

## **St. Matthew's Preschool Epidemic and Pandemic Policy (Covid 19)**

### **Statement of Intent**

St. Matthew's Pre-school intend to use this policy to provide precautionary measures to minimise transmission risks of disease in the setting during an epidemic or pandemic. It also states ideas for continuity of business if allowed.

Legislation and leading authorities which have guided and influenced this policy are:

Coronavirus Act 2020, Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Government Briefings, Public Health England (PHE) and World Health Organisation (WHO). Advice from but not limited to, The Secretary of State, The Chief Medical Officer, Local Authority (LA) and Department for Education (DfE). The policy also has regard to Ofsted and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance where appropriate.

### **Aim of Policy**

This Policy defines and assists the operating arrangements in place within the pre-school that assures compliance to the Government and leading bodies requirements with relation to the outbreak of a pandemic such as Covid19. This information builds upon our current procedures for areas such as Safeguarding, Child Protection and Equality and Diversity, however new practices may emerge as the situation continues. The policy and considerations may evolve and be built upon as the situation deepens and new precautionary measures have been introduced and practices have been reflected upon.

### **Method**

As early years providers we ensure to offer a continuum of very high standards of practice of childcare and education. The fundamental principles to be outlined in this policy are set out to ensure physical distancing is enabled and implement good hygiene practices as well as avoiding coming into contact with infected children and adults or anyone displaying symptoms. It states the protective measures put in place for children, parents and staff as best as possible to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced. We will continue to follow our other policies as long as they do not conflict with this policy and be guided by the EYFS as best as we can. The main areas we will be considering are:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell
- Maintaining personal and respiratory hygiene (handwashing, catch it, kill it, bin it)
- Ensuring cleanliness of the environment (especially frequently touched surfaces)
- Minimising general contact and mixing (creating bubbles and limiting numbers)
- The use of Protective and Personal Equipment (PPE)

- Testing

### Focus/ Areas of Consideration / Recommendations

#### Children

##### *Attendance*

- Only children who are symptom free or have completed the required isolation period should attend the setting.
- Providers may consider taking temperatures of children on arrival and risk assessing with regular health questionnaires for returning children Physical distancing/ grouping.
- Extremely vulnerable children should continue under government advice (to shield).
- Families who attend at least two settings should choose only one for the remainder of the term to ensure their 'bubble' remains small.

##### *Physical Distancing/grouping*

- Children may be organised into small groups known as 'bubbles'. Each group will be no larger than 16 (current government guidelines) and preferably be kept to 8.
- Wherever possible these small groups or 'bubbles' should not mix during the day as best as possible. This is to minimise contact with others and mixing. Staff may exercise their own judgement during the day for the high standards of safety for all children.
- Children in small groups should have the same staff team caring for them wherever possible to limit the amount of people coming into contact with each other.
- Smaller amounts of children in the whole setting may be advised or preferable. As we usually run to capacity most days this could be achieved by, but not limited to:
  - A temporary cap on the number of children in the setting at any one time.
  - Temporarily limiting funded hours to only 15 hours (or less) per child, ensuring all children have access to some preschool time.
  - Changing children's hours. Offering less hours/days to accommodate more 'bubbles' into the week.
  - Only allowing the older children or those moving to Primary school to attend.
  - Grouping children to certain days, such as in groups of children moving to next school, this would help with transitions.
  - Changing the preschool open hours to accommodate 'bubbles' allow time for cleaning etc.
  - Prioritising children such as those who are vulnerable, those with special educational needs, those from households where both parents work (or work full time)
  - The take up on places may be small so there may be no need to change children's hours.

- Care routines including nappy changing and toileting will be done in the allocated preschool toilet. (the disabled toilet). Staff to clean the toilet after each use. This toilet is for the sole use of preschool, but it is in the communal foyer. A clear sign will be on the door advising that other users may not enter. Children will be taken one at a time.
- Staff to monitor foyer to make sure it is clear of others before entering into it.
- Screens will be used to limit contact in the foyer.
- The use of communal internal spaces should be restricted as much as possible and outdoor spaces should be utilised as much as possible.
- A phased return may be best to ease their transition back into preschool if the preschool has been closed for quite a while or only open for critical workers.
- Sunscreen should be applied by the parents / carer before the child arrives at the preschool. T shirts covering shoulders and trousers/ leggings would be preferable as preschool staff will not be re-applying sunscreen.

#### *Wellbeing and education*

- Children should be supported in age appropriate ways to understand the steps they can take to keep themselves safe including regular hand washing, coughing into an elbow, using a tissue and adopting a catch it, kill it, bin it regime. They should be encouraged not to touch their faces (with an understanding that this will be very difficult to achieve)
- Children should be supported to understand the changes and challenges they may be encountering because of Covid-19 and staff need to ensure they are aware of children's attachments and their need for emotional support at this time.
- EYFS framework will continue to be delivered through play and adult led activities.
- Self-service snack bar will be discontinued but children can ask for water throughout the session if they are thirsty, staff will monitor this. Children will be provided with a simple snack (breadstick, cracker, piece of fruit) that will be eaten at a set snack time. Parents will be asked to ensure their child has had breakfast or lunch and a drink before they arrive.

## **Workforce**

### *Attendance*

- Staff should only attend preschool if they are symptom free, have completed the required isolation period or achieved a negative test result. All staff and their household are eligible for testing if they display symptoms.
- Providers may consider taking temperature of staff on arrival and risk assessing with regular health questionnaires for returning staff.
- Consideration should be given to limiting the number of staff in the preschool at any one time to only those required to care for the expected occupancy levels on any given day. Where possible staff should work with the same staffing team and 'bubble' of children.

- Where possible staff who are happy to return to work will be used in the first instance. As staff numbers need to increase this may not be possible. Staff who are living with a person that is shielding will be asked to return last or be given a role that has minimal contact with others. E.g. cleaning after the session.
- Staff hours, days they work, and length of day may change in order to meet childcare demands and considerations within this policy.
- Should there not be enough staff to operate safely then preschool will need to close.

#### *Physical distancing/ grouping /safety*

- Staff will complete a risk assessment before opening to address any risks from the virus, ensure sensible measures are in place to control risks.
- Staff to be informed of measures in place and sign a disclaimer to state they have read and understood the preschool policies and procedures.
- Wherever possible staff should remain with the same bubble of children, and not come into contact with other bubbles.
- Emergency revisions to the EYFS may have been implemented which provides some flexibility on ratios and qualifications to make this feasible.
- Staff have been advised by the government not to wear PPE such as facemasks during their day. Should they wish to wear a mask they may do so, but they will not be provided by pre-school apart from in the emergency packs. Staff should continue to wear PPE (disposable gloves) at the usual times such as intimate care. If staff are supporting an ill child a face mask, apron and gloves should also be worn. These are provided as 'emergency packs'
- After dealing with an ill child who displayed symptoms the staff member should continue to wear PPE and clean the affected area with disinfectant/ bleach.
- All PPE should be removed and disposed of following current government guidelines, the staff member should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- The staff member who supported the unwell child does not need to go home unless they are developing symptoms themselves.
- Staff may be required to be in charge of specific areas including the outdoors to minimise their contact with surfaces etc. Staff will be responsible to ensure appropriate cleaning takes place and enough ventilation is in the room such as opening windows. If doors are open, ensure the safety of the children is maintained.
- Staff members should avoid physical contact with each other including handshakes, hugs etc.

#### *Training*

- Where possible, meetings and training sessions should be conducted through virtual conferencing.
- All staff members must receive appropriate instruction and training in infection control and the standard operating procedure and risk assessments within which they will be operating.

- Online training may be available to allow their training levels to be maintained if appropriate.

## **Parents**

### *Physical distancing*

- Only parents who are symptom free and or have completed the required isolation periods will be able to drop off or collect their child.
- limit drop off and pick up to one parent per family.
- Arrange drop off and pick up at the preschool entrance to avoid parents entering the preschool unnecessarily.
- When parents are waiting to drop off or collect their child, physical distancing should be maintained in a safe area sticking to government social distancing policies. Clear 2-meter markings outside drop off/collection door. Staff member will be monitoring this
- Strict drop off times must be adhered to. Once the doors are closed children may not be admitted to the session.

### *Communications*

- Parents should receive clear communication regarding the role they play in the safe operating procedure and all measures being taken to ensure the safety of their children and themselves.
- Parents should inform preschool of their circumstances and if they plan to keep their child away, this helps preschool to conform to our safeguarding policy.

## **Visitors**

- Attendance to the setting should be restricted to only children and staff as far as practically possible and visitors should not be permitted to the preschool unless essential (e.g. essential building maintenance).
- Where essential visits are required these should be made outside of the usual preschool operational hours where possible.
- As far as possible parents and carers should not enter the premises.

## **Travel**

- Wherever possible staff and parents should travel to preschool alone, using their own transport or, if possible, walk.
- If public transport is necessary, current guidance on the use of public transport must be followed.
- Parents should be encouraged to ensure they do not leave travel accessories including buggies, car seats, scooters in the setting premises or grounds.
- Outings from the preschool into the local community should be restricted to ensure mixing with members of the general public does not happen.

## **Hygiene and Health & Safety**

### *Hand Washing*

- All children and staff must wash/sanitise their hands upon arrival at the preschool.
- Children and staff members should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently, this includes before and after eating food, after visiting the

toilet or playing outdoors, after sneezing, blowing their nose or coughing into their hand and dealing with unwell people.

- Bodily fluid spills should follow the correct procedures as normal.

#### *Cleaning*

- An enhanced cleaning schedule must be implemented that includes furniture, surfaces and children's toys and equipment and all staff are responsible in their area of work.
- Communal area, touch points and hand washing facilities must be cleaned and sanitised regularly and cleaned thoroughly after every session.
- A deep clean will be needed after a child has become ill in the area they were waiting.

#### *Waste disposal*

- All waste must be disposed of in a hygienic and safe manner following government guidelines.
- Tissues must be immediately disposed of and placed in a bin with a bag, lid and foot pedal.
- Bodily fluids must be bagged and disposed of in the nappy bin.

#### *Risk assessment*

- The setting and all activity should be risk assessed before opening or going ahead to address the risks from the virus and due consideration given to any adaptations to usual practice. Sensible measures should be put in place and policies and procedures followed.
- It is expected that would include, but not be limited, to the suspension of learning experiences involving materials which are not easily washable such as malleable materials (sand) and the suspension of the sharing of food and utensils.
- Cut down on the available resources out in the preschool.
- Remove anything which cannot be easily wiped down or washed at the end of the day.
- Baking, food play and finger painting should be avoided.

#### *PPE*

- Government guidance is that PPE is not required for general use in early years settings to protect against COVID- 19 transmission.
- PPE should continue to be worn and disposed of as normal for nappy changing, one to one care and the administration of first aid.
- If a child shows symptoms, staff should wear a face mask, disposable gloves and apron (emergency pack). PPE should be disposed of following government guidelines

#### *Premises Building*

- Where premises have been temporarily closed during the lockdown period or where they may need to temporarily close during future lockdowns appropriate Health & Safety checks should be conducted prior to reopening. Daily health and safety checks will be carried out as usual.
- We may be required to use a different room within the main building. Children may find this disorientating. Ask parents to prepare their child for this before arrival. We will try to make the room as familiar looking as possible. The main entrance, foyer and outside space will not change.

- Fire drills will continue to be practiced regularly.
- Keep windows open where possible to ensure good levels of ventilation.

#### *Resources*

- Children should not be permitted to bring items from home into the setting unless essential for their wellbeing. A named coat should be brought in and left on the allocated pegs.
- Preschool will provide nappies and wipes for those that need them. In the event of a toileting accident the child will be provided with clean pre-school clothes. These should be washed at 60 degrees after use and returned to preschool.
- All resources required for play and learning experiences of children should be regularly washed and/or sterilized. Any resources which are difficult to clean should be removed.
- Equipment used by staff such as stationary, tablets etc. should be allocated to individual staff members where possible and cleaned regularly.

#### *Supplies Procurement & monitoring*

- The preschool will not be able to operate without essential supplies required for ensuring infection control. The preschool should plan ahead to ensure that essential supplies such as soap, disinfectant, paper towels, hand sanitizer etc. are always stocked.

#### *Responding to a suspected case*

- In the event of a child developing suspected coronavirus symptoms whilst attending the setting, they should be collected as soon as possible and isolate at home in line with the current NHS guidance.
- Whilst waiting for the child to be collected they should be isolated from others in a previously identified room or area. If possible, a window should be opened for ventilation.
- The staff member responsible for the child during this time should be a staff member from their 'bubble'. The staff member should use the 'emergency packs' of PPE.
- The area should be thoroughly cleaned, immediately with bleach/ disinfectant. Where possible this area should not be used for the next 72 hours.
- The person responsible for cleaning ideally should be the person dealing with the unwell child and they should continue to wear their PPE. This should then be disposed of according to current government guidelines.
- In the event of a staff member developing suspected coronavirus symptoms whilst working at the preschool, they should return home immediately and isolate at home in line with the NHS guidance. They should also follow current testing advice for themselves and their household.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of St. Matthew's Pre-school held in June 2020.

Signed on behalf of the management committee :

Name of signatory: Allison Warner

Role of signatory: Nominated person and Preschool Manager