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**Full opening of schools: a decision-making framework for**

**The Rose Learning Trust (February 2021) –**

**Lakeside Primary Academy**

*This framework is adapted from The Confederation of School Trusts (CST), the national organisation and sector body for academy and multi-academy trusts. We have updated the decision-making framework to reflect the* [Schools Covid-19 operational guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf) and trust specific information.

*The framework outlines a series of strategic actions for the trust to take about the full opening of schools on* ***8th March 2021****. It does not include all possible actions that could or should be taken in the specific context of the trust as schools will personalise accordingly. It is intended to be a strategic framework to guide decision-making.*

*All schools in the trust follow the* ***system of controls*** *in* [Schools Covid-19 operational guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf) *(summarised at annex A) to effectively reduce risks and create an inherently safer environment.*

**Decision making framework and updated risk assessments to be returned to Deborah Temperton by 9am Friday March 5th 2021**

**Decisions and actions to take before opening your schools for all pupils from 8th March 2021**

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| **Health and safety** | * Review health and safety risk assessments ensuring these are based on the Public Health System of Controls in the [DfE guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf) summarised in **annex A** below.   **ProAktive has updated risk assessments accordingly and these are published on trust and school websites.**  Versison 6 of RA on website and issued to staff – 1/3/20.  Ensure consultation has taken place with all staff and their representatives in line with [HSE requirements](https://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/index.htm)  Staff consulted/personal RAs updated where necessary.   * Ensure statutory site checks are carried out, if required including site checks from central team staff. * Commission cleaning of all sites using [guidance on cleaning non-health care settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings).   Additional cleaning at lunchtimes of toilets, classrooms used for lunch, high use areas.   * Review arrangements to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on [air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm). Refer to the [system of controls](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf) for guidance on keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.   Windows open in all rooms.   * Agree a policy and procedures should a child or adult fall ill with the coronavirus on site, fall ill having recently been on site and/or if a number of people fall ill related to a particular site (use DfE guidance on the [system of controls](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf))   There is a designated isolation room with full PPE near the main entrance.   * Ensure there is a critical path decision making process/ contingency plan in case of a local outbreak. |
| **Pupils and parents** | * Assess parental confidence and ensure processes are in place to communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families ahead of 8th March 2021. * Ensure appropriate support and arrangements are in place for pupils with EHC plans. * Ensure that pupils most at risk of disengagement/most in need of additional support are identified and support is in place. * Audit wider family services supporting mental health, bereavement, domestic violence etc in order to be able to signpost/refer families where required (Public Health England has published [guidance on supporting children and young people’s mental health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing), [Every Mind Matters](https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/) and [advice for groups with specific mental health needs)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#additional-advice-for-groups-with-specific-mental-health-needs). |
| **Workforce and HR** | * Review workforce: Some people will remain under the care of their doctor or specialist, who are ‘extremely clinically vulnerable’ and may be advised not to return to the workplace/ school. Assess how many staff remain in this much smaller group and the impact on the workforce. Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are extremely clinically vulnerable is [here.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19) * You will need to follow the specific [guidance for pregnant employees](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees) because pregnant women are considered CV. In some cases pregnant women may also have other health conditions that mean they are considered CEV, where the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable staff will apply.   One employee working remotely from 8/3/20   * Assess how many staff may be at increased risk due to protected characteristics and disparities in outcomes. Consider using an Equalities Impact Assessment. * Determine whether/what staff training is required prior to the full return of pupils in March. * Consider what arrangements might be put in place for staff wellbeing. All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. [Education Support](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/) provides a free helpline for school staff and targeted support for mental health and wellbeing.   Mental health first aiders x2   * Ensure designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) are provided with time, especially in the first few weeks of after 8th March, to help them provide support to staff and children regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns and the handling of referrals to children social care and other agencies where these are appropriate. Consider whether additional safeguarding training is necessary for staff prior to full return. |
| **Curriculum and timetabling** | * Scrutinise the plans for identifying the most important missed knowledge and how this will be covered, within a broad curriculum in all subjects * Ensure the curriculum remains broad and ambitious and that all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects * Ensure that there is a staffing plan and timetable for each school, including any special arrangements where necessary and practicable e.g. staggered starting and ending times of the school day, drop off and collection and/or break and lunch arrangements   Communicated to staff and parents on 2/3/21   * Scrutinise plans for how remote education will be offered where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate. * Review the approach to physical activity within the school day, ensuring pupils remain in consistent groups where possible, sports equipment is thoroughly cleaned between each use, contact sports are avoided and outdoor sports are prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where not, maximising distancing between pupils and paying attention to cleaning and hygiene. * Review your before and after-school provision and plan whether/ how to restart. And ensure where parents are using external providers, that the school has a plan in place to and consider how such provision will work alongside their wider system of controls, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible.   School will review again after Easter holidays to assess whether whole school breakfast club/after school clubs are safe to reopen. |
| **Policies and procedures** | * Review at least the following policies and procedures and if you have addendums to policies consider whether these need to be amended or removed: * Health and safety * Child protection and safeguarding * Attendance * Behaviour * Remote Education * Consider whether enhanced safeguarding and welfare provision needs to be put in place – plan for the potential increase in disclosures and welfare needs including mental health * Amend procedures for fire drills * Assess whether any other trust and/or school-based policies and procedures need to be reviewed and amended |
| **School kitchens, supply chains and contracts** | * Scrutinise plans for the reopening school kitchens and compliance with the [guidance for food businesses](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19) on COVID-19 * Ensure there is free school meals provision over the holiday period – where applicable * Check suppliers know and understand the system of controls and hygiene arrangements * Agree approach to any scheduled or ongoing building works in relation to safety |
| **Communications** | * Plan and agree communications to staff, including but not limited to: * Arrangements for keeping staff and pupils safe * Staff deployment and attendance expectations * Curriculum and timetabling * Workload and wellbeing * Training * Plan and agree communications to parents/carers, including but not limited to: * Attendance expectations * Uniform expectations * The curriculum * Dropping off and picking up * Parents/ carers visiting the school * Parents’ evening arrangements |

**Decisions and actions to manage the financial and educational impacts and regulatory and accountability environments**

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| **Financial impacts**  (At trust level) | * Ensure additional cost pressures due to COVID-19 have been identified and an end-of-year forecast which factors them in has been produced for the board * Assess whether schools in the trust are eligible for financial support (DFE has published [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020#additional-costs-covered-by-the-fund) on the financial support schools and trusts will receive to reimburse them for exceptional costs incurred during COVID-19. These relate to increased premises-related costs; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not attending school and where those costs are not covered by the FSM national voucher scheme and additional cleaning costs) * Assess impact on reserves and review reserves policy * Assess impact on three-year financial strategy |
| **Educational impacts**  **(At trust and school level)** | * Keep educational impacts under review – ensure a trust-wide plan is in place to assess educational impacts, specifically gaps in learning, and that the plans address these in the short and medium term (see curriculum section above) |
| **Regulatory environment**  **(At trust level)** | * Review the new regulatory requirements in the [Academies Financial Handbook](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef0a9a5d3bf7f6c03ed25b7/Academies_Financial_Handbook_2020.pdf) which came into force in September 2020 (summarised in **annex B** below) * Agree a plan for internal scrutiny. * Agree the arrangements for external audit and associated returns. * Keep under review the statutory timescales for returns that have been paused or deferred - ESFA published [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-reducing-burdens-on-educational-and-care-settings/reducing-burdens-on-educational-and-care-settings) on reducing burdens which includes a full list of returns that have been cancelled, paused or deferred. |
| **Accountability environment** | * Review the arrangements for school and trust accountability and the performance management policy in the light of how school and trust external accountability will be handled. Please note that guidance states that teachers must not be penalised during the appraisal process or any subsequent pay progression decisions because of the decision to restrict pupil attendance at schools. * Performance tables were not published for the 2019 to 2020 academic year. DfE will not judge schools on data based on exams and assessments from 2020. DfE will not publish data based on exam and assessment results from summer 2021 on school and college performance tables. Read [coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college accountability](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-and-college-performance-measures) to see what this means for accountability in 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021. |

**Annex A: The Public Health System of Controls**

*The system of nine controls is the set of actions schools MUST take, grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection.’*

*There is a lot of detailed guidance about the system of controls including how to group children, measures within the classroom, measures elsewhere and measures for arriving at and leaving school. Schools must work through the system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school, and allows you to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. If you follow the guidance set out here, you will effectively reduce risks in the school or groups of schools and create an inherently safer environment.*

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| **A. Prevention** | You must always:  1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the school.  2) Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.  3) Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual.  4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.  5) Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents. 6) Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible.  7) Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.  In specific circumstances:  8) Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.  9) Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing, where available. |
| **B. Response to any infection** | You must always:  10) Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.  11) Manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community.  12) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice |

**Annex B: Main Changes to the Academies Financial Handbook 2020**

The main changes to the Academies Financial Handbook 2020, are:

* **Governance**: Further information on governance arrangements including trustees’ responsibility to maintain the trust as a going concern [1.14, 2.5 and 2.8], confirmation that members must not be employees or occupy unpaid staff roles [1.4], that members must remain informed about trust business [1.8] and that trusts must appoint a clerk to the board [1.40]. Also clarifying that trusts must keep their register of interests up to date [5.46].
* **Executive team**: Confirmation that both the accounting officer and chief financial officer (CFO) should be employees, and a requirement for ESFA approval if, exceptionally, they are not [1.26 and 1.36]. Also encouraging larger trusts to consider relevant accountancy qualifications for their CFO, and for all CFOs to maintain professional development [1.37 and 1.38].
* **General controls and transparency**: Updated clarifications including maintenance of a fixed asset register [2.7], termly review of pupil number projections [2.12], use of integrated curriculum and financial planning [2.13], avoidance of overdrafts [2.24], publication of information about high pay [2.32] and whistleblowing [2.44], confirmation that the trust’s funds must not be used to purchase alcohol [2.35], board and committee responsibilities for risk management [2.38, and 3.6 to 3.8] and completion of the School resource management self-assessment tool [6.8].
* **Internal scrutiny**: Updated text including clarification that internal scrutiny covers both financial and non-financial controls [3.1], removal of the option for internal audit to be performed by the external auditor [3.17 and 3.20] and confirmation that trusts can use additional individuals or organisations to support internal scrutiny where specialist nonfinancial knowledge is required [3.18 and 3.23].
* **Annual accounts:** More on the audit and risk committee’s role in relation to external audit [4.17].