



PARENT GUIDE

February/March 2022

Government guidance – contingency planning

In addition to a current COVID-19 risk assessment, schools are required to have outbreak management (contingency) plans covering positive cases within school and/or high community transmission. Should we have positive cases, there will be a sliding Red-Amber-Green scale of restrictive measures taken depending on the number of cases and how likely it is that transmission has occurred within school. **Please be aware that it may become necessary to reintroduce ‘bubbles’ for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups, if we have a high number of positive cases in school and/or high infection rates in the local community. Therefore, we may need to return at short notice to the staggered start and end times used in 2020-21.** Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of ‘bubbles’ would not be taken lightly and would take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education and inconvenience to families.

Uniform Policy

We expect children to come to school in full school uniform each day.

- White school polo shirt (plain or with school logo)
- Purple school sweatshirt or cardigan (plain or with school logo)
- Grey skirt, pinafore or smart grey trousers/shorts
- Plain white or grey socks; grey tights may be worn during colder weather
- Black shoes or black ankle boots – these should have a good grip sole, be well-fitted and comfortable to sit in cross-legged. If laced, please ensure your child can fasten them independently.
- Optional purple reversible fleece/jackets and purple reversible storm proof jacket (both with school logo) are available

In colder weather, we strongly suggest additional layers under the uniform – for instance, a thermal vest and/or T-shirt underneath the polo shirt. We will do our best to maintain a comfortable temperature in the classroom but, given the risk of infection, we will also need to have classroom windows open at least partially. Children will be permitted to wear their coats inside school if they are seated near to an open window.

Long hair must be tied back for safety and hygiene, and children should not attend school with their hair dyed or sprayed with colour.

If children have pierced ears, they may wear stud earrings only, which they must be able to remove and put back in again independently on PE days. No other jewelry except a watch should be worn. No smartwatches, please.

Physical Education (PE) kit

As it has proved popular with parents and ensured fully-active lessons, your child can come to school wearing their P.E kit for the whole day. This will minimize the bags around school, loss of kit, and also save lesson time. Teachers will be delivering all PE lessons outside whenever possible, in line with current guidance from PESSPA . In the event of this not being possible, the Main Hall will be used, with a deep clean of the floor and any equipment used after each use. Each class will also have their own box of small equipment e.g. balls, beanbags, small cones.

Also, from PESSPA guidance, please note that items with hoods are not considered safe for PE. If your child wants to wear an additional layer when doing PE outdoors, the hood will need to be detached or able to be tucked inside the back of the coat/jacket. For similar reasons, scarves are also not permitted. Beanie/bobble hats and gloves are acceptable.

PE kit consists of:

- Black or dark grey shorts, joggers or leggings (plain – no branding)
- White polo shirt or t-shirt (plain or with school logo)
- Purple school sweatshirt or cardigan (plain or with school logo)
- Black or white trainers (as plain as possible and no bright colours) - if laced, please ensure your child can fasten them independently

PE kit is part of our uniform and **must** be adhered to. Parents will be informed on the first occasion if what their child is wearing does not meet our policy. On the second or subsequent occasion, parents will be contacted and asked to bring appropriate uniform to school for the child to change into. Failing this, the child will be required to change into spare uniform in school for the whole day.

What to bring to school

- Children may bring in a school bag with their reading book as well as other personal items, such as their own tissues and hand sanitiser.
- Children in Years 3-6 may bring in a pencil case, but larger cases that don't fit into trays will need to be kept in lockers or taken home at the end of each day.
- A water bottle – to be taken home and thoroughly washed in soapy water each day.
- A snack for morning break time. Free fruit is always available for children in Reception and Key Stage 1, and snacks can be ordered daily from the school kitchen.
- Packed lunch, or buy a school packed lunch. Hot or cold school lunches will be available (a menu can be found in this guide). Please ensure that your child can open items in their packed lunch by themselves.
- A waterproof coat
- A change of clothes – this can be spare uniform, spare PE uniform or spare plain joggers, underwear, socks and shoes/trainers. Bad weather and accidents do occur and it would be sensible for children to have something spare to change into should their clothing become wet or heavily soiled

Arrival and Exit Times

As we have done prior to the pandemic, we will open our doors and take children into school on a filtered basis from 8:50am to 9am, and home time will be at 3:15pm.

However, we will continue to use both sides of school and multiple entry and exit points so that children crossing each other on the corridors is minimised and there is no crowding at the entrances.

Please also note that staggered timings may be introduced at short notice if we have an 'Amber' or 'Red' situation (e.g. 5 or more positive cases in a 10-day period or high community transmission) according to our Outbreak Management Plan.

Entering School

Please **do not** bring your child to school if they are showing any symptoms of Covid19

- a new, continuous dry cough
- a high temperature
- loss of taste or smell.

School has the right to refuse entry if we have reason to believe that your child is showing signs of Covid19.

If your child is feeling unwell, they should also stay at home.

Please be mindful of other families dropping off their children as the pavements outside school are narrow. To support with avoiding congestion and children having to step into the road, parents are kindly asked not to gather in groups at the entrance gates and railings. We have 2 entrance points onto school grounds: the main gates (double and single) at the front of school and the staff car park gate.

- **Reception, Year 2, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 children will enter the school grounds through the main gates at the front of school**

We will open both gates, as previously, to support easy flow and social distancing.

Parents of Reception children will walk them around the back of the building to enter through their outdoor area.

Y2 and Y4 will be entering the building through the main entrance door (for the school office). Y5 and Y6 will be entering at the top door facing the gate.



Please ensure that if you arrive and no staff are on the gate or in the playground, you **remain** to supervise your child.

From 8:40am, there will be a member of staff to supervise children on the playground where they can line up in their classes, while waiting for their door to open. Year 2, 4, 5 and 6 parents will be able to come onto the playground and walk their child over to this area but are asked to then leave promptly.

At 8:50am, any children waiting will be taken into school by a member of staff and then the doors will be staffed until 9am so children can enter as they arrive.

- **Year 1 and Year 3 will enter through the car park gate and doors to arrive on their side of school and enter through the side door**

The car park will be closed to ALL vehicles from 8:30am to 9:10am. We regret that we cannot accommodate privilege parking for vehicles with disability badges in the staff car park at this time, as children's safety is of paramount importance.



Please ensure that if you arrive and no staff are on the gate or by the side door, you remain to supervise your child.

From 8:40am, there will be a member of staff to supervise and guide children to the areas where they can line up in their classes, while waiting for their door to open. Parents will be able to walk their child over to this area but are asked to then leave promptly.

At 8:50am, any children waiting will be taken into school by a member of staff and then the door will be staffed until 9am so children can enter as they arrive.

If you have more than one child in our school at different sides and arrive very early while the car park is still open to cars, you are welcome to wait with your children on the playground.

Children arriving after 9am will need to go in through the main entrance via the school office.

We can accommodate bikes and scooters whichever gate your child uses and we encourage children to safely use these or walk to school, whenever possible, as part of our WOW project to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution and increase the safety on the roads around school. Your child will earn a WOW badge monthly if they walk, scoot or ride to school just 4 times in the month.

Exiting School

At the end of the school day at 3:15pm, the children will exit through the same doors with their class teacher. If your child is exiting onto the school playground, we ask that you come onto the school grounds to avoid congestion on the pavements.

To avoid children crowding near doorways and gates, they will have their allocated area to wait for collection by parents:

- Front playground for Years 2, 4, 5 and 6,
- Reception outdoor area for Reception,
- Car park for Years 1 and 3.

Key Stage 1 children MUST be collected from their line by a responsible adult.

As usual, if parents wish Upper Key Stage 2 children to walk home by themselves, please let their teacher know they have your permission for this.

The car park will again be out of use to vehicles to allow children and parents to move out of school safely. This will apply from 15:05pm to 15:30pm.

Hand Washing and Hygiene

- Children will be asked to wash their hands at a hand sanitiser station on entering and exiting the building.
- Children will be expected to wash their hands or hand sanitise before and after break, before and after lunch and after every toilet visit.

- Children will also be expected to practice good respiratory hygiene – catching coughs and sneezes in tissues and disposing of them in a lined, lidded pedal bin, and then washing their hands.
- Children will be asked to avoid touching their mouth, nose and eyes with their hands or equipment. There will be verbal and visual prompts to remind them.
- Children must not share drinking bottles or food.
- Children are to tell an adult if they are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus.
- Equipment shared between year groups will be cleaned or left for a period of 72 hours.
- Where toilets are shared between year groups, a further enhanced cleaning regime will be established.
- There will be pump hand sanitisers and additional, wall-mounted, automatic hand sanitisers around school for staff and children to use. Children may bring their own hand wash and/or hand sanitiser (with name label) and keep it in class if their hands become irritated by what is provided.

Social Distancing

Social distancing restrictions have been lifted but, given the high infection rates, it is still important that we retain some enhanced measures. For this reason:

- Each class will be allocated its own room and, where possible, their own set of toilets (Reception, Year 2, Year 5), which will be cleaned at least twice daily. Some classes (Year 1, Year 3, Year 4 and Year 6) may share toilets with another class and these will have further enhanced cleaning.
- Our academic mentor will have her own room and will use anti-viral spray for furniture and equipment in use between different groups of children.
- In PE, they will be playing non-contact games. Equipment can be shared within a class but will be cleaned or left for 48 hours after use.
- Children will use cloakrooms in a controlled manner to avoid crowding.

In Class

We are now able to return to seating children in groups around tables. This flexibility will enable staff to ensure that children receive any additional adult support required during lessons. However, staff may continue to sit children in rows if they find this the most effective use of space; they may also allocate set places as the best way to maintain focus during lesson input, according to their professional judgement.

Equipment can be shared freely between children in a class, but children will be provided with their own equipment such as pencils, pens and books to avoid sharing equipment unnecessarily. Laptops and iPads will be cleaned after use. Reading books, games and other resources will be shared within the class but will be wiped/washed more regularly, or left untouched for 72 hours.

Reception outdoor equipment will be sprayed regularly.

If equipment must be shared with other classes, it will be thoroughly washed in soapy water between uses. If this is not possible, it will be sprayed with a disinfectant spray or thoroughly wiped with a disinfectant wipe. Foundation subject resources will be allocated to classes as needed. These can then remain untouched for 72 hours (5 days for plastics) or thoroughly cleaned before being used by another class.

Weather permitting, we will be spending more time learning outdoors, especially for PE.

We will be following an enhanced cleaning regime with common touch points all cleaned at least twice daily, to make the school as safe as possible for children and staff. If the alert level is raised to Amber or Red, further enhanced cleaning will be carried out.

We have lidded bins available in each classroom for used tissues, hand towels and antibacterial wipes.

We will continue to minimise adults moving between groups of children, except where this has clear educational benefit (e.g. specialist teachers, subject monitoring) or is necessary for other reasons such as teacher absence.

- Specialist music teachers in Key Stage 2 work with one year group only at a time.
- Specialist dance and PE lessons will be delivered outdoors whenever possible and with one class only at a time.
- Specialist art lessons will mainly be with one year group a week, or a maximum of two.
- Our French teacher will move between all classes in Key Stage 2 but teach from the front of the classroom, with any direct support for the children being provided by classroom staff.
- Our academic mentor will take focus groups for catch-up, keeping these as consistent as possible.

Ventilation

All rooms and corridors in school will be kept well ventilated at all times by keeping windows fully open in mild weather and partially open in cold weather (as a marked difference between internal and external temperature naturally increases the air flow). Where possible, allowing for fire safety and security, doors will also be kept open.

We will be using carbon dioxide monitors to support with ensuring adequate ventilation while also keeping children and staff comfortable in colder weather. These will be checked by staff throughout the day.

Face Coverings

Masks may be worn by staff in the event of administering First Aid, where close, personal contact is taking place; PPE will be worn when dealing with a symptomatic individual.

Unless there is an outbreak situation and we are acting on the advice of Public Health, staff are not currently required to wear a mask in classrooms or communal areas where it may be difficult to socially distance e.g. the corridor. Staff may choose to wear face coverings if working in more than one class, if they are unable to socially distance from the other adults or children, or if they have underlying vulnerabilities. This also applies if they are visiting the class for monitoring purposes. These masks will be stored in a sealed plastic bag when not in use and replaced when damp.

Face coverings cannot be insisted upon but will be strongly encouraged for any external agency staff visiting school e.g. school nurses, speech therapists, external supply teachers.

In line with Government guidance, children in primary education are not required to wear face coverings of any description, and will not be doing so in school. If you choose for your child to wear a mask to come to school, they will need to remove it safely once inside school, store it inside a plastic bag in their school bag, then wash their hands carefully. If an issue arises that cannot be discussed or resolved by Seesaw message or a phone call, and you need a face-to-face meeting with your child's class teacher or another member of school staff, we ask you to kindly take a lateral flow test before coming into school

Infection control

From Monday 21 February, the Government has removed the guidance for primary staff to undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic testing. Schools will no longer be able to order test kits for staff unless under a directive from Public Health during an outbreak situation.

In addition, the Government will no longer ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days and has removed the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home.

From Thursday 24 February, the Government has removed the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. However, Government and UKHSA guidance is clear that ***ADULTS AND CHILDREN WHO TEST POSITIVE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ADVISED TO STAY AT HOME AND AVOID CONTACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE FOR AT LEAST 5 FULL DAYS, AND THEN CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE UNTIL THEY HAVE 2 NEGATIVE TEST RESULTS ON CONSECUTIVE DAYS.***

Updated operational guidance for schools was published on the 24th February, which includes the following advice for school leaders:

"In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a pupil with the key symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend the school, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school where they have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19."

Children must not attend the school if they display any coronavirus symptoms.

Please be aware that we will still be sending children home if they are showing one of the 3 main symptoms, and asking parents/carers that a PCR test is done. If parents/carers advise us that a child has recently shown one of the main symptoms while at home, we will be asking them to remain at home until a PCR test is done and returns negative.

If the child tests negative on lateral flow tests on days 5 and 6 (or any two consecutive days from then on till the full 10 days self-isolation), they will then be able to come back into school without further delay.

It is the duty of the parent/carer to inform school about symptoms and test results of the child, so that we can dynamically risk assess infection risk in school.

Schools will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. If there is an outbreak of several cases or more within 14 days in school, or if central government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise school to temporarily reintroduce more stringent control measures.

It is expected that operational guidance will be updated again by 1st April when indications are that testing will no longer be available. We anticipate that then we would treat COVID19 as any other 'infectious disease' under Public Health guidance.

What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in the school?

If an adult or child develops symptoms of coronavirus while they are in school, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate and access a test as soon as possible. In the event of their test being positive, the individual must self-isolate for 10 days from the date the symptoms started or the date of the test.

If we are notified that an individual develops symptoms outside of school, our policy will be that the individual must not attend school until they have taken a PCR test and received a negative result. **Please note that, with symptoms present, a PCR test must be carried out: we will not allow a symptomatic child into school on the basis of a negative lateral flow test, as they are not as sensitive as PCRs.**

The rest of the class remains in school. Hard surfaces possibly touched by the individual will be disinfected and their belongings double-bagged and removed. Their classroom will be 'fogged' with disinfectant mist as soon as possible; this quick, thorough and safe process only requires the children to be out of their classroom for a maximum of 30 minutes.

Should a symptomatic individual test negative, they can then return to school and any identified close contacts no longer need to have a PCR test.

The school may take the temperature of a child if they have concerns about their health.

If your child feels unwell, with or without symptoms of COVID19, they will be sent home.

This is in accordance with government and Public Health England guidance.

While the 3 main symptoms still apply, it is clear that other symptoms of general illness are showing with the Omicron variant:

- Fatigue
- Muscle aches and joint pains
- Headache
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Sore throat

We advise a PCR test if in any doubt, particularly if the child has been identified as a close contact.

The 10-day period of self-isolation can be shortened if the child takes lateral flow tests at least 24 hours apart on days 6 and 7 and they are BOTH negative. If this is the case, the child can then attend school after their test result on day 7 and onwards. Should either of these lateral flow tests be positive, this guidance also applies for days 8 and 9,

e.g. Positive lateral flow test on day 6

Negative lateral flow test on day 7

Negative lateral flow test on day 8 – no longer need to self-isolate.

Additional information is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection?utm_source=26%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

The Curriculum

- Foundation subjects, apart from PE, Music and French, will continue to be blocked on timetables so that resources are not going in-between classes during the week. This means, for example, that your child may cover their Science learning for the half term in multiple lessons over two weeks, then do a week of multiple RE lessons, rather than a lesson on each foundation subject each week. The continuity has worked well in supporting the children's recall of key facts and understanding of the topics covered.
- Years 3, 5 and 6 will have weekly music lessons delivered by a specialist teacher, socially distant.
- Mr Corcoran will be delivering Art in blocked full days or half days to Years 1-6. This avoids him having contact with more than 2 classes on the same day. Each class will come off timetable for an Art day (or 2 half days) every 6-7 weeks of term time.
- After reviewing French in the summer term, we have made the decision to only deliver this subject to Key Stage 2. This is in line with what we are required to do as a school and allows for them to have lessons lasting 1 hour instead of only 30 minutes, as previously when the teacher covered all 7 classes. Our view is that Key Stage 2 children will have enhanced opportunities to develop their language knowledge and skills in different ways, leading to improved outcomes. It will also allow for more time on reading and phonics for Reception and Key Stage 1 children.

Assemblies will be in separate Key Stages, or virtual, depending on the alert level on the Outbreak Management Plan; the alert level also takes account of the local infection rate.

Homework

It is vitally important that your child reads daily at home from their school reading book, books you have at home, and/or Reading Eggs or Reading Plus. Reading is an incredibly important life skill to master, and one which makes a huge difference to life outcomes.

Additional homework will mainly be electronic, with resources provided and marked automatically by the application (TTRockstars, Mathletics, EdShed and spag.com) or through SeeSaw by the class teacher. **Please contact us if you do not have access to the internet or a device to access homework other than a mobile phone.** We may be able to loan a device.

Break Time and Lunch Time

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 will have separate morning break times. The playground will be zoned to separate Upper and Lower Key Stage 2 and we will continue to zone the playground at lunchtimes so that not all the children are mixing.

At lunchtimes, children will be sat exclusively with their own class with space left between classes and as full ventilation as possible. We have adequate tables to allow slower-eating children to remain in the hall until they finish their food.

	Morning Break Time	Lunch Time Hall	Lunch Time Playground	Return to class for toilet and handwashing
Reception	10:15-10:30am	11:50-12:10pm	12:10-12:40pm	12:40-12:50pm
Year 1	10:15-10:30am	11:50-12:10pm	12:10-12:40pm	12:40-12:50pm
Year 2	10:15-10:30am	11:50-12:10pm	12:10-12:40pm	12:40-12:50pm
Year 3	10:35-10:50am	12:20pm-12:40pm	12:40-1:10pm	1:10-1:20pm
Year 4	10:35-10:50am	12:20pm-12:40pm	12:40-1:10pm	1:10-1:20pm
Year 5	10:35-10:50am	12:45-1:05pm	12:15 -12:45pm	1:05-1:15pm
Year 6	10:35-10:50am	12:45-1:05pm	12:15 -12:45pm	1:05-1:15pm

- Different entrances/exits will be used to avoid all year groups mixing
- Outdoor play equipment will be used on a rota basis.
- In the hall, there will be 20 tables and 40 benches with a minimum 2m space between year groups.
- Windows and doors in the hall will be open to allow for full ventilation.
- Thorough cleaning practices will be adhered to in the hall, with all tables and benches being sprayed and wiped with an anti-viral spray between groups of children using them.

Lunches

SPRING 2021 MENU

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Monday	Macaroni cheese	Margarita pizza, with herby diced potatoes and sweetcorn	Tomato and mascarpone pasta bake with seasonal vegetables
	Vanilla ice cream	Vanilla ice cream	Vanilla ice cream
Tuesday	Roast gammon with sage and onion stuffing, creamed and roast potatoes, carrots, broccoli and gravy	Roast turkey with sage and onion stuffing, creamed and roast potatoes, carrots, broccoli and gravy	Roast chicken with sage and onion stuffing, creamed and roast potatoes, carrots, broccoli and gravy
	Fresh fruit or yoghurt	Fresh fruit or yoghurt	Fresh fruit or yoghurt
Wednesday	Pork sausage with creamed potatoes, gravy, seasonal fresh carrots and peas	Cooks choice pie with creamed potatoes and seasonal vegetables (vegetarian available)	Chicken tikka masala with 50/50 rice
	Blueberry cake	Jelly and fruit	Flapjack
Thursday	Fish stars or crumb coated chicken, with chunky chips, peas or baked beans	Battered salmon or chicken poppers, with chunky chips, peas or baked beans	Seasoned chicken fillet or battered fish, with chunky chips, peas or baked beans
	Shortbread biscuit	Cookie	Toffee date cake or chocolate cake with orange
Friday	Spaghetti bolognese	Italian chicken pasta bake, with seasonal vegetables	Pork meatballs in tomato and basil sauce, with wholemeal pasta and peas
	Jelly and fruit	Fruit crumble and custard	Jelly and fruit

Free school hot and cold lunches on a 3-week rota will be available to all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children (under the Universal Free School Meals scheme) and to any children eligible for free school meals.

As usual, we can be flexible and allow for children to choose whether to have a school dinner and what option they would prefer, on a daily basis.

School meals will be provided with milk or water.

Sandwiches and filled jacket potatoes are available daily as an alternative to the main meals below.

Please note that we have been advised by the School Meals Service that, due to staff shortages in the current circumstances, they may not be able to cover any absence in our kitchen. In this event, we may be forced to reduce the menu further, on a temporary basis. In the worst-case scenario of no kitchen personnel available at all, only children on benefits-related free school meals will be provided with a lunch and this would be a cold packed lunch. Should this happen, we will let parents know as soon as possible so that they can make alternative arrangements.

Attendance requirements

All children are expected to attend school full time. We will be recording attendance in line with government policy and our own Attendance Policy.

- Absences will be recorded and we will ask for a reason for your child's absence.
- If your child is unwell, please call the school as soon as possible to inform us of their absence and if they have any symptoms of COVID19.
- Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they have been assessed by a medical professional as too clinically vulnerable, or are following Public Health advice to self-isolate, remote education will be offered through online programs and the application 'SeeSaw'.
- A child/young person who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable, including those who are pregnant, can and should attend school.
- A high level of absence leading to attendance below 96% will be reported to parents and, if persistent, will be flagged to Warrington Borough Council Attendance Service. Persistent lateness will also be flagged due to the disruption this causes to the child's education and that of others. If there is failure to improve, further measures may be taken, up to and including prosecution.

Behaviour

After the holiday, we understand the children may need some reminders of our rules about keeping themselves and others safe. We will support them with this and provide visual and verbal prompts. Accidental transgressions will not generally be subject to sanctions, particularly with very young children. However, deliberate transgressions putting others at increased risk of infection will be taken seriously, particularly deliberate coughing or spitting at someone. These will be subject to a scale of sanctions up to and including exclusion.

Please see the school Behaviour policy on our website for more detailed information.

Contacting School

The majority of contact with the school, including with teachers, is likely to be by Seesaw, phone or e-mail to the school office, or speaking to your child's teacher at drop-off or pick-up times. There is a contact facility on our website for you to directly email the head teacher, the special needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCO), or the office manager directly.

If there is a serious or sensitive matter to discuss, face-to-face contact inside the school building will be facilitated to support privacy.

Due to the main entrance being used by two year groups at drop-off and pick-up times, we strongly suggest that parents and carers only come to the school office outside of these times, by prior arrangement and if strictly necessary. As the foyer by the office is a small space, we ask that only one adult go into it at any one time. Please consider the health and wellbeing of office staff by maintaining social distancing and wearing a face covering.

Supply

The school will aim to minimise using external agency supply teachers at this time to cover any short-term staff absence. This is to reduce the risk of cross-infection from other education settings and households and this may mean that, for example, a teaching assistant would temporarily manage a part or whole lesson planned by the teacher, if the teacher needed to attend an appointment. Teachers' planning time (PPA) will be covered by our regular supply teachers, or in-house, where possible. Our HLTA, Mrs Bond, is qualified to take a class and is also Forest School trained.

The government has encouraged schools to combine classes to keep children in face-to-face education during this critical period of high infection, if there are teacher absences and no supply teachers available. Please be assured that this would be very much a last resort, only taken after very careful consideration and consultation with Omega MAT executive.

Mental Health

During our first partial closure, all staff received training from an experienced play therapist provider on supporting children's mental health. We will encourage children to use some strategies to cope if they are experiencing difficult emotions on their return. We are conscious that some children may have suffered a bereavement or other very challenging circumstance and we would ask that you alert us to this confidentially so that we can be mindful of the additional support they may need. Also, we have access to support from mental health care professionals, who can advise staff and parents if anxieties continue or if other mental health issues need addressing. This year, we are also fortunate to have a trainee play therapist on Fridays, who can support identified children meeting criteria.

We have included some tips and resources which you may find helpful.

Tips for parents to ease child anxiety at returning to school

- A few days before school, start preparing children for the upcoming transition by getting back to school routines such as a realistic bedtime and selecting tomorrow's clothes, getting them up early in the mornings etc.
- Arrange play dates with one or more familiar peers before school starts. Research shows that the presence of a familiar peer during school transitions can improve children's academic and emotional adjustment. If this is not possible, show them class photos or talk to them about who they will meet again when back in school.
- Talk children through the morning routine and school drop-off; children are less fearful if they know what to expect. Talk to children about what to expect when they go in to school. Highlight the fun as well as what they might find challenging.
- Come up with a prize or a rewarding activity that the child could earn for separating positively from parents to attend school.
- Validate the child's worry by acknowledging that, like any new activity, re-starting school can be hard but soon becomes easy and fun.
- Reassure children that school is a safe place and explain what they can do to keep themselves safe (i.e. when sneezing 'catch it, bin it and kill it' by washing their hands). Explain what you as a parent will do to keep yourself safe while you are at home or in work, as they may be anxious for your safety while they are apart from you.
- Parents should try and manage their own anxieties in front of their children, model a sense of calm and confidence.

For anxious older children who do not want to attend school, explain to them:

How avoiding school maintains their anxiety levels and eventually causes their comfort zone to decrease even further. Facing our fears may increase our anxiety temporarily at first and cause discomfort, but eventually the anxiety reduces.

The body symptoms that we experience when we're anxious (i.e. fast beating heart, sweaty palms, fast breathing etc.) can be alarming but they are our body's natural response to a perceived danger, and we can learn ways to self-calm.

Videos for children that explain anxiety

♣ Fight Flight Freeze – A guide to Anxiety for Key Stage 2 primary school children:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

§ Fight Flight Freeze – A guide to Anxiety for secondary school children:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4>

♣ The owl and guard dog brain – For Key Stage 2 primary school children:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8>

The best way to reduce anxiety is by calming our body symptoms. We can do this by practicing techniques such as muscle relaxation, breathing, grounding exercises. Below are some ideas on how children can relax their bodies.

- ♣ Kids muscle relaxation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>
- ♣ Relax like a cat: <http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/26930/Relaxleaflet.pdf>
- ♣ Calming anxiety: <https://copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety>

Resources on school transitions

- <https://www.annafreud.org/media/5103/all-change-parents-back-to-school-guide.pdf>
- <https://childhood101.com/starting-school-12-tips-for-easing-separation-anxiety/>

Information on school refusal

- https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/Content/refusal_to_go_to_school/#/id/59faef4f768f5e9649724d03