

Monday 6th September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope this letter finds you well and that you have had a good summer break with your children.

Our summer improvement, enhancement and routine building works are all now complete, the schools are cleaned and ready to open and the teachers are preparing exciting learning activities for the new term. We are all very much looking forward to welcoming our pupils back and to meeting our new reception and nursery classes.

Below you will find information regarding our arrangements, planning and response to COVID19 for the start of term. You will have seen in the press that due to the high rates of infection across the South West at the moment, Cornwall and Devon have been moved to an Enhanced Response Area (ERA) by central government. This means that authorities across the South West have more flexibility to introduce public health measures if considered necessary.

This response will last for five weeks initially and will be reviewed after four.

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-news/health-wellbeing-and-social-care/cornwall-designated-enhanced-response-area-to-help-tackle-rise-in-covid-cases/>.

Our Aspire Health and Safety team have been busy this week consulting with and taking the most up-to-date advice from Public Health England, the Department for Education and the Cornwall Local Authority teams. All individual school risk assessments have been updated and signed off by the health and safety teams and a COVID Outbreak Management Plan is in place.

Our planning has been based on balancing the need for the children to have an enjoyable start to their school year with a necessity to reduce any further disruption to their education and to keep the children, families and our staff as safe as we can.

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Sandy Hill Academy, Sandy Hill, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 3AT

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Registered Office: Aspire Academy Trust, Unit 20, St Austell Business Park, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 4FD

Bubbles:

Children will no longer be grouped in 'bubbles.' They will however be grouped in their normal classes and we will endeavour to keep children within their class groupings whilst learning indoors. We will avoid classes mixing inside the buildings as much as possible.

Large indoor assemblies and gatherings will NOT take place for at least the first five weeks and children will stay in their classes.

If an individual school has an outbreak of confirmed COVID infections we may consider temporary re-introduction of bubbles if advised to do so by the South West Health Protection Team.

Break times and Lunch times:

Children will be able to play freely and with their friends whilst outside. There will be no bubbles and children will be able to mix with other classes.

During lunch the dining halls/rooms will run as normal. Windows and doors will be opened to ensure good ventilation. All children will wash their hands/use sanitiser before entering/leaving the dining hall.

Carbon Dioxide Monitors:

The government has announced that they will be providing monitors to schools to enable us to take readings from across the indoor spaces in our schools, providing reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, and helping balance the need for good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm. At this time procurement has not yet been finalised and we do not yet have a date for delivery. When we have more information on this we will let you know.

Cleaning:

Our cleaning contractors will continue to carry out high level cleaning regimes for the whole term. Additional cleaning during the day will take place for highly used areas and frequently touched areas/resources. Children will use their own equipment where possible.

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Covid Response Flowchart:

Please see Appendix 1 below for a chart of measures we will take should there be a rise in cases in any individual school.

Covid contact tracing and self-isolation:

From 19th July schools were no longer expected or able to undertake contact tracing. Schools will not be asking families to keep their children home to isolate nor asking any member of staff to isolate unless they have Covid symptoms. This is now undertaken completely by NHS Test and Trace.

As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case and/or their parents to identify close contacts. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. As parents or carers, you may be contacted to help with identifying close contacts.

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, NHS Test and Trace will inform affected individuals, children or their parents or carers that they have been in close contact with a positive case and advise them to take a PCR test.

Do not send your child to their school if:

- they are showing one or more [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#)
- they have had a positive test result

Pupils should only self-isolate if they have symptoms or if they get a positive PCR test.

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Curriculum and Wellbeing:

We are returning to our full and exciting curriculum plans and all subjects will once again be taught as normal. We understand there will be 'gaps' in learning and teachers will continue to plan, as they always have done, to meet the needs of all children.

We also understand that children have experienced a great deal of disruption and chaos in their learning and school life and many children have experienced personal traumas as well. Pastoral care and mental health and wellbeing of children is at the top of our agenda and our staff are skilled in recognising, supporting and helping children with social, emotional and physical wellbeing needs. There may also be a reduction in confidence and resilience levels as well as social anxieties for some children.

Please ensure you talk to your child's teacher about any specific concerns you have regarding your child/children's return to school. Email hello@sandyhill.org.uk or phone the office 01726 75858 and this can easily be arranged. Alternatively, you may simply wish to speak before the start of the school day, between 8:30 and 8:40 in the morning and we can do this also.

Drop off/pick up procedures:

The vast majority of Aspire schools will be continuing with the staggered start and finish times, and we politely ask that you continue to socially distance and wear a mask at the gates for the first five weeks.

Nursery and Reception classes have staggered sessions to start their school journey. These have all been communicated at the end of last term and will remain the same.

The main school will continue with the planned 8:30 – 8:40 drop off time with children going straight in to their own classroom on arrival at school. This worked well and gave a calm, settled start to the school day. We ask for your support with this, ensuring you arrive on time and no later than 8:40 as this can be extremely unsettling for individual children and cause whole class disruption, taking adults away from working with children – certainly, something none of us want.

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For the end of school day, the planned staggered time of 2:50 - 3:00 will start slightly earlier at 2:45 initially, still remaining in 2 groupings with surnames A-M in the first half and N-Z in the second half of this time slot. Please do arrive in the correct allotted time to avoid congestion. Your child will only be ready in their allotted time also to avoid congestion with pupils. At the start of term, as was the case last year, this dismissal **will take longer** as staff are getting used to new parent/ carer faces and names and so dismissal will be slower to ensure we continue to maintain the safety of all pupils whilst staff get to know all the family faces of new pupils in their class. We will monitor this dismissal in the first few days and review as needed in the first full week of school. We thank you for your patience and support with this, as well as welcoming any feedback.

Education and support for pupils at home:

Should your child/children need to isolate and stay at home but remain well, we will provide remote education that meets the same quality and quantity of education that pupils would receive in school.

The school will continue to provide food vouchers for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals while they are not attending school because of COVID-19 isolation guidelines.

Face Coverings:

Children are not required to wear a face covering at any time. We are requesting that staff, visitors and parents do wear a face covering in communal areas of the schools for the next five weeks. We politely ask parents to please continue to wear a mask if entering the school buildings.

Hygiene

Hand hygiene

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning will be a regular practice for all children and adults. Staff will continue to ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

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Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important and will be followed in our schools.

LFD testing:

All school staff will be asked to continue with twice weekly Lateral Flow Device testing.

Staffing:

Thank you all again for your endless patience and understanding during the last 18 months. We endeavour to ensure your children are taught by their familiar adults, but we do expect some disruption with staff shortages due to sickness and/or need to isolate (as many workplaces in Cornwall are experiencing at this time with cases rising)

Our fabulous staff in all our schools will always 'go the extra mile' to ensure that children are cared for by familiar adults whenever possible. We ask for your continued support should we need to cover your child's class short term with unfamiliar (but qualified and experienced) adults.

Uniform:

As we are returning to a full and normal curriculum all children will be expected to return in their full school uniforms, please and with their PE/Sport kits. Please ensure school shoes and trainers are plain, not brightly coloured and 'brand name' logo free.

We wish to ensure our uniforms are affordable and accessible. High street alternatives to branded school uniforms are very acceptable and please ask at your school for help with costs if you need it.

If you have good condition uniform items your child has outgrown, please consider donating these back to your school so another family can make use of them. We are happy to take any donations in the morning at the gate when taking your child to school for ease of dropping off.

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Ventilation:

We will ensure our schools are well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

Any poorly ventilated spaces will be identified as part of the risk assessment process and steps taken to improve fresh air flow in these areas.

Wraparound and Clubs:

Our Kids Club will be open as usual from the first day of term for pupils. This can be booked in the usual manner through Parent Pay the day before the place is needed and will be staffed accordingly therefore no bookings can be made on the day.

With regards to after school clubs, information on this will follow within the first 2 weeks. Please be aware however that whilst case rates are high in Cornwall it is possible that staff shortages may cause some disruption to clubs and after/before school activities.

The Aspire Academy Trust website has been updated with the most recent documentation for you and your school will be keeping in very regular contact regarding procedures and any changes in your schools.

<https://www.aspireacademytrust.org/1434/coronavirus-covid-19>

We look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure a smooth start back, happy settled children and a great term of learning.

Take care,

Vanessa Bragg

Bridget Rundle

Aspire CEO

Head of School

Appendix 1

Aspire Academy Trust
COVID Autumn Term 2021 Reopening Information

<p>When should my child self-isolate or miss school?</p> 	 NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children MUST attend school unless they are unwell. • From 16th August 2021, children under 18 (or double-vaccinated adults) do not need to self-isolate or miss school if a member of their household or a close contact, has COVID. • Instead, they will need to book a PCR test but can continue coming to school so long as they have no symptoms and the test result is negative.
	 YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child develops COVID symptoms at home, they should <u>stay at home</u> and should book a PCR test), NOT a Lateral Flow test. • If your child develops COVID symptoms at school, they will be sent home and you should book them a PCR test. • If your child tests positive for COVID, they will need to self-isolate. The rest of the household does not need to self-isolate if they are under 18 or fully vaccinated – but should book a PCR test.

Community Covid Risk	Description	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been no cases of Covid 	No Covid measures are necessary beyond:

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 <p>Low Community Transmission. No School Cases.</p>	<p>within school for 10 school days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of Covid locally are low and/ or stable. • Hospitalisation/ Deaths due to Covid nationally are low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminding children of good hand-hygiene. • Ensuring good ventilation throughout the school. • Ensuring Children / Staff stay at home if they have COVID symptoms (and to book a PCR test). <p>Staff will continue to test themselves twice weekly using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests until the end of September.</p>
 <p>Rapidly Rising Community Transmission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current Covid cases have been recorded at school, but... • Cases of Covid are rising rapidly in the community causing disruption to other local schools. • South West Health Protection Team/ Public Health England issue warnings of expected local/ national infection wave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ventilation of classrooms increased & hand-washing supervised. • Re-introduction staff face masks for corridors & communal areas • Large indoor public performance audience numbers reduced. • Staff-room capacity is reduced. • Whole-school assemblies are replaced with virtual assemblies.

Number of Cases:	Description:	Actions:
 <p>A single child tests Positive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single child tests positive for COVID in a class. • There are fewer than 5 cases in the year group. • No other year groups are affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child self-isolates for 10 days. Remote learning will be provided if the child is well enough to complete it. • The parents of the child are contacted directly by NHS Test and Trace to establish likely close contacts. • Contacts will be contacted by NHS Track & Trace and advised to book a PCR Test. The school will contact parents to advise this if contacted by NHS Test & Trace. • The Aspire Health & Safety Team will be notified of the case to enable efficient outbreak monitoring. • Children do not need to miss school or self-isolate whilst they wait for the result of the PCR test unless they have COVID symptoms.
 <p>5 children or staff within a year group test positive within</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 5 confirmed cases of COVID across a year group within 10 days which could mean that COVID is spreading within that group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above for each positive case. • The Trust will discuss the outbreak with South West Public Health Team and agree strengthening protective measures <u>for 10 school days</u>, including:

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<p>10 days of each other.</p> <p><u>OR</u></p> <p>3 children or staff in a single Class/ Club within 10 days.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Re-introducing staff face masks for corridors & communal areas. ○ Adapting, limiting or postponing indoor sporting events, trips, open days and performances. ○ Reverting to virtual assemblies in classrooms. ○ Reducing the amount of classes staff work across.
 <p>Covid cases continue to increase rapidly within a 10 day period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Despite the measures indicated above, COVID cases within the school continue to rise within a 10 day period with multiple classes and staff affected, suggesting that COVID is spreading widely throughout the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incident management meeting held between the Aspire Trust COVID Response Team and Cornwall Public Health Team to agree further measures, <u>for a further 10 school days</u>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Re-introducing class bubbles. ○ Reverting to class-based school lunches. ○ Limiting all non-essential visitors to school. ○ Postponing all non-essential events. ○ Re-introducing remote learning for individual classes for 10 school days considered as a last resort.