



FRMAT SEND Information Report: COVID 19 addendum

September 2020

Context

In March, when the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic was increasing, the Government asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, with the exception of children identified as vulnerable and children whose parents were critical to the COVID-19 response. 'Vulnerable children' included those supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs (including those on child in need and child protection plans), 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. No parent was penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school during that time.

From June, primary schools were encouraged to welcome some children back, focusing on specific year groups being education in small 'bubbles'. School remained open to vulnerable children and children whose parents were critical to the COVID-19 response during this time. During this period, attendance at school was not compulsory and no parent was penalised or sanctioned if they chose to keep their child at home (off school) during that time.

From September 2020, the Government expectations changed. **All children are now expected to be in school.**

This addendum to FRMAT's SEND Information Report contains details of our individual arrangements and changes to our usual mode of working due to opening with COVID-19 Risk Assessment measures in place:

- Vulnerable children including those previously shielding
- Safeguarding, attendance and monitoring of wellbeing
- Arrangements for consulting parents of, and young people with, SEND
- Arrangements for assessing and reviewing children's progress
- Arrangements for supporting children in moving between phases of education
- Transition periods within school
- The approach to teaching children with SEND
- Support for emotional and social development
- Working alongside other professionals

Please note: This annex should be read in tandem with the FRMAT Safeguarding Policy.

PURPOSE

This is an Annex to the SEND Information Report, setting out the arrangements in place to support our children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities whilst the school operates within its COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

Date Written	8 th November 2020
Written By	H Best, C Peats and E Bloomer

Next Review	As required
Summary of changes	New addendum published for COVID-19 crisis

1. Vulnerable children

From September 2020, the Government expects the majority of pupils to return to school. This includes all children previously identified as ‘vulnerable’ and those who were clinically vulnerable and shielding.

Shielding advice for clinically vulnerable children and adults was paused nationally on 1st August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who remain on the shielded patient list are expected to return to school, as are those who have family members who were shielding.

Children with an EHC plan are also expected to attend school and our focus is on working with the Local Authority, Health and Social Care partners to restore full provision for all children with an EHC plan within the safety measures outlined in the school’s ‘Risk assessment of re-opening with COVID-19 Measures.’

The academies continue to work with the Local Authority to contribute to EHC needs assessments and annual reviews of EHC plans and is aware that temporary changes to the law on the timescales for EHC needs assessments and plans expire on 25 September 2020.

2. Safeguarding, attendance and remote learning

Our academies continue in their commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their children whilst opening with COVID-19 measures.

They continue to ensure a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Principals work alongside the SENCo to ensure that appropriate staff, facilities and provision are available to secure a safe, appropriate and positive school experience for all children.

We will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

From September 2020, the Government expectations changed. **All children are now expected to be in school.** The usual rules on school attendance apply including:

- parents’ duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school, where the child is a registered pupil and when the child is of compulsory school age
- schools’ responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities’ codes of conduct.¹

Where a child is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, the school will immediately provide them access to remote education.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#attendance>

Where children are not able to attend school as parents and carers are following clinical or public health advice, for example, self-isolation or family isolation, absence will not be penalised.

The school will not provide remote education for children whose absence is unauthorised, for example if a child's parents decides their child will not return to school due to concerns about COVID-19 but the child or family are not clinically shielding and have not received clinical or public health advice to keep their child at home.

We are aware that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, they are encouraged to discuss their concerns at the earliest opportunity with the school. We will provide concerned parents with details of the measures being put in place to reduce the risk in school. Where necessary, a personalised approach has been agreed between school and parents to support a child's gradual reintegration into school i.e. a Temporary Reduced Timetable. These are shared with the Local Authority as required.

Risk Assessments were reviewed to take into account the proactive and reactive support strategies possible within school whilst working within the restrictions and limitations of the 'Re-opening with COVID-19 Measures' risk assessment. Parents continue to be able to contact key members of staff (the Principal / SENDCO / class teacher and members of the pastoral team) by email or telephone as required.

3. Pupil Wellbeing and Support

Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation.

We recognise that some children may need support to re-adjust to school, others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return, a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school.

In preparation for school re-opening following the COVID-19 closures, all Trust staff participated in staff training and CPD to further develop their understanding of effective support for children who may find returning to school difficult. This included the development of Zones of Regulation sessions, making effective use of Boxhall Profiles and sharing ideas for class activities that may help pupils to reconnect with each other and with school.

We know that children need to feel safe and happy at school in order to make progress in their lessons and to fulfil their potential. However Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and other traumatic events interrupt emotional development and can lead to lifelong mental and physical health issues without the appropriate support.

As always, the school will draw on external support where necessary and possible, for example referring to CAMHS or working with parents to complete an 'Early Help Assessment' where necessary.

We will signpost parents to other professionals who may be able to support them and their children at this time. The school will also share parent and child-friendly leaflets with links to mental health and wellbeing support strategies and agencies.

5. Arrangements for children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

Working in partnership with children with SEND and their parents continues to be central to our policies and practice.

We have ensured that appropriate support is made available for pupils with SEND, through a strong 'universal offer' of a coherently planned and sequenced curriculum and a strong, consistent pedagogical approach (see Education Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy and Curriculum Policy).

Children are being taught in class 'bubbles' of up to 30 pupils. Children must stay in their 'bubble' at all times. The class 'bubble' has a designated classroom and outdoor space. Time in communal areas such as corridors, sports halls and dining halls is minimised. SEN interventions and support can only take place in spaces designated specifically for the class 'bubble' of which the child/ren are part. In other words, interventions that would usually involve children from several classes cannot be run whilst the school is operating with COVID-19 opening measures in place.

Adults supporting children may only work directly with pupils in two bubbles per day. This is to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. This means that Teaching Assistants and the SENCO cannot run interventions in several different classes during the same day.

Deployment of adults within the school to facilitate school opening with COVID-19 measures has involved careful consideration and planning to support children with SEND i.e. the school is satisfied that adults supporting individual children with SEND have the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out their role. Where a child has an EHC plan, they continue to receive the statutory hours of support specified in their EHC plan.

Where a child's individual needs requires regular movement breaks or a 'change of face' of staff these can only be provided within the safety measures set out in the school's 'Re-opening with COVID-19 Measures' risk assessment.

In a small number of cases, the school's 'Re-opening with COVID-19 Measures' risk assessment will mean that it is temporarily impossible to deliver an intervention specified in Section F of a child's EHC plan, for example a provision that requires access to the Sports Hall such as Sensory Circuits; collaborative sensory play involving sand, water or playdough; a 'buddy' programme involving peers from others 'bubbles' or year groups. Where this is the case, the SENCO and Class Teacher will discuss this with parents, take advice from external professionals and consult with the Local Authority SEN Officer. In most cases, it should be possible to find alternative ways to enable a child to achieve the same outcome – even if the provision supporting them to achieve the outcome looks a little different.

The school website contains the contact details for the SENCO, so that, should parents of children with SEND need to contact a member of school staff for additional support or guidance, they can do so.

Where statutory processes relating to SEND are in action, the school will continue to maintain communication with parents of, and children with, SEND so that their views are actively sought, considered and promoted.

6. Arrangements for assessing and reviewing progress of children with SEND

Where children's EHC plans are due for review, the school will discuss arrangements with parents, children, the Local Authority and professionals involved in the plan to decide whether arrangements for a 'remote review' should be made. The SENCO will make the necessary arrangements following this decision.

7. Arrangements for supporting children in moving between phases of education

For children due to move between phases of education at the start of this academic year, we will continue to make contact with the new settings to share necessary information to make children's transitions as smooth as possible. Where it has not already been possible to do so, the SENCO will make contact with SENCOs in the new settings to share information on SEND needs.

As a school we recognise that transition may be a particular concern for parents of children of SEND, and communication remains open for parents to contact key school staff to discuss this.

Our approach to supporting children with transition will continue to be reviewed in line with all available DfE and government guidance.

8. Transitions within school

For children transferring between classes the SENCo will continue to inform the new class teacher of the pupil's needs using electronic folders and meetings where appropriate. Additional transition work will be used where necessary to relieve any worries and doubt. New class social stories can be sent home to support with the changes where possible.

Any consultations that the school receives during this time will be responded to within the designated timescales unless illness prevents this.

9. Working alongside other professionals

We will continue to maintain contact with other professionals during this period of opening with COVID-19 measures. This will particularly include liaison with the Therapists and the Educational Psychology Service within the Local Authority. This service will be sharing resources which may be of use to parents and professionals during this time, and we will be adding links to these to our school website.

The SENCo holds contact details for external professionals already working with children with SEND including health and social care staff and will maintain both planned contacts and referrals of arising need. Contact details for the SENCo and key school staff are available via the school website should professionals need to make contact.

We will signpost parents to appropriate external professionals as needed and will continue to fulfil authorised requests for information for assessment or review purposes.

Review

This addendum to the information report will be reviewed in light of new government guidance as and when it is published.