

COVID-19: Phased Return to School Policy

Introduction

At Bedford Modern School we are implementing a phased return to school from 01 June 2020 until such time as all staff and students are safely back and we are operating in a fully open, safe and secure environment with no COVID-19 related restrictions in place.

This may take a number of months so a phased return will require patience, resilience and considerable effort to ensure the school environment is safe, at all times, during this transition. We recognise that:

- Our core obligation is to ensure 'so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of employees and the safety of non-employees'.
- We hold the prime responsibility for ensuring the safety, first and foremost, of our students, but also and as importantly of:
 - Staff and volunteers
 - Parents and guardians
 - Guests and visitors
 - Contractors and delivery services.

Ultimately, everyone needs to know that Bedford Modern School is a safe environment in which to operate and learn.

This Phased Return to School Policy is based on the following school documents:

- General School Risk Assessment.
- Specific Risk Assessments for Departments, Year Groups, Classes and Activities.
- Analysis and Planning Guidance.

Planning the phased return and transition to school

Good planning and management are fundamental to the success of the phased return. Effective planning and consultation with all stakeholders including Harpur Trust staff, insurers, governors, staff, parents, students and contractors is essential. The level of detail is enormous and involves all staff in ensuring this policy is implemented and complies with the strict rules set out in the school's risk assessments and plan.

The Bedford Modern School Leadership Team meet regularly to review COVID-19 matters and agree plans and actions as required. The Leadership Team consists of:

- Headmaster
- Senior Deputy Head
- Deputy Head Academic
- Deputy Head Pastoral
- Head of Junior School
- Head of Sixth Form
- Director of External Relations
- Director of Operations (and Clerk to the Governors).

Members from the School Management Team and personnel from the Nurses, Estates and Catering departments supplement the Leadership Team as necessary.

Phased return to school

Whilst recognising the safety of children and staff is of the utmost priority, current Government advice recommends that from 01 June 2020 the return to school should include:

- Year 6 students, alongside priority groups.
- Some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of Year 10 and Year 12 students who are due to take key exams next year.

The Government is keen for all students to return to school as soon as the scientific advice allows, recognising that this will then allow more families to return to work. We will continue to monitor and act on Government guidance.

Risk assessments

The school is required to carry out a risk assessment directly addressing hazards associated with COVID-19 and operating safely. This has been completed and as Bedford Modern School has more than 50 employees, the COVID-19 Risk Assessment has been published on the school website. This risk assessment will be updated as and when guidance changes or before additional year groups return to BMS.

Assessing COVID-19 is particularly complex as the outcome of the many and varied risk assessments for one group within school such as departments, year groups, classes and activities will have an impact on others such as teaching staff, support staff, visitors and contractors and students of other age groups. It is, therefore, key that the risk assessment ensures risks are identified and properly mitigated across the whole school.

Note that the school is responsible for:

- Reviewing and updating where necessary the safeguarding policy, code of conduct and medical policies and procedures so that staff and students feel safe.
- Regularly accessing, assessing, recording, communicating and applying Government advice.
- Regularly reviewing changes with governors and communicating to staff, students and parents.
- Consulting with Harpur Trust staff before the school re-opens and/or plans are amended.
- Revising the policy for those wearing (or not) PPE.
- Updating emergency procedures, fire drills and assembly points.
- Re-assessing that access to school is controlled effectively.
- Having contingency plans in place for the transition to full opening (or re-closing).

New school rules

The following additional school rules are now a requirement for all students:

- Social Distancing rules
- Hygiene rules (if not already enforced and supervised):
 - *Catch it, bin it, kill it.*
 - Wash hands for 20 seconds
 - Before arriving at school and immediately after arriving at home.
 - At every break.
 - After all visits to the toilet and before and after meals.
- Rules for breaks, lunch and hydration.
- Rules to minimise all contact and mixing outside class 'bubbles' during breaks.

Planning for incidents and emergencies

We recognise that plans need to be revised to respond effectively to health and safety incidents and other emergencies that might occur during the COVID-19 era. Where relevant, the Bedford Modern School Leadership Team have agreed the emergency procedures for:

- Fire.
- Accidents and injuries.
- Infection during school hours, their isolation and return-to-home procedures.
- Other emergency evacuation.
- Security.
- Severe weather that limits student's learning, exercising or playing outside.

Inclusion for people with a disability

We will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where possible to ensure that people with a disability (mobility, visual and hearing impairment, medical conditions and hidden disabilities) are protected in terms of hygiene solutions and emergencies.

During school

Once the documentation and plan for re-opening to additional year groups have been agreed emphasis inevitably focuses on the implementation, effective management and monitoring of staff, students and the environment. This will include:

- Ensuring communication channels and messaging are working and regularly reviewed and updated.
- Systems to communicate with parents and staff that have not returned to school for fear of infection are in place.
- Robust feedback and reply system is operational to ensure best practice and two-way communications for students, parents, staff and governors.

- Transit spaces (corridors), social zones (car parks, common rooms, playgrounds) are supervised for social distancing rules.
- Ensuring different age groups and class 'bubbles' are supervised throughout the length of the school day and exposure to other age groups is monitored and safe.
- Enforcing rules and procedures for hygiene standards for staff and students including regular breaks for washing hands and so on.
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures are clear – vehicle flow, in and out routes, parking, parents remaining in vehicles and social distancing outside gates and entrances.

This Return to School Policy is in addition to the Risk Assessment covering Operating BMS during the Coronavirus Pandemic, the School and Harpur Trust normal site-wide and departmental risk assessments and the School and Harpur Trust Policies.

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