CORONAVIRUS POLICY

This policy has been written to cover the operational procedures necessary for Oscar Club to protect its pupils, visitors and staff from the risks presented by coronavirus (CIVID-19) infection.

What is Covid-19?

The World Health Organisation defines coronaviruses as a family of viruses that cause infectious illness ranging from very mild to very severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). Covid-19 is a new strain which originated in China at the end of 2019. It rapidly spread around the world as a global pandemic and has created a public health crisis.

How is Covid-19 spread?

The virus is highly infectious and moves from person to person in droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person infected with Covid-19 coughs or exhales. In addition, the virus can survive for up to 72 hours out of the body on surfaces.

People can catch Covid-19 directly if they breathe in the droplets or indirectly if they touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

It is known that infected individuals who show no symptoms may still be able to pass on the virus, especially in the early stages of infection. This is described as asymptomatic spread.

What are the symptoms?

The NHS recognise the main symptoms of coronavirus Covid-19 infection as fever and high temperature, a new, continuous dry cough and/or loss or change to the sense of smell or taste. Other less common symptoms include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, tiredness and fatigue. Symptoms begin gradually and are usually mild.

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. However, some people can become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. It is particularly dangerous for those with weakened immune systems, for older people, and for those with long-term conditions such as diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. In these groups the infection is associated with significant morbidity.

Children can become infected and spread the virus in the same way as adults. However, while some children have become seriously ill, it currently appears that they are less vulnerable to the virus.

Public health information

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented and fast moving crisis throughout the UK which has placed enormous pressure not only on health and social care systems but also on emergency services and national and local government. The response from public health and from education authorities has been a rapidly evolving one and official guidance has changed repeatedly throughout the pandemic. In addition, conspiracy theories and misinformation have spread.

This early years’ service will keep up to date with the latest public health and government information about the risk of coronavirus in the UK. The senior management team will maintain close links with local health protection teams and will be responsible for circulating essential information to staff and parents. Staff are asked to do all they can to help combat misinformation.

Prevention

The current public health campaign stresses 3 key actions to help prevent spreading the virus:

* Wash hands - keep washing hands regularly
* Cover face - wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
* Make space – maintain “social distancing” and stay at least 2 metres apart from others not in the same household (or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions)

These requirements are supported by the following general “handwashing and respiratory hygiene” precautions:

* Cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing (Catch it, Bin it, Kill it)
* Put used tissues in the bin straight away
* Wash hands with soap and water often — wash for 20 seconds and use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
* Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
* Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth if hands are not clean
* Face masks or face coverings have also proved an effective prevention measure and are required in many indoor places and on public transport.

Public health messages should be followed by all staff and passed on to parents as appropriate. Children attending the setting will be engaged in public health messages through age appropriate learning and play resources.

Self-isolation

Oscar Club will support all staff to self-isolate as required.

The government requires people to “self-isolate” if they have Covid-19 symptoms or if they have been tested and are found to be infected. They must also self-isolate if told to do so by the NHS Test and Trace service or if they share a household with someone else who has become infected.

Oscar Club understands self-isolation to mean staying at home and not leaving the house for 10 days from when the symptoms started. Those that live in a household with others should stay at home for 14 days from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

Staff who need to self-isolate should inform their line manager immediately and stay at home. On no account should they attend for work if they fit any of the above criteria. If they do, they may spread the virus.

Lockdown and social distancing

In March 2020 the government announced a countrywide “lockdown” with the temporary closure of places where people gather and meet, such as pubs, restaurants, cafes, non-food shops, gyms, cinemas, churches and leisure centres. Schools and early years childcare were also closed with a partial service remaining open to support certain children. People were urged not to travel and to stay at home. They were permitted to go outside only when shopping for necessities, for medical or care needs and to exercise.

People staying home were advised not have visitors, not even from friends or family. Those that did go out were asked to do so for only short periods and to go straight home afterwards. While out they were asked to observe “social distancing” rules and keep a safe distance of at least 2 metres from others not in the same household. This reduced the risk of virus transmission.

Vulnerable people, including those aged 70 and over, were advised to be particularly stringent in staying at home and following social distancing measures when outside. Those whose pre-existing medical conditions made them more vulnerable to the virus were identified as at moderate risk (such as older people and those with diabetes or lung conditions) or high risk (such as those who have had organ transplants or who have serious lung conditions). The latter were made subject to special “shielding” arrangements.

The lockdown was considered essential to halt the spread of the virus. Once infection rates were low enough it was progressively eased through the summer on the basis that people still follow current “social distancing” and face-covering rules and avoided gatherings.

The revised safety arrangements introduced a “1 metre plus” rule for social distancing which means that wherever a distance of 2 metres between people cannot be achieved an additional risk reduction measure must be adopted, such as wearing a mask or face-covering. Additional requirements for wearing masks or face-coverings were also introduced, for instance, in shops and on public transport.

Oscar Club understands that “lockdown” restrictions may be reimposed if transmission rates increase. These may be reimposed on a local or regional basis where “hotspots” are identified or rising rates of infection. The organisation is aware that these restrictions may affect the running of the service and will inform parents immediately if this is the case.

Reopening

In England plans were introduced under the lockdown easing for a phased re-opening of schools and early years provision before the summer. However, these were delayed on safety grounds and revised with an intention to fully reopen for the autumn term.

This early years’ service has since reopened in accordance with government guidance and on the basis that it will do everything possible to ensure the safety of its staff and of the children and parents using the service. The setting understands that a small number of children may still be unable to attend if they are required to self-isolate or if they are prevented by local lockdown arrangements being in place.

Guidance for the early years sector

This early years’ service will fully implement all official guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England (PHE) relevant to minimising the transmission of the Covid-19 virus and ensuring the safety of children and staff attending and working at its site.

As well as general government Covid-19 guidance, all staff should make themselves familiar with specific guidance for the education and early years sector which includes:

* [*Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures)
* [*Safe working in education, childcare and children’s social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe)
* [*Face coverings in education*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education)
* [*Guidance for full opening: schools*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools) (applicable to school-based nurseries)
* [*COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)
* [*Early years foundation stage: coronavirus disapplications*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications)

Staff should also be aware of relevant Ofsted guidance, including:

* [*Interim visits: registered early years providers*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/interim-visits-registered-early-years-providers)

Controls will be based upon a risk assessment carried out by the early years’ service management and regularly updated with input from senior staff, health and safety leads and staff representatives.

Risk assessment

Oscar Club recognises its legal duty under health and safety law to protect the health and wellbeing of staff and others as far as is reasonably practicable. This includes protecting them from virus infection in the workplace.

Controls will be based upon a risk assessment carried out by the early years’ service management and regularly updated with input from senior staff, health and safety leads and staff representatives. The risk assessment will include identification of staff or attending children who may be at increased risk from coronavirus, e.g. those with pre-existing medical conditions, black and minority ethnic individuals, pregnant staff, etc.

Key findings from the risk assessment and any identified risk control measures will be disseminated to all staff.

System of controls

In Oscar Club the system of controls identified in [*Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures) will be applied.

According to the guidance managers and staff must ensure that the following 5 controls are in place all of the time:

* Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that that children or staff who are ill stay at home
* Appropriate use of face coverings as required
* Cleaning hands thoroughly more often than usual (both children and staff)
* Robust measures covering good respiratory hygiene by promoting the “catch it, bin it, kill it” approach
* Enhanced environmental cleaning arrangements

These key controls will be supported by a wide range of further measures including:

* reasonable measures to reduce contacts between children, staff and visitors, wherever possible, and maximising “social distancing”
* the effective management of any cases of Covid-19 infection at the setting
* the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
* active engagement with the NHS Test and Trace system
* the provision of “Covid-safe” facilities and adjustments to premises
* effective arrangements for parents dropping-off and picking-up their children
* additional support for SEND children
* staff health and wellbeing support

Staff will be informed about these key prevention measures and will be given appropriate training.

Staff or child sickness

In this setting:

* staff who are unwell with suspected Covid-19 or who have come into contact with an infected individual or who share a household with someone who is unwell should not come to work but must comply with the latest government advice about self-isolating themselves in their home
* children who are unwell for any reason should be kept at home by their parents or carers and should not attend the setting
* children or staff who become unwell while onsite with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of sense of taste or smell should be sent home immediately and appropriate measures taken to clean and decontaminate affected parts of the premises

Cases of confirmed or suspected Covid-19 in the setting or amongst the children attending must be managed effectively.

An unwell child should be isolated in the back room while waiting to be picked up. The curtains will be closed and a window opened for ventilation. Staff looking after them while they wait should wear appropriate personal protective equipment as advised in *Safe working in education, childcare and children’s social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)*.

Parents collecting sick children should be advised to follow government advice regarding testing and self-isolation.

If clinical advice is required staff, parents or guardians should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they do not have internet access). In an emergency, 999 should be called if the child is seriously ill.

DfE advise that any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any children who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate. However, they must self-isolate and arrange for a test if they develop symptoms themselves or are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

Any outbreak (2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus is suspected) should be reported immediately to the local protection team. In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other children self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. The setting should cooperate with all advice given and advise parents accordingly.

Any confirmed cases of coronavirus Covid-19 in the setting (either child or staff), and/or if the setting is advised to close as a result, should be reported to Ofsted immediately through the usual notification channels.

Reducing contact

Oscar Club is aware that reducing contact between individuals is effective in minimising virus spread as it reduces opportunities for the virus to pass from one person to another. However, the setting acknowledges the difficulties in achieving this with young children in an early years environment.

During the summer official guidance required early years providers to allocate children into small groups or “bubbles” and assign staff consistently to these groups. Groups were required to stay apart throughout the day. This had the effect of minimising the numbers of other children and staff children interacted with, thus reducing the potential for virus transmission.

Oscar Club will make all appropriate arrangements, as indicated in the risk assessment, to support staff in managing attending children in such a way as to reduce contacts wherever possible. It will also support staff to reduce their face-to-face contacts with each other and with parents and maintain safe social distancing. Face-to-face contact will be minimised by asking parents to communicate with staff, where possible, by phone or by email. Any face-to-face contacts will be conducted with appropriate social distancing either outside or in a well-ventilated room.

Wearing face masks

Oscar Club understands that, at this time, DfE is not recommending universal use of masks or face coverings in early years education because the system of controls, applicable to all education and childcare environments, is thought to provide sufficient protection against virus transmission risk. In addition, PHE advises that for health and safety reasons, face masks should not be used for children under three.

Oscar Club understands the DfE guidance to state that early years providers have the discretion to require face coverings for adults on site, both staff and visitors, in indoor communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.

Therefore, in this organisation:

* face masks will be worn by all visitors
* face masks or coverings may be required by staff in circumstances where risk assessment suggests that effective safe distancing is not possible ie. collecting children at the school gate.
* children attending the setting will not be required to wear masks
* staff working with children will not be required to wear masks as it is considered that other controls are sufficient to reduce risk – in addition, masks may have a negative impact on interactions

Where masks are used, staff and visitors should be given clear instructions about putting them on and taking them off safely. Staff and visitors should be instructed to carry a plastic bag with them where they can store their mask hygienically when not being worn.

DfE guidance, [*Face coverings in education*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education), will further inform any mask use.

Staff should be aware that some individuals may be exempt from wearing face coverings, e.g. people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability.

Supporting respiratory and hand-hygiene

All staff at Oscar Club should practice appropriate hand hygiene more frequently than usual, either by washing their hands thoroughly or by using an alcohol based hand sanitiser gel. Children using the setting should be encouraged to also clean their hands more regularly than usual.

Effective hand hygiene is known to reduce the chance of the Covid-19 virus being passed on indirectly by touch. Staff and children should be encouraged to clean their hands regularly during the day, including when they arrive, after they use the toilet and before eating. Hand cleaning “routines” will be introduced and hand and respiratory hygiene incorporated into fun play activities.

In this setting:

* staff should comply fully with hand sanitisation policies and procedures at all times and provide effective role models for the children
* supervisors will ensure that policies are supported by the provision of appropriate resources such as soap, towels for drying hands and stocks of suitable hand sanitiser gels
* hand sanitiser use should be supervised at all times to prevent risks related to misuse and ingestion

Respiratory hygiene refers to catching coughs and sneezes in tissues and then disposing of these in an appropriate manner. Tissues and bins will be made available throughout the premises. Bins will be regularly emptied and waste disposed of in accordance with government guidance.

Staff and children should practice effective hand hygiene after handling a tissue.

Providing a Covid-safe environment

Oscar Club will make all suitable and appropriate adjustments to its premises to enable staff and children to maintain social distancing and comply with the high standards of respiratory and hand hygiene required for their safety.

Adjustments may include:

* placement of floor markings and signage to remind children, visitors and staff to social distance in areas such as reception and toilets
* establishing maximum room occupancy numbers
* putting in place adequate hand hygiene facilities, including suitable hand washing facilities and/or hand sanitiser
* providing additional facilities where necessary to avoid over-crowding in wash areas

The is arranged so that staff do not sit facing each other. Sufficient space will be made between desks to allow social distancing.

Parents and carers should not be allowed into the setting unless there is a specific need. Only essential visitors should be admitted after they have been provided with social distancing or mask wearing rules.

Enhanced premises and site cleaning

Enhanced premises cleaning schedules will be in place throughout the pandemic. These will be managed in collaboration with the cleaning and housekeeping team.

Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned on a more regular basis.

Such surfaces include:

* toilet and handwashing areas
* flush levers and taps
* door handles
* handrails
* table tops
* desks, computers, mice and computer keyboards
* electronic devices (such as phones)
* toys and playthings

Soft play equipment and difficult to clean items will be removed and placed in storage. Soft furnishings, for example pillows and bean bags will be removed. Risk assessments should cover the ongoing use of sand play.

Staff will use standard detergents and bleach for routine cleaning. These are known to be effective in removing the Covid-19 virus on surfaces.

If a person with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 infection has been present in the setting, or in the case of an outbreak, additional “deep clean” arrangements should be implemented using appropriate disinfectant and cleanser, as advised in [*COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) published by Public Health England. In an outbreak situation the setting will work closely with local public health protection experts and arrange for enhanced cleaning as advised.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The DfE and PHE guidance advises that most staff in education, childcare and children’s social care settings will not require PPE (gloves, masks, aprons and face shields) beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others.

DfE state that PPE is generally only needed in the following circumstances:

* where an individual child becomes ill with coronavirus Covid-19 symptoms and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
* where a child already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

The pre-school manager of the service is responsible for ensuring adequate stocks of appropriate PPE are kept and that staff know how and when to use it.

Drop-off and pick-up adjustments

Drop-off and pick-up arrangements are currently subject to adjustment due to the need to prevent large groups of children arriving and leaving at the same time and to relieve congestion or crowding at entrances and exits.

The following arrangements currently apply:

* staggered start or finish times will be used to reduce the number of children arriving together or waiting to be picked up - details will be communicated in timely fashion to parents
* parents will be asked not to gather in groups at entrances and exits – at all times they should follow government social distancing guidance

Parents are asked to travel by foot, bike or car wherever possible at the present time and to avoid public transport as much as possible.

Vulnerable and SEND children, children with special health or social needs, and safeguarding

In this early years’ service, it is acknowledged that vulnerable children, SEND children and those with additional health or social care needs may need additional support to return to the setting safely. All such children will be encouraged to return to the service. Staff will work closely with parents and healthcare providers/social workers as appropriate and relevant health and support plans will be kept under regular review.

Many “vulnerable” children may have been included within the “high-risk” category during lockdown. Even though formal “shielding” arrangements for these individuals are currently suspended the setting will maintain additional support for all children identified in this category.

Oscar Club is very aware that the pandemic has placed unprecedented pressure on both individual children and their parents and that some families may have struggled with problems related to issues such as illness, poverty, bereavement, stress, mental health and domestic violence during the lockdown. They may also have found themselves without their normal support mechanisms. All staff should therefore be especially vigilant to identify vulnerable children who may require additional support through established safeguarding arrangements.

The setting will continue to have a practitioner designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding available on-site or contactable if working from home.

Use of private and public outdoor spaces

Oscar Club understands that it may organise visits and use public outside spaces if it wishes. In all cases appropriate risk assessments should be completed and permissions sought according to established planning procedures for such events. The risk assessment must:

* demonstrate that any group of children can remain socially distant (2 metres) from other people and groups, wherever possible
* include arrangements for good hygiene to be maintained throughout
* ensure that thorough handwashing happens before and after the trip
* take into consideration local virus transmission rates and any local lockdown restrictions

Staff should make full use of the private outside space at the setting. However, groups should be kept separate, where possible, and staff in outside spaces should practice social distancing in the same way as they must do inside buildings.

Testing, tracking and tracing

A nasal/throat swab test is available to confirm the presence of the virus. Tests can be performed in regional drive through centres or via home testing kits. Anyone who experiences any coronavirus symptoms can get a free test.

In the UK the NHS Test and Trace system is operative. It involves identifying and isolating people who are infected and then tracing those who may have been in contact with them. These people can then be tested and isolated as required.

This setting will fully support testing and tracing. Further information can be found from the online document, [*NHS Test and Trace: how it works*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works).

Staff health and wellbeing

Oscar Club will make every effort to support its staff whose health and wellbeing is a key priority. Every effort should be made to consult with staff, and with staff representatives, and keep people safe and informed.

The government has advised that shielding arrangements for “extremely vulnerable” people have currently been put on hold. According to the DfE schools and early years settings are regarded as “low risk” environments and staff who have been considered “extremely vulnerable” due to underlying health conditions during the height of the pandemic should be safe to return to work provided appropriate safeguards are in place, including robust hand hygiene and social distancing arrangements.

In this setting all face-to-face activities with children will be covered by risk assessments completed by line managers with occupational health support as required. Where additional reasonable adjustments are required for individual staff these will be applied and kept under review.

Staff who have ongoing concerns, particularly those who have been considered moderate or high risk, should discuss these with their line manager.

Ofsted guidance and inspection

Oscar Club is aware that in March 2020 all routine regulatory inspections by Ofsted were suspended due to the pandemic.

In August Ofsted announced that there would be a phased return to routine inspection which would begin with interim visits from September 2020. The service understands that these will initially be targeted on registered early years providers who had an overall effectiveness grade of requires improvement or inadequate (with actions) given at their last inspection and where the re-inspection date may have passed during the height of the pandemic.

As an interim measure before the 25 September 2020 Ofsted inspectors were advised not to check whether a provider had met learning and development requirement actions set at a previous inspection. However, from the 25th September Ofsted state that providers must meet the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in full.

Oscar Club does not anticipate an imminent visit from inspectors but will maintain itself in readiness for inspection as part of its standard practice.

The Manager at Oscar Club is aware of latest regulatory news from the [*Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) rolling update*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update). Due to Ofsted staff working from home during the pandemic this states that early years managers should use online forms wherever possible if they need to contact the regulator or submit information.

Business continuity procedures and pandemic recovery planning

In addition to Oscar Club’s general business continuity and recovery planning policies, the early years’ service recognises the need to have a separate pandemic contingency plan and procedure. This is because a general business continuity plan focuses on a short-term recovery programme. In contrast, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic are likely to last many months.

The following contingency measures will apply during the pandemic:

* local virus transmission rates will be kept under review by the senior management team who will work to ensure the safety of staff and attending children as their primary concern
* a coronavirus communications strategy will be developed to ensure that staff and parents are provided with up-to-date and accurate information on the status of the pandemic and on the settings response
* information will be provided to staff and parents via e-mail where possible - unnecessary meetings and training will be cancelled and greater use made of digital/virtual communication and eLearning in order to reduce face-to-face contacts
* during any national or local lockdown or period of heightened virus transmission staff whose role enables them to work from home will be supported to do so
* staff who are required to self-isolate themselves at home if they or a member of their family has the virus will be fully supported – they should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity of their status
* staffing levels will be reviewed on a daily basis and contingency plans put in place to ensure that the setting remains open and fully staffed wherever possible
* if it becomes impossible for the setting to maintain even a reduced service due to staffing constraints the management will work with the local authority to make alternative arrangements and inform parents at the earliest opportunity
* official disapplications introduced to the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework will be applied as advised by DfE, including disapplications relating to staff to child ratios, qualifications and paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate requirements – staff ratios and the first aid risk assessment for the provision will be kept under review throughout the pandemic and during any periods of increased viral transmission
* the management will keep up to date with financial support packages available for the early years sector and apply for these as appropriate, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Line managers and supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that all staff understand Oscar Club’s pandemic contingency plans. Staff should familiarise themselves with the plans and should speak to their line manager if they have any questions or concerns.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be continuously monitored and updated by senior management to take account of any changes to the official advice provided about coronavirus.

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