



41. COVID Policy

Aims of Policy

Seer Green Pre-School is committed to keeping the children, staff, families and community safe. In light of the pandemic resulting from the COVID-19 virus, this policy has been created to provide an outline of the steps we will continue to take to manage COVID-19 within our Pre-School and the community around.

The policy aims to support the advice issued by the government, and this advice should be followed and will override the policy if there are inconsistencies due to the continued development of the COVID-19 situation.

Background

During Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began in the UK, and at 3.10pm on Thursday 19th March 2020, in accordance with government guidelines, we shut the Pre-School due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following twelve months continued to affect operations of the Pre-School, with closures, reduced opening hours and bubbles, as well as increased Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), cleaning requirements and risk assessments being carried out when we could open more 'normally'. The challenges continued even with more normal day-to-day routines for the children, with no external visitors being allowed into the Pre-School for most of the year, and new routines were created to adjust life and make a safer environment for children, parents, carers, staff and the wider families and community. These changes continue to evolve however, it was believed it would be appropriate to outline in a specific policy the Pre-School's overall position regarding COVID-19.

Guidance and Policy

Whilst the Pre-School adheres to government guidance in all circumstances, including the advice provided in the case of COVID-19, we also recognise that the guidance, when it is available, can also be left open to interpretation. Therefore, as a Pre-School, we have the following policy in place:

- Actions will follow government guidance but may also, at the discretion of the Pre-School Trustees, be stricter than issued guidance. This may be due to guidance being vague, not updated quickly enough in response to new information, or to protect those in our Pre-School and wider community.
- Risk assessments will be carried out to ensure the safety of all.
- Communication with parents, carers and staff will be via email in the main, although will also be updated on the WhatsApp group and on the website as appropriate. As much notice as possible will be given when communicating, although we recognise this can be challenging as information changes.
- Where the Pre-School, or government, prescribes certain requirements (face coverings, handwashing/sanitisation, social distancing, keeping children at home if they are unwell), these must be upheld. Any breaking of these requirements may put staff and children at risk and therefore may result in a child's or staff member's exclusion from the Pre-School for a period or permanently if it is deemed in the best interest of the rest of the community.

Additionally, we provide further steps which need to be taken if a potential positive case of COVID-19 is identified at the Pre-School.

Potential positive COVID-19 case

Where there is a suspicion of a COVID-19 infection during the day at Pre-School:

- If a child is suspected of having COVID-19, they will be isolated from the rest of the children and staff in a separate room (Nicholls Room) with 1 staff member until they can be collected. The staff member will wear full PPE (gloves, apron, mask/visor), and two full PPE kits are kept in the office for any such occasion.
- If a staff member is suspected of having COVID-19, they will be sent home immediately, subject to ensuring staff:children ratios are maintained. In practice, as we work well above minimum ratios, this shouldn't be an issue. If this would cause an issue of staff:children ratios however, the staff member should remain on site but isolated in a separate room (Nicholls Room) until another member of staff or the Committee can come in and assist.

In both cases, the person suspected of having COVID-19 must go home and isolate and only leave the house to get a full PCR test.

NOTE: A lateral flow test is not suitable for anyone who has symptoms or for pre-school aged children to use to confirm a positive or negative case.

Should a staff member be the suspected case, the Pre-School Manager will arrange for cover for the persons hours until they can return. Should this not be possible, a discussion with the Committee Chairperson and Operations Manager will occur at the earliest opportunity to discuss what next steps will need to be taken – either limiting the number of children who can attend or closing the Pre-School depending on the staffing challenges.

Once the PCR test result comes back:

- If negative, the staff/child can return to the Pre-School without further requirements, and
- If positive, the staff/child must isolate, in accordance with current government guidance, and the steps below will be followed.

In addition to suspected COVID-19 cases presenting via symptoms, asymptomatic cases may be highlighted through regular staff lateral flow tests. If a staff member tests positive through a regular lateral flow test:

- They must isolate immediately and contact the Management team as soon as possible
- A confirmatory PCR test is no longer required, and all relevant steps for a positive case as below will be followed.

In addition to the evolving government guidance, we have put in place the following steps for a **positive COVID-19 result from a PCR test**. These cover what action we as a Pre-School we would take and are specific to our setting.

1. If a staff member tests positive through a PCR test;
 - a. The Pre-School Manager will notify Buckinghamshire County Council Early Years team and Ofsted, and committee.
 - b. All staff and parents will be notified as soon as possible, and any un-vaccinated staff will be required to isolate for 10 full days.
 - c. All vaccinated staff who have been in contact with the positive case within the last 48 hours will begin daily Lateral Flow tests, and carry on with these for a full 7 days. The tests must be taken prior to attending the setting where possible. If staff have difficulty accessing tests they can liaise with Management who has a small supply of these in the office.
 - d. Parents will be advised to do a LFT on children who have been in close contact with the positive staff member if possible, before returning to Pre-School. Any children with symptoms will be required to get a PCR test immediately and isolate until they have their result.
 - e. The Pre-School will be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each session so a thorough clean should not be required after a positive case has been identified.
2. If a child tests positive through a PCR test;

- a. The Pre-School Manager will notify PHE, Buckinghamshire County Council Early Years team and Ofsted.
 - b. Parents will be asked to notify any additional settings their child may attend if they are affected by the positive test result (i.e. the child has been in contact with the positive member of staff in the last 48hours).
 - c. Where there is a positive test and the Pre-School remains open, further requirements may be asked of parents, carers, staff and children to help minimise the risk of further spread. These will be reviewed on a case by case basis, and will take into account any government guidance at the time.
 - d. Where staff members are off sick due to COVID (while waiting on test results, after testing positive or having to self isolate), staff will continue to be paid in accordance with the sick policy. Should the whole Pre-School close for a period, staff will continue to be paid if they could've continued to work but can't due to the closure (other staff will be paid under the sick policy).
3. If there is a positive case in a child or staff member's household
- a. If the staff member is vaccinated they can continue to attend the setting, ensuring they carry out a LFD test every morning before coming in, for a full 7 days.
 - b. If they are unvaccinated they will be required to isolate for a full 10 days, as per government guidelines.
 - c. If the case is in a child's household, we request the child obtains a PCR before returning to the setting, as regular use of LFD tests are not recommended for children under 5.
 - d. If there are 2 or more positive cases in a staff member or child's household we strongly recommend they stay away from the setting, to try and limit the likelihood of an outbreak or putting our vulnerable employees at further risk.
4. Isolation
- a. Government guidelines is constantly evolving regarding how long an individual should isolate with covid-19. Our policy has taken into consideration guidance as well as the safeguarding of all of our staff and families, especially those who are Critically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV).
 - b. All positive cases should isolate for 10 full days, with day 1 being the day **after** you test positive. Isolation can end early with 2 negative LFT's taken 24 hours apart.
 - c. We will welcome back staff and children to the setting on **Day 8**, providing they have tested negative on a LFT on day 6 and 7. The tests must be taken 24 hours apart.
 - d. If the positive case is still testing positive on day 6, they must continue to isolate, and return to the setting after they have returned two negative LFT's 24 hours apart, or on day 11, after 10 full days in isolation (whichever comes first).

This policy is supported by our other policies. It is our intention that this policy provides sufficient information to provide an understanding of the Pre-School's position relating to COVID-19, but it does not provide advice or guidance which continually changes. For this, the appropriate government or medical body website should be viewed.

As with all the policies for Seer Green Pre-School, the Operational Plan should be referred to for the specific details of day to day operations of the Pre-School. In addition, any issues which arise in the course of a child's time with the Pre-School and that are related to a child's health and wellbeing, parent's or staff's concern, or the overall care and safety of our children, staff, parents and equipment will be dealt with in a professional and confidential manner in order to arrive at an appropriate outcome.

This policy was adopted on (date) _____

Signed on behalf of Seer Green Pre-School (Committee Chairperson) _____

This policy was reviewed as indicated below:

January 2022 reviewed and updated
2021 created