

Thursday 5th November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

RE: Operational Plan – Guidance Update

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. I am writing to update parents/carers regarding the government's guidance published since lockdown began at midnight on Wednesday 4th November.

Attendance

I do appreciate that with the country back in lockdown until the 2nd December and schools remaining open, there is a degree of anxiety in communities about this decision and the potential risk of infection transmission.

Here at Oak we have been well prepared for some time now, and, thanks to your support and the positive behaviour of our students in following our operational plan, we have managed to prevent infection transmission through our process of risk management.

Although no organisation can truly remove the risk entirely, I am confident that if we continue to follow our plan, remain in our bubbles and also ensure social distancing features outside of Oak as well, then we really are doing all we can to keep each other safe.

The government has published guidance that states the best place at this time for children and young people is to be in education:

"Being at school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time spent out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education, and children's future ability to learn. It continues to be our aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time."

Furthermore, the government has clarified guidance for children that are either extremely clinically vulnerable or clinically vulnerable:

"More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice."

- *Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place.*
- *Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education.*
- *Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice.*

Oak Academy

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- *Children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance."*

This guidance does mean that it's very much 'business as usual' and it has been great to see this response in action with good levels of attendance this week as the new term has started.

For a very small number of students where we expect a medical shielding letter to be issued, we will work with families to discuss support regarding a remote learning curriculum through MS Teams and our existing platform of online resources.

I recognise and respect that some families may feel conflicted about following the guidance and wanting to be assured that their children are safe, particularly if their child or another member of the household is extremely vulnerable, and I would like to remind all families of our core principle in determining attendance at this time:

Students must not attend if they are displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.

The symptoms are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

We remain unable to give medical advice, but do recognise that parents are looking for reassurance that they are doing the right thing. To help, you might find the following link useful: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

It will take you to an NHS webpage where a short online survey around your (or your child's) symptoms will determine the required course of action and signpost you to these next steps.

Do please contact us in the usual way if you need to. Remember also that reporting absence must be done using our dedicated absence line by calling 01202 242300.

Visitors to Oak Academy

Since September we have restricted the number of visitors to Oak Academy and made changes to our Reception area to limit access to one family / visitor at a time.

Following the latest guidance, these will continue and be further enhanced such that visits will now only take place if absolutely necessary. This may include meetings re: safeguarding which still need to happen or where external agencies have pre-booked meetings with students.

For parents wanting to contact staff, email or telephone remains the best option at this time. Face-to-face meetings at Oak can still be arranged in exceptional circumstances, so long as they are socially distanced, and take place after school. We have set aside two dedicated meeting areas which are kept secure and cleaned between uses.

This does mean that parents and visitors are unable to arrive unannounced to the Academy and should contact us in advance to request an appointment should this be necessary.

After School Clubs and Activities

We are currently reviewing our after school provision, clubs and activities during this lockdown period. It is important that Year 11 students in particular still have access to ongoing intervention and revision at the end of the academy day and we intend this to continue unaffected because the students are working in an operational bubble.

Similarly, where after school sport is offered to specific year group bubbles from a health and well-being perspective, we intend to continue this offer also.

All other activities are under review and may be paused at this time.

Face Coverings

Updated guidance has been published regarding face coverings:

"In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained."

For Oak, all staff and students will be required to wear a face covering when indoors and not sat working in lessons. At these times they can be removed. Face coverings must be worn when walking to the canteen, but can also be removed once a student has sat down to eat. It is best practice to wear a covering as you arrive and leave the site, staff and students will be asked to do so at the main gate.

Face coverings must be plain or a simple pattern in design. They can be any colour and ideally the reusable cloth style coverings as these are more environmentally friendly. If the face covering has any large logos, pictures or is considered inappropriate for school by the Senior Leadership Team, the face covering will have to be removed and we will provide a new surgical style mask as a temporary replacement. **Scarfs, Snoods, Buffs and Bandanas are not permitted to be worn as face coverings.**

In line with national guidance, pupils travelling to and from school on either public or school specific transport/taxis must always wear a face mask.

These changes will be in place from Monday 9th November and families should ensure all children arrive at Oak with an appropriate face covering from this time onward.

All Oak staff are here to support you. You can contact me directly should you have any questions about our operational plan, or do please continue to contact tutors and teachers as you have done so since this academic year began.

As ever, thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Burgas
Principal