



**Osborne**  
Co-operative Academy Trust

Self-help  
Self-responsibility  
Equity  
Equality  
Democracy  
Solidarity

## **Pandemic Incidents Policy**

**First approved by Trust Board: July 2020**

**Review Frequency: Biennial**

**Date of last review: July 2020**

**Date of next review: July 2022**

## Version Control

Author	Date Created	Version	Notes
L. Coates	June 2020	1.0	Draft Approved by Trust Board 21/7/2020
L. Coates	September 2020	2.0	Page 4 - updated to include lettings Appendix 1 updated Appendix 2 amended

## Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust

Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust (MAT) incorporated around the principles and values of the international co-operative movement. These are Equality, Equity, Democracy, Self-help, Self-Responsibility and Solidarity, along with the ethical values of openness, honesty, social responsibility and caring for others. These values and principles underpin all our actions.

### Statement of Intent

Organisations that prepare for emergencies are more likely to withstand or recover successfully from these disruptions than those who do not. Therefore, the Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust has developed contingency plans, policies and protocols which will be part of our general business continuity planning. Our procedures aim to ensure that Trust schools will be able to operate effectively in a pandemic event while protecting, as far as is reasonably possible, their staff and pupils.

### Aims and Objectives

- To address potential workforce issues that may arise to ensure adequate service levels are maintained during a pandemic.
- To have systems in place that assess the risk of, and prevent, detect and control, the risk of infection during a pandemic.
- To ensure sufficient resources are available to secure effective prevention and control of infection.
- To audit all policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose during a pandemic and actions are being implemented and followed by all staff.
- To carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment with respect to prevention and control of infection.
- To ensure an appropriate standard of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained throughout the premises and that the premises are maintained in good physical repair and condition.

### Explanation of terms and definitions

**Pandemic** – an epidemic occurring over a whole country, worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people.

**PHE** - Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. To provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

**IMT** - Incident Management Team, which consists of senior Trust staff whose focus will be to provide support and direction during the pandemic response and to determine an appropriate plan for a recovery phase after the pandemic

### Introduction

The CEO, in conjunction with the Chair of the Trust, can invoke the policy at any stage after a pandemic incident notice is announced. This will only be invoked during a nationally recognised level 4 incident declaration via Public Health England or locally through the Health Protection Team and will override existing policies. It is expected that groups responsible for the oversight of policies work flexibly to enable swift change and update as necessary to respond to the pandemic incident in a timely manner.

This policy sets out specific arrangements which will be involved for the duration of a pandemic incident and until the CEO makes the decision to stand the policy down. This policy is designed to provide a framework for the Trust schools to enable them to continue an education service and will be used in conjunction with the Trust Incident Management Plan, Trust Business Continuity Policy and the individual School Emergency Management Plans.

A pandemic incident could present a major challenge to the Trust schools through high demand on remote learning as well as adapting school based services to meet the changing needs of the community.

It aims to provide guidance on management of HR and Finance procedures to ensure mechanisms are in place in order to maintain services whilst at the same time supporting the needs to staff. The Trust has experience of dealing with a range of emergencies, however, a pandemic is likely to be more sustained and affect the whole Trust. The demand for rapid change in approach to education and the levels of staff absence and stress on staff may be unprecedented.

## **Organisation of the Trust during a Pandemic**

### **Arrangements**

#### Trust Procedures

The Incident Management Team (IMT) will:

- Convene within 24 hours of the announcement of a Pandemic or local/national lockdown. Using the PHE, WHO and DfE guidance, in addition to any other relevant agencies, they will invoke the Trust Incident Management plan and the Pandemic Policy.
- Implement the Command and Control structure.
- Provide clear direction to the Headteachers' on risk assessments and the shared plan for our Trust.
- Identify any single person dependencies and other vital roles critical to the business activities that will need to be secured during the pandemic such as finance and HR.
- Organise a Trust Heads meetings to share expertise and agree a shared approach to the delivery of our educational services.
- Keep a central stock of PPE to enable swift distribution if required.

If the pandemic is announced during a school holiday all members of the IMT will be informed and available members will meet. The IMT will quickly establish what the method of transmission is, who is affected and will act accordingly.

#### Local Procedures

The schools will follow the published guidance provided by PHE and the DfE in regards to local outbreaks and local lockdowns. Potential practices include suspending affected classes or year groups, or changing the school organisation structure to reduce pupil mixing and therefore reduce the likelihood of any virus spreading. Depending upon the nature of the Pandemic and how it is transmitted actions taken could include:

- Ongoing and regular updates for parents/carers
- Closing of playgrounds
- Cancelling non-essential activities and meetings, including lettings
- Keeping pupils in constant class groups or classrooms
- Reducing the number in each class
- Increasing spacing between pupils in classes
- Shortening the school week
- Staggering school start and lunch or break times across year groups or classes
- Establish online learning for children from home and, where possible, allocate IT kit for vulnerable children
- Ensure all staff laptops are equipped to work from home and establish safe working criteria for 'live lessons', Existing office equipment limited to screens, keyboards, mice and chairs may be taken home with agreement from Headteacher to support with workstation setup.
- Ensuring adequate staffing for additional groups
- Reducing adult interactions by limiting communications to email or telephone for parent/carers
- Providing PPE as required (Trust will maintain a small stock of PPE for emergencies)
- Prioritising cleaning, ensuring particular attention to any high use areas such as toilets, door handles, support handrails, taps and washbasins.
- Providing and use of antibacterial hand wash and sanitiser. (Increased hand hygiene expectations will be made clear based on PHE guidance)
- Increase of signage and guidance regarding increased hand hygiene

Where required the schools will ensure notifiable outbreaks (two or more cases within fourteen days) are reported to the relevant authority i.e. HSE, following guidance from oneSource. Work closely with the Local Health Protection Teams seeking their guidance regarding any actions to be taken.

## **Cleaning**

It may be necessary to implement tiered cleaning depending on outbreak

### **General cleaning**

- Normal cleaning procedures should be maintained and increased where possible
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched regularly (desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, bannisters, books, toys etc.) more regularly using your standard cleaning products
- Make sure that you have proportionate supplies of soap, anti-bacterial gel, 70% alcohol and cleaning products
- Ensure all cleaning products are stored in a locked cupboard and anti-bac dispensers are kept out of direct sunlight
- Empty bins throughout the day
- Posters, leaflets and other materials care will be made available to all schools

### **Deep cleaning**

- Schools will follow the guidance issued by Public Health England to carry out deep cleans
- Schools will procure the services of a recommended specialist cleaning company
- Wear masks, aprons and gloves when cleaning, double-bagging all of the disposables and setting them aside securely (for 72 hours) before putting them into the general waste
- Cleaning staff will follow the guidance of PHE regarding the donning and doffing of PPE.
- If possible, the school may wish to use different rooms for the next 72 hours as an added precautionary measure

Whilst this summary is accurate at the time of writing, it may change for each pandemic, so the IMT will always refer to the detailed Public Health England cleaning procedures.

The Site Manager/Caretaker will be responsible for ensuring the cleaning throughout the pandemic is of the highest standard and is maintained at the agreed level as per guidance from PHE.

## **Staffing**

The Trust leave and absence policies will be reviewed as the status of the pandemic changes this includes the Trust policies on sickness absence policy, bereavement leave.

A pandemic is likely to affect our Trust staffing in the following ways:

- Increase in workload due to the change in the delivery of education
- Staff morale may be low
- Staff may themselves become infected, which is likely to lead to an unprecedented level of sickness absence during a pandemic
- Stress levels will be high because of pressure on staffing and concern for them, colleagues and loved ones.
- Staff with caring responsibilities may be adversely affected by local measures, such as closures to their own children's schools. As a result these staff may need to stay at home to care for dependent children, and in other cases staff may be caring for partners or other dependants, such as older relatives.

All staff should continue to fulfil their employment contracts as much as is reasonably possible, HR will meet with individuals to discuss the support that could potentially be offered to enable staff to return to work.

Staff may be required to observe several measures to keep the risk of infection to an absolute minimum. Whilst advice will be published at the time in question to ensure it is specific to the pandemic, it is likely that rules will include:

- Social distancing at work between participants in urgent, essential meetings and staff communal spaces, avoiding unnecessary travel, cancellation of face to face meetings and working remotely
- Increase levels of hygiene management, including keeping hands clean and coughing and sneezing into tissues which are immediately disposed of
- A requirement for employees to adhere to government guidance of management of symptoms and self-isolation where recommended
- Completing any additional training relevant to the pandemic
- Adapting to a new working pattern as required to enable the whole Trust to continue with the effective delivery of education

### Vulnerable groups

The Trust will be guided by the government guidance in relation to the definitions of clinically vulnerable and clinically, extremely vulnerable (shielded group) and will make reasonable adjustments once a risk assessment has taken place.

- The Trust Incident Management Team will have access to information regarding all key vulnerable groups across the trust schools. This should be maintained locally and shared with the IMT to be stored on the Trust's onedrive Business Continuity Group on a termly basis.
- Appropriate action for staff considered at high risk due to personal medical grounds or caring responsibilities will be taken into account on a case by case basis at a local level with the support of Trust HR.
- Changes to working practices could be made to minimise risk of infection. Appropriate support will also be provided to staff with roles that place them at risk with these groups of staff identified by the IMT for priority access to PPE and other resource in order to limit the risk of harm
- There may be further risks identified within key vulnerable groups and these will be addressed swiftly in the case of a pandemic and individual risk assessments completed at a local level

### Staff Well-being and Mental Health

The Trust recognises the importance of the work force maintaining positive mental health and will ensure the following:

- Staff will continue to have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) **08000856148**
- Staff will be supported in as many ways as possible in order to allow them to continue working either in schools or remotely
- The Trust will also consider other appropriate specialist support as needs arise
- Regular contact will be maintained for staff working remotely, including TEAMS staff meetings and CPD
- Communications will be sent to all staff via email to ensure regular updates
- Mental Health SIG representative in each school will maintain regular contact with their school colleagues, including tips and signposting to services
- Access to HR where required

Notably, regardless of official school closure, staff absenteeism (whether due to illness or precautionary) can be very high during epidemics. Staff absenteeism can lead to forced local school closures, the IMT will consider creating 'Hubs' across Trust Schools to enable education to continue. Where staff are nervous about attending work, every attempt will be made to try and encourage them to attend by giving them all available information about pandemic and the risk of infection.

### Redeployment

In line with the Trust Incident Management Plan, functions will need to be defined business critical or non-business critical as essential or non-essential.

In the event of a pandemic, some functions may cease for a period of time. This will release staff that can then be redeployed into different critical roles; this may include for example administrative and managerial staff as well as educators whilst this policy is invoked. Staff may be required to work and support across other schools within the Trust, where the need arises to ensure that adequate service levels are maintained.

- Staff will not be expected to undertake roles for which they are not competent, however in line with our Cooperative Values it is hoped that staff will respond positively by acquiring additional skills when required, through the CPD offered
- Consideration will be given where possible to relevant skills, experience and personal circumstances
- During the pandemic, staff could be assigned to different roles, functions or a change of work location
- Adequate necessary training and induction will be provided to staff to equip them for the role they are redeployed to
- In the event of a change in work location, travelling costs will be reimbursed as per Trust policy. Pay and conditions will be unaffected by this arrangement. Data on skills, experience and qualifications should be maintained locally and shared with the IMT to be stored on the Trust's onedrive Business Continuity Group

### Communication

Amendments or changes to working practices or ratified policies may be required during the pandemic as the service needs change. All communications will be through the Incident Management Team – IMT - (as defined by the Trust Incident Management Plan).

There is likely to be concern among staff about the potential risks of a pandemic. The Trust will develop appropriate communication plans to address staff concerns. Staff will be briefed about the key facts and be kept regularly updated by the elected Communications Member of the IMT via email and bulletins.

Briefing sessions on the pandemic incident will also be held for all staff if appropriate. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring they share/cascade relevant information to their teams.

### Communication with External Partners

Any communication with external partners will be via the Incident Management Team.

### Pay Arrangements

In the event that the payroll function struggles to recover the necessary data, or becomes critically impacted by the disruption, mitigations will be enacted to ensure pay is corrected as quickly as possible. This assumes there would be necessary IT kit made available urgently to enable this. In the event that the payroll function was unable to undertake critical process, assistance would be requested from Essex Payroll.

### Working Time Regulations and Excessive Hours

It is difficult to predict with any certainty the full extent of the impact the pandemic will have on the Trust staffing levels. The Trust has robust plans in place to respond to critical impacts on service if and when it occurs. Adherence with the hours' restrictions of the Working Time Regulations will be maintained as fully as possible; however, the Trust may be required by Government to request that schools are opened during the normal school holiday times.

Where staff are working remotely the Trust will request that they carry out a DSE self-assessment to ensure a suitable and safe working environment. Staff are expected to self-regulate their working pattern during remote working and should take regular breaks in line with the safer working regulations.

### Disruption to Travel Infrastructure

If there is disruption to the transport system, staff may encounter difficulties in getting to work. In order to try and facilitate attendance where at all possible, the following measures will be put in place:

- Redeployment
- Working from a different site within the Trust
- Remote working – Remote working will not always be practicable for whole staff teams; however, this will be reviewed on an individual basis as well as considering the needs of the schools and business

### Absence Reporting Sickness

- Absence reporting will continue to follow the Trust’s sickness absence policy
- Any staff having a confirmed pandemic diagnosis should follow national guidelines and inform their line manager and agree ongoing reporting procedures
- Staff returning to work after illness relating to the pandemic or who have returned from a pandemic area will be required to telephone prior to returning to work. The latest national guidance available will be utilised at that time

### Response to Local Lockdown

The trust schools will continue to follow the guidance provided by PHE and the DfE with regards to the delivery of education. The IMT will meet to evaluate the impact of the local lockdown on staffing and resources and create hubs where required to maintain the educational service.

The remote learning will be re-established with immediate effect to enable learners to continue with their education.

The risk assessments in each school will be reviewed and amended according to the new guidance, these will then be uploaded to EVERY for all staff to read.

### Management of School Building

It is important that arrangements remain in place to ensure that children and staff are in safe buildings during reduced occupancy arrangements.

Trust Schools must review their arrangements for all building-related systems but in particular:

- hot and cold water systems
- gas safety
- fire safety
- kitchen equipment
- security including access control and intruder alarm systems
- ventilation

Staff must be familiar with the government guidance and work with their responsible bodies to ensure that statutory health and safety arrangements are in place.

**There may be increased risks related to safety concerns around water hygiene, building and occupancy safety, as well as, building hygiene.**

Schools must contact their contractors and suppliers to check on any special interim arrangements in place due to the pandemic.

The site manager will liaise with the Headteacher on all premises related issues. The Every system used for compliance in all Trust schools will be maintained to ensure that there is a shared knowledge of suppliers and contractors. In cases of staff illness, cover arrangements will be put in place as soon as possible.

### **Cold water systems**

This includes:

- tanks

- sinks
- basins
- showers
- drinking water outlets (taps and water fountains)

**Do not drain down systems.**

Increase the frequency of outlet flushing and temperature monitoring to maintain water quality within the entire system.

If required, consider additional water quality testing at water outlets (closest and further from the main water source) and drinking water outlets that remain in use.

**Domestic hot water services**

This includes:

- calorifiers
- direct-fired water heaters
- sinks
- basins
- showers

**Do not drain down systems.** Schools should continue hot water generation servicing in line with manufacturers’ criteria. Water temperatures must be kept within limits recommended for the control of legionella bacteria in water systems. For reference, use the [Approved Code of Practice](#) and [HSG 274](#).

Regularly check hot water generation for functionality and if required, temperature recording.

If the hot water system has been left operational the hot water should be circulating as normal and regular checks, in line with guidance, should be carried out.

**Gas safety**

- Do not isolate gas supplies to boilers and hot water generation.
- To avoid the risk of leaks and dangerous build-up of gases, isolate gas supplies where not in use, for example, in science labs and prep rooms, design and food technology classrooms, and school kitchens. Otherwise, gas services should remain in normal operation.
- Continue planned gas safety checks including gas detection and/or interlocking.

**Fire safety**

Schools must review and if necessary, update their fire management plans and ensure any changes to fire escape routes are clearly identified and communicated.

During the reduced occupancy period schools must:

- carry out weekly checks of alarms systems, call points and emergency lighting
- carry out regular hazard spotting to identify escape route obstructions
- check that all fire doors are operational

**Fire drills should continue to be held as normal.**

**Kitchen equipment**

- Equipment that holds water – for example, dishwashers, combination ovens – should be run through at least a full cleaning cycle per week. This is to remove scale build-up and standing water build-up to prevent possible bacteria growth.

## Security

- All areas of the school should be kept secure.
- Access to certain closed areas should only be possible by relevant staff – for example, science laboratories, chemical stores and IT rooms. Check that access control and lockdown systems are operational.

## Ventilation

- All systems to remain energised in normal operating mode.
- Where mechanical ventilation is present, recirculatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If mechanical ventilation systems cannot be adjusted to full fresh air these **should be switched off**.
- Where possible, occupied room windows should be open.
- Ventilation to chemical stores should remain operational.

## Other points to consider

Core building-related electrical systems should remain in use/energised in normal operating mode, this includes:

- internal and external lighting
- small power
- CCTV
- access control and alarm systems (fire, intruder, panic and accessible toilets)

For drainage systems, check traps have not dried out and ensure water seals are in place to prevent smells within the building, for example, hygiene rooms, sports hall showers.

Schools must update their keyholder information. Intruder alarm / lift / fire alarm companies often have remote monitoring stations (response centres) – follow advice from these providers.

Continue with:

- all regular cleaning
- enhanced disinfection appropriate for the coronavirus outbreak
- maintenance
- testing and statutory compliance activities

Continue carrying out thorough examinations and testing of lifting and pressure equipment during a pandemic.

## Preparing School Buildings for the wider opening

All staff must be familiar with government guidance regarding the pandemic. All risk assessments must be reviewed and submitted to central Trust and oneSource. Schools must review their fire plan and any policies that were amended during the pandemic.

## All other systems

Recommission all systems before re-opening, as would normally be done after a long holiday period.

This includes:

- gas
- heating
- water supply
- mechanical and electrical systems
- catering equipment

## Further information

More detailed information on maintenance arrangements can be found in [good estate management for schools](#), in the section on [maintenance checks and testing](#).

### After the Pandemic

The Trust will determine an appropriate plan for a recovery phase after the pandemic, the IMT will reflect on the response taken by the Trust and adjust the policy and plan where required. A recovery curriculum will be decided at a local school level.

### Policy

The effects of a pandemic on Trust performance could be significant and consequently there will be a time when existing working arrangements will be insufficient and new arrangements covering the following policies could need to be invoked. It may also be necessary to suspend any work that is not legally required. It is anticipated that disciplinary investigations and hearings will be suspended during the pandemic. Each case will need to be reviewed on its own merits with a decision to suspend action based on the priority and impact on individuals. However, exclusion will be retained in the event of serious disciplinary events.

### Related to other policies:

- Fire Evacuation Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Infection, prevention and control Policy
- Remote Learning/Working Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Sickness Management Policy

## Appendix 1

Taken from Government guidance published on 7/08/2020

### Management of local infections of an infectious disease

- If a pupil displays symptoms\* at school, isolate from others in a room with a closed door and preferably with an open window. If appropriate, staff member uses PPE if unable to maintain a 2metre distance. If it is an emergency dial 999
- Inform parent/guardian and send home (with test kit if risk the pupil/family will be unable to access this)
- Staff member/s who attended unwell pupil, ensure/s good hand hygiene consisting of hand washing for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Area around the possibly infected pupil is to be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after they have left
- The school will maintain contact with the parent/carer until the child returns to school
- Test result comes back positive, follow government guidance for self-isolation – ensure the parent/carer is aware of most up to date guidance on [NHS testing and tracing website](#)
- There is no need to produce evidence of a negative test and pupil should return to school.
- For a positive test, the Headteacher contacts the Local Health Protection team for advice. Equally the Local Health Protection team may contact the school if they are aware of an individual who has tested positive attending the school
- The Health Protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period they were infectious and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.
- Individual information will not be shared unless it is to protect others.
- The [guidance for full opening of schools](#) (updated 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020), includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops Covid19 symptoms whilst at school. This guidance has been developed with advice from PHE and should be followed to minimise the risk of Covid transmission.
- If the test is positive, they should inform their setting immediately and must isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of symptoms (refer to the PHE/NHS111 website for current advice) Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the person first had symptoms

\*A list of current recognised symptoms is available on NHS111 website, Public Health England or from gov.uk website

\*\*Definition of close contact (DoE 2020):

Direct close contact – face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation or unprotected skin to skin contact

Proximity contact – extended close contact (within 1-2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual

Travelling in a car – travelling with an infected person in a small vehicle

## Appendix 2

Taken from Government guidance published on 2.7.20

### Management of a local outbreak

Defined as 2 or more confirmed cases in 14 days or an increasing sickness absence with suspected infectious disease

- Continue to work with the Local Health Protection Team for advice if additional action required
- [Government guidance](#) regarding self-isolation will be followed
- Whole school closing will not be considered unless directly advised to by a local Health Protection Team
- At this point, the Headteacher will inform the most senior, available individual within the Trust (CEO/COO/Chair/Vice Chair) and the Incident Management Plan may be invoked (as per the policy).
- In consultation with the local Public Health Team, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive.
- Testing will focus initially on the person's class, followed by their year group, then the whole school if necessary, in line with routine public health outbreak control practice.