

Covid 19 & Schools – First Aid Provision

In a school environment, under normal conditions, the school should conduct a needs assessment to identify what first aid provision they require (First Aid at Work Regulations). The regulations outline that as a school has many young people that may be prone to accidents, have medical needs, or to meet requirements for off-site visits first aiders are recommended. However, if the first-aid needs assessment indicates that a first-aider is unnecessary, the minimum requirement is to appoint a person to take charge of first-aid arrangements. The roles of this appointed person include looking after the first-aid equipment and facilities and calling the emergency services when required. They can also provide emergency cover, within their role and competence, where a first-aider is absent due to unforeseen circumstances (annual leave does not count).

The DFE has stated however that the requirements in the EYFS on paediatric first aid certification remain in place to ensure children are kept safe.

Paragraph 3.25 and Annex A of the EYFS set out the requirements, including that 'at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings.'

In terms of paediatric first aid under the current climate, the Resuscitation Council has released the following statement in relation to CPR and resuscitation: <https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-paediatrics/>. The key message is that if a school with early years provision doesn't have a paediatric trained first aider on site, the critical aim is to act quickly and seek medical assistance to prolong life. The statement also considers the risk of transmitting Covid-19 to be low if a young person is unconscious and rescue breaths have to be administered.

Under the current environment where schools are open to cater for children of a vulnerable background or whose parents are key workers. If the school is operating on a reduced basis where staff with first aid qualifications are not in attendance because they are self-isolating, working from home or another reason, then the school should look to complete a risk assessment based on the pupils and staff they are looking after to identify any particular need, such as medical provision (this needs to be agreed with the parents).

If first aid qualified staff are available and can attend, they still need to observe the current guidance surrounding social distancing, wearing PPE when administering first aid and maintaining hygiene. If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

This guidance isn't specific to first aid provision in schools under the current climate, so risk assessment and alternative methods have to be adopted under the circumstances. The only other guidance is if a school has a qualified first aider whose certificate is due to expire, a 3-month extension is granted beyond their date of expiry to account for the closure of first aid training by accredited providers.

Ratified by the Link Academy Trust Board of Trustees on 18.05.2020