary very slightly in our settings but the overall approach will remain the same.

Part A: Symptomatic pupils/learners

What we do when a child or young person presents as symptomatic in our schools or college:

- Immediately move the child or young person to the identified designated room in the building;
- Ask the member of staff accompanying the child or young person to wear a face mask, gloves and plastic apron;
- Ring the parents/carers and request that the child or young person is collected immediately;
- Inform the placing LA that the child or young person will be learning from home until a test is administered;
- Contact the families of those children/young people in the bubble to advise them to isolate should they become symptomatic;
- Ask the parents of the affected child/young person to have them tested and let the school/college know of the outcome. We recognise that not every child or young person will be able to have a test, and in these cases the pupil/learner will be asked to self-isolate;
- Should the test result come back positive (or a test is not taken) we will send pupils/learners and staff in that bubble home to self-isolate and follow up with others who might have had peripheral contact to self-isolate;

- Be clear with parents/carers about the length of time for self-isolation;
- Ensure our day cleaner cleans spaces the person has been in contact with;
- Designated room cleaned down/deep cleaned down once vacated;

Part B: Symptomatic staff

What we do when a staff member presents as symptomatic in our schools or college:

- Immediately isolate them in the identified designated room in school/college until they can go home
- Check when their symptoms started;
- Check who they've had contact with within their bubble (staff and pupils/learners) over the past 3-5 days;
- Instruct the affected staff member to take a test;
 - Should the result come back negative, we advise self-isolation is no longer needed (unless of course they show new symptoms) and they return to work
 - Should the result come back positive we will send pupils/learners and staff in that bubble home to self-isolate and follow up with others who might have had peripheral contact to self-isolate
 - We will check in with those self-isolating to monitor their symptoms and if needed, (ask them to) follow up with people they have had contact with.
- When there is a suspected case in our schools and college, we will ring our local Public Health England representative to inform them and take guidance;
- We will deep clean areas used by affected staff, pupils and learners.

Managing local and national lockdowns

For September 2020, our plan is that all our children and young people will return to education in our schools and college. However, we must plan for and prepare for localised lockdowns or a return to a full lockdown. Our schools and college take children and young people from 30 of London's local authorities and our staff live across London, and in the outer London areas. As we have from the beginning of this pandemic, we will follow Government guidance. Experience of local lockdowns to date indicates that the response will vary depending on the local authority, the cause of the outbreak and the needs of the local area. We will develop specific plans in response to local, regional or national lockdowns once specific guidance is issued. We will communicate these plans clearly, transparently and in a timely manner to staff, pupils/learners and parents.