

# Early Years Policy 2021-2022



**St Gerard's Catholic Primary School**

*"Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."*



## SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT



***“St Gerard’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”.***

## **Aims:**

At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School we aim to give each child a positive and meaningful start to their school life, in which they can establish solid foundations on which to develop into independent and fearless lifelong learners.

We will encourage children to develop independence within our secure and friendly atmosphere; to support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing; to help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We will offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited availability for development through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences that will give children the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test their skills, knowledge and understanding alongside existing experiences. We will ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start school.

## **At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School we aim to:**

- Provide an atmosphere where children can be happy, contented, safe, valued, gain confidence and achieve greater independence.
- Provide a child-friendly environment that is safe, caring and stimulating.
- Provide an environment where no child should be excluded or disadvantaged.
- Build upon what children already know and what they can do.
- Promote children's social, intellectual and physical development through play and directed activities.
- Provide, through a stimulating environment, opportunities for the child to develop a positive attitude to learning and an active interest in the world around them.
- Develop a working partnership between parents/carers and the school in order to establish an accurate understanding of each child's individual needs.
- Work within the guidelines of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **What is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?**

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

(The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

## **The EYFS seeks to provide:**

- quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.

- a secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

All schools and Ofsted-registered early years' providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.

At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School, we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. We also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life and therefore it is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

We are committed to our strong links with the parish and the Catholic community and strive to enrich pupils' religious, spiritual, moral and social education from Nursery to Year 6. We are renowned, not just locally, but in the wider world for its caring attitude to all children. The Catholic faith and the living out of the Gospel values are central to school life.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework for children from birth to five years of age. The final year of the EYFS is referred to as Reception. Within Nursery and Reception the children will be tracked and assessed using the updated 'Early Years Outcomes' document and then will be assessed at the end of the academic year using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). This information is collated by the school leaders and sent to the Local Authority to monitor school and children's performance.

We acknowledge that all children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the role of the practitioners working in the Foundation Stage, with support of parents, to build upon the children's prior learning and life experiences. This is done through a holistic approach, ensuring that parents/carers, support staff and teachers work effectively in partnership to support children's learning and development.

### **The EYFS is based upon four principles:**

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

#### **A Unique Child**

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

#### **Positive relationships**

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

## Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

## Learning and development

Our foundation stage has one nursery classroom, a reception classroom and a large outdoor classroom, which is shared. All our learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The seven areas of learning are defined so that children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

## The Areas of the Curriculum

Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. The 7 Areas of the curriculum, as set out in the EYFS, are equally important and interdependent. They are split into areas which are:

### Prime Areas

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

### Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

We aim to deliver all the Areas of Learning through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of child-initiated and adult led activities, as guided by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage which states

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things."

As children move through Nursery and Reception they will transition into more formalised learning and longer, focused, carpet time activities. This will ensure they are taught what is required in order to achieve a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) at the end of Reception.

## Observation, Assessment and Planning

Effective planning builds on and extends what children know and can do and is the key to making their learning exciting, varied and progressive. In order to understand and consider the child's current learning and development needs, planning starts with observations of the child. Assessments are then made on the basis of observations about the child's learning and development. These assessments are then used to inform planning the "next steps" of the child's learning and experiences.

- Observations are carried out in variety of ways – individually, in small groups, as part of class, adult led but mostly child-initiated. (This will be gathered via 'Evidence Me')
- Learning Receipts, tracking activities, photographs, WOW Moments (parent/carer contributions) and other methods of evidence collection are used and then analysed to highlight achievements and/or need for further support.
- Assessments are the decisions then made about the child's learning/development. Ongoing assessment from observations is known as *formative assessment* or *assessment for learning*. Assessments used to give a summary of a child's achievements at a certain point in time are known as *summative assessment*. The EYFS Profile is used as a summative assessment at the end of the Reception year. It summarises and makes statements about the child's progress towards the revised Early Learning Goals. (September 2021)
- Planning has three stages – long term, medium term and short term. 'Long Term' planning shows an overview of the experiences to be covered and skills to be taught. The 'Medium Term' shows in more detail how the Principles of the EYFS will be put into practice through specific activities and 'Short Term' planning (weekly/daily) shows how each child's learning and development is to be supported.

## **Staffing and Organisation**

There are 2 learning zones within the Foundation Stage at St Gerard's; Foundation Stage 1 (Nursery) and Foundation Stage 2 (Reception).

There are two Full-Time class teachers and two Full-Time teaching assistants;

- Nursery Class Teacher (QTS)
- Nursery Teaching Assistant (Level 3)
- Reception Class Teacher (QTS – Assistant Headteacher)
- Reception Classroom Support Assistant (Level 2)
- SEND Support Assistant (Level 2)
- PPA Teacher (QTS)

## **The Learning Environment**

We are proud of our attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which encourages all children to explore, investigate and learn. The staff ensure that the environment is a place where children feel secure and confident and are challenged to develop their independence.

The Foundation Stage is organised into 2 classrooms, one for Nursery and the other for Reception. Within the classroom the 7 Areas of Learning are offered to the children through continuous provision, alongside a wide variety of child initiated and adult led activities to support and stretch their learning.

St Gerard's has a partly covered, purpose built outdoor area which children have continual access to. The outdoor environment offers experiences and activities that extend those from indoors and also offers learning experiences that are unique to the outdoors.

**Indoor Areas of Learning;** (Subject to updated COVID-19 Restrictions)

- Role Play Area
- Reading / Book Area
- Number Area
- Mark Making/ Writing Area
- Small World Area
- Computer / Interactive Whiteboard Area
- Listening Area,
- Construction Area,
- Art Area
- Creative Area
- RE focal point
- Central carpet area for whole class designated activities

**Outdoor Areas of Learning;** (Subject to updated COVID-19 Restrictions)

- Water Area,
- Sand Area,
- Quiet area,
- Construction Area
- Music Area,
- Funky Fingers Area,
- Large Chalk Board
- Climbing Area

Children are encouraged to be independent in their choices and to be responsible for tidying and organising resources and activities they have used. The Foundation Stage operates a system of "self-regulating", whereby the children monitor how many people are already in an area and check to see if there is space for them to join.

**Induction Procedures:**

Please see the separate policy on "Induction Policy and Arrangements"

**Transition to Key Stage One:**

Please see the separate policy on Transition Arrangements

**Parents as Partners:** (Subject to COVID-19 Restrictions)

We recognise that Parents/Carers are children's first and most enduring educators. When Parents/Carers and practitioners work together in early years' settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning. A successful partnership is one which develops a two-way flow of information and knowledge. At St Gerard's we aim to foster this by;

- Meeting informally with parents/carers through the initial Induction procedures at playgroup/pre-school settings.

- Meeting formally with parents/carers at the meeting in July, outlining the curriculum and the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Including this Policy in the Starting School pack
- Encouraging parents/carers to complete the "This Is Me/Holiday News" booklet with their child
- Encouraging parents/carers to complete the Home-School agreement with their child
- Holding a meeting with parents/carers in the Autumn term to outline the expectations of that particular phase of the EYFS.
- Making the planning accessible in the setting so that parents/carers are informed of the learning that will be taking place
- Operating an "Open Door" policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner
- Inviting parents/carers to join us in our "Stay and Play" sessions
- Encouraging parents/carers to participate in the weekly Learning Together activities, sent home each Friday and based on the child's learning that week
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute to their profile, sharing news of things their child has achieved outside school.
- Encouraging parents/carers to hear their child read daily and record their comments in the Reading Record book.
- Inviting parents/carers to join us in our half termly open afternoons, participating in activities related to our theme that half term.
- Holding parents/carers interviews each term to discuss progress and individual targets in relation to the EYFS.
- Providing an annual written report to parents/carers in July, summarising the child's progress against the early learning goals.

## **Equal Opportunities**

At St Gerard's, we aim to provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning abilities, disabilities or gender, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. As role models, practitioners are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

For further information see "Equal Opportunities Policy"

## **Inclusion**

The diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. No child is discriminated against.

Children with Special Educational Needs will be given appropriate support to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. This includes children that are more able, those with specific learning difficulties and those with disabilities.

The school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is responsible for providing additional information and advice to parents/carers and practitioners and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

For further information, see "Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy"



## Further Reading:

- **EYFS Statutory Framework – September 2021**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974907/EYFS\\_framework\\_-\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)
- **Development Matters – September 2021:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/988004/Development\\_Matters.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988004/Development_Matters.pdf)
- **Early Years Outcomes 2021:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/919681/Early\\_adopter\\_schools\\_EYFS\\_profile\\_handbook.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919681/Early_adopter_schools_EYFS_profile_handbook.pdf)

## **Appendix:** Planning guide for early years and childcare settings – COVID-19 Guidance

The government announced a roadmap towards recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and plans for welcoming all children back to early years settings and a [phased return of some children to school](#) from 1 June at the earliest.

This planning guide is intended to provide information and support for all early years providers in England as they prepare to open for all children.

It is for:

- local-authority-maintained schools
- non-maintained schools
- independent schools
- all providers on the early years register
- all providers registered with an early years childminder agency

This guide does not cover nannies or au pairs, as they work in the child or children's family home.

We have published separate [guidance for primary schools opening from 1 June](#).

This guide can be used by settings to inform plans to open more widely from 1 June, if the 5 key tests set by government justify the changes at the time. The guide sets out considerations for preparing to open to more children and putting in place protective measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), and has been developed in consultation with early years sector bodies and providers from a variety of different settings. Every setting is different and it is not a requirement to use all or parts of this toolkit. Settings may use their professional judgement, and choose to follow alternative approaches depending on their particular circumstances, but at all times will need to take account of relevant public health guidance to maximise safety for those in the environment.

This guide does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that businesses or employers continue to comply with existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It has been developed to provide helpful prompts of things to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to implement these changes, please work with any unions which staff belong to and take into account agency workers and contractors, as well as employees.

If providers choose to use this guidance, they should do so in conjunction with information and advice from local authorities and other sector bodies to help decide how best to implement this guidance in their setting. The planning guide should be read in conjunction with the following guidance:

- [Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June](#)
- [Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)
- [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) coronavirus disapplications](#)
- [Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)

## 1. Prepare the premises

### Health and safety check of the building

If your site or buildings have been closed, or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, then you should consider undertaking a health and safety check of the buildings concerned. Providers may refer to [guidance for school premises](#), which will in some cases also be applicable for early years settings. Consider refreshing your health and safety advice for children, staff, parents and carers and any other visitors in light of coronavirus. Consider [legionnaires checks](#) if premises have been closed.

### Risk assessments

All planned activities should be risk assessed in light of coronavirus, in conjunction with relevant staff where applicable, and due consideration given to how usual practice may need to be adapted. Consider adjusting fire alarm procedures, for example assembly points, and how you will ensure that staff are trained in them.

### Cleaning and hygiene

Be clear how hand washing will be managed. Refer to guidance on [cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#), and also the detail set out in [Section 3](#), and decide how this can be managed in your setting. Make this information available to staff and parents.

Once children are back in the setting, all frequently touched surfaces, equipment, door handles, and toilets, used during the day, will need to be cleaned thoroughly several times a day.

### Space management

Consider your premises and how they can be best used to keep small, consistent groups of children together throughout the day, and to keep the groups apart from each other. Further information is set out in [section 2](#) of this guidance.

Depending on the size and the layout of individual settings, consider how floor space, rooms and outdoor space can be organised to ensure physical distancing between staff and between groups of children, considering the early years foundation stage (EYFS) age-based space requirements. Providers must meet the following indoor space requirements:

- children under 2 years need 3.5 m<sup>2</sup> per child
- 2 year olds need 2.5 m<sup>2</sup> per child
- children aged 3 to 5 years need 2.3 m<sup>2</sup> per child

Area dividers may help to keep children in different parts of the room, and floor markings could be helpful in assisting staff with keeping groups apart. The use of communal spaces in settings should be managed to limit the amount of mixing between groups as much as possible.

Smaller settings, including childminding settings, may have fewer children than larger settings, so the necessary adjustments may be different. It may be difficult for childminding settings, where family members are also present, to limit their use of shared spaces, however settings could consider whether a specific room could be designated for childcare during the day.

In order to facilitate cleaning, remove unnecessary items from learning environments where there is space to store them elsewhere. Public health advice is to remove all soft toys, and any toys that are hard to clean, such as those with intricate parts. Where practicable, remove soft furnishings, for example pillows, bean bags and rugs.

Review arrangements for the supply of food to the setting and agree an approach that suits the setting's particular circumstances. If you use food suppliers, consider how appropriate physical distancing, and hygiene measures, can be maintained when on setting premises, and communicate this with suppliers.

Consider instances where other suppliers and contractors may be in the setting, for example cleaners and site maintenance, and how physical distancing and hygiene measures will be put in place and communicated. Consider a monitoring system and contingency plan to minimise the impact of shortages of supplies and workforce.

## **2. Prepare to implement practical measures to reduce risk**

Consider the measures that you should implement to reduce the risk of transmission in your setting, using: [Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#). Consider how you can involve staff in developing policies for your setting and ensure that they are personalised where necessary, for example for staff who have responsibility for providing 1:1 support for children or for children with additional needs.

We know that, unlike older children and adults, children in the early years cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. You should therefore work through the hierarchy of measures set out in the protective measures guidance:

- ensure parents are advised to keep children with any symptoms at home
- ensure staff who are symptomatic do not attend work
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

### **Keeping children and staff together in small groups**

Keeping group sizes to a maximum of 8 children, while adhering to EYFS ratios, is preferable so groups are as small as possible. Providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in a group in early years settings. Further information on planning these groups once you have worked with parents to identify the children who will be returning to your setting is set out in [section 8](#) of this guidance.

### **Physical distancing between groups**

While it is not expected that children and staff within a group will keep 2 metres apart, it is important for settings to consider how they can reduce contact between groups of children and staff as far as possible, for example by ensuring children and staff mix in a small consistent group and that small group stays away from other groups.

Settings should ensure:

- physical distancing between groups of children and staff as far as possible
- that individual groups use the same area of a setting throughout the day as much as possible
- that the sharing of toys and resources is reduced
- that any toys or resources that are shared can be easily cleaned between different groups' use

Consider how snacks and meal times can be planned to ensure groups of children are kept together. Where possible, staff meetings and training sessions should be conducted virtually and staff should remain at a safe distance from each other during breaks, including in staff rooms or other staff areas in the setting. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor or when moving to a different part of the setting, is low risk.

### **Handwashing and respiratory hygiene**

Ensure sufficient handwashing facilities (running water and soap, alcohol hand rub, sanitiser, skin-friendly wipes) are available for staff and children, and that hands are washed upon entering the setting, regularly throughout the day, before and after eating and when they leave. Ensure children are supervised when doing this, especially if using hand rub or sanitiser, and learn how to do it effectively. Ensuring you have a good supply of disposable tissues throughout the setting to implement 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Ensure the availability of lidded bins, preferably operated by a foot pedal, and that tissues are immediately disposed into bins and that these are emptied throughout the day.

### **Enhanced cleaning**

Ensure surfaces that children and staff are touching, such as toys, books, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, are cleaned more regularly than usual by putting in place an enhanced cleaning schedule using disinfection as appropriate.

Ensure all items that are laundered within the setting, for example towels, flannels and bedding, are washed in line with guidance on [cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#) and that these items are not shared by children between washes.

Ensure that there are clear procedures for maintaining stringent cleaning processes for food preparation areas, dining areas and table coverings.

Consider and communicate a policy on bringing items and toys from home. This should only be done if absolutely essential and, where this is the case, items should be appropriately cleaned on arrival.

### **Reducing face-to-face contact with and between parents and carers**

Reduce contact between parents and carers when dropping off and picking up their children, for example by limiting drop off and pick up to one parent or carer per family and staggering timings. Do not allow parents or carers into the setting unless this is essential, and arrange for children to be collected at the door if this is possible.

As some young children will not have been attending a setting for a number of weeks and may be feeling anxious, work with parents and carers to consider how best to manage dropping off their children while maintaining physical distancing.

Avoid the need for parents and carers to wait, but where they have to, consider whether physical distancing markings could be used.

Consider how you can use technology to communicate with parents and carers digitally, for example when providing handover information at the end of the day.

### **Other measures**

Keep windows open as far as possible to ensure ventilation, avoid the use of lifts unless essential and use outdoor areas as much as possible. Limit external visitors to the setting and ensure they only come into the building when strictly necessary, for example if providing an essential service or essential support for a child's health and wellbeing.

### **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

The majority of staff in childcare settings will not require PPE, beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed for children whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE, or if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child displaying coronavirus symptoms. Further information on what this means for early years settings is provided in [section 4](#) of this guidance.

### **Taking temperatures**

Settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning or throughout the day. Public Health England's guidance is that routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus. There is no need for anything other than normal personal hygiene and washing of clothes following a day in a childcare setting.

### **Ensure you are prepared**

Ensure that your setting is operationally prepared to implement these measures, and that they are clearly communicated to all staff members. Ensure that supplies of essential products are in place, as well as contingency plans to respond to any shortages in supplies.

## **3. Reviewing your staff for availability to work in the setting (if applicable)**

Conduct an audit to determine the availability of staff to work in the setting from 1 June. In so doing, remember that you may be working with some staff who are anxious and may value the opportunity for discussion and reassurance. Consider staff wellbeing, including any support that may be needed for those who have suffered bereavement, and discuss their needs with them.

Anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or has displayed symptoms in the previous 7 days, or lives with someone who has displayed symptoms in the previous 14 days, should not attend work unless they have tested negative for coronavirus.

The [main symptoms of coronavirus](#) are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough

- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

They and their household members should follow the [advice for households with possible coronavirus infection](#).

This audit should be done in conjunction with the official government [guidance on shielding](#). People who are clinically extremely vulnerable (those with serious underlying health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus and have been advised by their clinician or through a letter) are advised to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe.

If a staff member is clinically extremely vulnerable, they are advised not to attend the setting. If a staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, it is advised that they follow [guidance on people who are shielding and living with other people](#).

Clinically vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions as set out in the [staying at home and away from others \(social distancing\) guidance](#) have been advised to take extra care in observing social distancing and should work from home where possible. This includes pregnant women.

For childminders, who work together, but live in different households, you can still attend the childminding setting as it is your place of work.

Consider the impact of staff availability and their qualification levels on staff to child ratios and on other relevant provisions in the [statutory framework for the EYFS](#), including the requirement to have a designated safeguarding lead and the expectation to identify a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). This should be reviewed in conjunction with government guidance on [temporary changes to requirements in the EYFS during the coronavirus outbreak](#), which sets out changes to qualification requirements to be included in staff to child ratios and to paediatric first aid requirements.

The availability of staff, as well as your own and family circumstances, may change, so agree a policy for updating your audit on a continuous basis and how you will communicate this with staff and parents.

#### **4. Agree a protocol for responding to a suspected case of coronavirus and ensure setting is prepared**

Amend your current policy on sickness management to ensure your setting has a protocol in place for responding to a suspected case of coronavirus and that you are prepared with the resources and staffing levels to implement this if necessary. All protocols should include the following measures.

Anyone who begins to display coronavirus symptoms while in the setting should be sent home immediately and follow government guidelines on [what to do if you or someone in your household develops symptoms](#). If a child is waiting to be collected, they should be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff if this is possible.

A facemask should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from a child who is symptomatic and awaiting collection and if contact is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a facemask should be worn. If a risk assessment determines there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing or spitting, then eye protection should also be worn. Settings should ensure they are prepared to respond in line with the [guidance on protective measures in education and childcare settings](#) and [guidance on using PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#).

Once the child or member of staff has left the setting, settings should follow [Cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#) to ensure areas they have been in are disinfected and any PPE and other waste is disposed of safely.

Once early years and childcare providers open to more children, all staff and children who are attending a childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Visit the [guidance on coronavirus testing and how to arrange to have a test](#).

Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. If the child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their immediate group within their setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. For childminding settings, this applies to everyone attending your setting who came into contact with the child or staff member. The other household members of those advised to self-isolate do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with subsequently develops symptoms. Take appropriate steps to deputise responsibilities or arrange cover if affected members of staff fulfil designated roles, for example paediatric first aid, SENCO or safeguarding lead.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger group may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

Ensure that emergency contacts are updated in advance of wider opening and consider where these may need to change, for example if previous emergency contacts are in a shielded group. Plan how you will communicate your protocol to parents and carers and ensure they understand their role and will be available to collect their child if necessary.

## **5. Communicate with staff**

Communicate your plans for the wider opening of the setting from 1 June with staff, ensuring they are aware of and understand all new measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus and their roles and responsibilities. Build in time for staff to review processes and procedures and to ask questions and raise any concerns in advance.

Ensure that all staff understand that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, should not attend the setting in any circumstances. Ensure staff understand that if they develop coronavirus symptoms, they are entitled to a test, and are encouraged to organise one in this scenario following government [guidance on getting tested](#).

Consider the instruction and training that staff will need on infection control, for example [putting on, taking off and disposing of PPE](#).

Staff will need to identify and support any vulnerable children and parents that return to settings, for example, by signposting them to appropriate local services such as health visitors, mental health services, and domestic or substance abuse services, and school nurses where applicable. Settings should continue to contact their local authority to understand what support is available.



Discuss any additional support that may be needed to ensure staff wellbeing and consider how this can be put in place in your setting. Consider how to arrange regular opportunities to get feedback from staff on the new arrangements.

## **6. Communicate with parents and carers**

Communicate your plans for the wider opening of the setting from 1 June with parents and carers, ensuring they are aware of all new measures put in place to reduce risk of transmission of coronavirus, how this impacts them and their responsibilities in supporting this. Where appropriate, review your policies and procedures with parents and carers and inform them of any updates you have made.

Ensure that all parents and carers understand that if a child has coronavirus symptoms, or there is someone in their household who does, they should not attend the setting under any circumstances. Ensure parents and carers are aware that all children attending the setting, and members of their household, will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus and they are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Communicate your plans in ways that are accessible to specific groups of parents and carers (for example, those with English as an additional language) and parents and carers of vulnerable children. Remind parents and carers of the complaints policy setting out the routes to accept and resolve any low level concerns that arise.

A model letter to parents and carers is included in [Annex A](#), however individual settings should modify this based on their particular circumstances.

## **7. Identify the likely numbers of children returning to the setting**

Identify the children who are likely to be returning to, or joining, the setting on 1 June, working with parents and carers, and with your local authority, where relevant. This should be done in conjunction with official government [guidance on shielding](#). Where children are unable to sustain safe social distancing and hygiene measures, and live in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable and has chosen to shield, those children will not be expected to attend an early years setting. Consider how you can support parents and carers to understand the risks.

To minimise contact between groups of children and staff, children should attend just one setting wherever possible and parents and carers should be encouraged to minimise as far as possible the number of education and childcare settings their child attends. Childminding settings should consider how they can work with parents and carers to agree how best to manage any necessary journeys, for example pick-ups and drop-offs at schools, to reduce the need for a provider to travel with groups of children.

If demand for places is higher than the setting's capacity when measures to allow physical distancing between groups are in place, it may be necessary to have a temporary cap on numbers of children attending the setting. Solutions might involve working with the local authority to support children attending a nearby setting on a consistent basis. If necessary, settings should prioritise vulnerable children and children of critical workers, then 3 and 4 year olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to reception in September, followed by younger age groups.

## **8. Plan your setting's groups to reduce contact between children and staff**

Audits of staff availability and assessment of likely demand for places for children who will be attending settings from 1 June should be used to plan groups, ensuring staff to child ratios set out in the EYFS framework are adhered to. Consider any risk assessments that you will need to undertake to ensure the safe care of groups of children can be maintained at all times, taking the need for staff breaks into account.

Providers should use professional judgement when planning groups but may wish to use EYFS ratios to guide this. Keeping group sizes to a maximum of 8 children is preferable so groups are as small as possible, and providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in a group in early years settings. Sessional nurseries that have different cohorts of children at different times of the day may wish to consider having smaller group sizes to limit the number of children staff are in contact with. Each setting's circumstances will be different. If your setting cannot achieve these small groups at any point, options should be discussed with the local authority.

As far as possible, the same members of staff should be assigned to each group and these should stay the same during the day and on subsequent days. Keep your staffing arrangements as consistent as possible. In instances where you do need to use staff from other settings or agency staff, ensure that this is agreed on a weekly basis, not daily, to limit contacts.

## **9. Identify safeguarding, special educational needs and disability (SEND), child wellbeing and welfare requirements**

Plan how all children will be supported to address the specific issues that may have arisen due to coronavirus, taking into account children's individual needs and circumstances. The coronavirus outbreak may have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties for some children. Be alert to harms that may have been hidden or missed while they have not been attending settings. Consider the mental health, pastoral or wider health and wellbeing support children may need, including with bereavement, and how to support them to transition into the setting after a long period of absence. Consider how you will involve parents and carers to identify specific support for children and how children's needs may have changed and to prepare for their return to your setting.

Consider whether a review of child protection arrangements is needed in light of coronavirus. Identify and plan how best to support high needs groups, including children with SEND, vulnerable children and disadvantaged children when the setting reopens. Settings should refer to [government guidance on supporting vulnerable children](#) when planning this. If your setting usually works with external agencies to support children with SEND or with behaviour or other issues, discuss with your local authority or other providers of support services to ascertain whether or when these services will be available and plan accordingly to suit your setting's individual circumstances.

Readjustment to the routines in a setting may prove more challenging for some children with SEND, particularly those who have been attending a different setting if their usual setting has been closed. Plan how to ensure your setting will have the staffing needed to support children with SEND at safe ratios, that there is a member of staff designated as a SENCO or interim SENCO and how this can best be accommodated in the planning of groups of children in your setting. Consider how you will involve parents and carers in planning and agreeing any changes to support, including reviewing EHC plans.

Consider how to encourage attendance of vulnerable children and the best way to support them to transition into the setting according to their needs and their individual family circumstances. In cases where children are considered vulnerable and do not attend provision as expected, as with normal practice, follow up with the parent or carer – and social worker and local authority where appropriate

– to explore reasons for absence. Settings should work with local authorities, and school nurses and health visitors where relevant, to monitor the welfare of vulnerable children who are not attending provision, and other children they might wish to keep in touch with for safeguarding purposes.

While the Secretary of State for Education announced the suspension of routine Ofsted inspections in March 2020, the safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and regulatory action including visits to settings which are triggered by safeguarding concerns will continue. See [Ofsted's response to coronavirus](#) for more information.

## **10. Planning what children should learn and how to adapt the EYFS**

The priorities at this time are helping young children to adapt to their new routines and supporting children to settle back into the setting, especially where there have been staffing changes. Continuing to support their early language and communication skills is essential. Children who have had limited opportunities for exercise should be encouraged to exert themselves physically.

Settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the EYFS learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as set out in [guidance on the temporary changes to the EYFS requirements in light of coronavirus](#). This means continuing to provide an environment that invites learning across all 7 areas as far as is practicable during this time. Consider how stories, singing and games can be used to help children to socialise and resettle into familiar everyday routines.

Plan how children can learn in age-appropriate ways about how they can keep themselves safe, including regular handwashing and using tissues. Consider how to encourage children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition. Resources you may wish to use to help children learn are included at [Annex B](#).

Consider new approaches that will need to be taken to minimise the sharing of resources between groups, for example for painting, sticking, cutting and outdoor construction activities, which should be thoroughly cleaned before and after use by different groups. Malleable resources, such as play dough, should not be shared between groups and public health advice is that, as sand pits cannot be thoroughly cleaned between uses, they should not be used at this time. Consider how resources can be used safely and in which circumstances and which items it might be more practical to remove during this time.

Plan how outdoor space, where available, can be used as much as possible. Consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor learning, while ensuring outdoor equipment and toys are appropriately cleaned between being used by different groups.

Settings should consider how to continue to support the learning of children who do not attend settings, including how these children can maintain contact with their key person and peers through the early years setting, and how parents and carers can be supported to provide a positive learning environment at home. The Department for Education's [Hungry Little Minds](#) campaign features tips and practical activities that parents and carers can do at home with children to support their early learning. The campaign website has been updated to include a wealth of online educational resources available for parents and carers to support their child's development at home. Settings can also direct parents and carers to the [BBC's Tiny Happy People](#) campaign and the [National Literacy Trust's Family Zone](#) for more ideas and content. The Department for Education has published further guidance on how to [help children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home during the coronavirus outbreak](#).