**Epidemic and Pandemic Policy**

**(Covid 19)**

**Statement of Intent**

Windmill Pre-School intend to use this policy to provide precautionary measures to minimise transmission risks of disease in the setting during an epidemic or pandemic. It also states ideas for continuity of business if allowed.

Legislation and leading authorities which have guided and influenced this policy are:

Coronavirus Act 2020, Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Government Briefings, Public Health England (PHE) and World Health Organisation (WHO). Advice from but not limited to, The Secretary of State, The Chief Medical Officer, Local Authority (LA) and Department for Education (DfE). The policy also has regard to Ofsted and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance where appropriate.

**Aim of Policy**

This Policy defines and assists the operating arrangements in place within the Pre-School that assures compliance to the Government and leading bodies requirements with relation to the outbreak of a pandemic such as Covid19. This information builds upon our current procedures for areas such as Safeguarding, Child Protection and Equality and Diversity, however new practices may emerge as the situation continues. The policy and considerations may evolve and be built upon as the situation deepens and new precautionary measures have been introduced and practices have been reflected upon.

**Method**

As early years providers we ensure to offer a continuum of very high standards of practice of childcare and education. The fundamental principles to be outlined in this policy are set out to implement good hygiene practices as well as avoiding coming into contact with infected children and adults or anyone displaying symptoms. It states the protective measures put in place for children, parents and staff as best as possible to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced. We will continue to follow our other policies as long as they do not conflict with this policy and be guided by the EYFS as best as we can. The main areas we will be considering are:

* Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell
* Maintaining personal and respiratory hygiene (handwashing, catch it, kill it, bin it)
* Ensuring cleanliness of the environment (especially frequently touched surfaces)
* The use of Protective and Personal Equipment (PPE) should a child/adult become unwell
* Testing

**Focus/ Areas of Consideration / Recommendations**

**Children**

Early years settings are no longer required to organise children and staff in small, consistent groups so can return to normal group sizes. Returning to normal group sizes is based on the fact that the overall risk to children from coronavirus (COVID-19) is low. It also recognises that early years settings are typically smaller than schools.

*Attendance*

* Only children who are well and if necessary, completed the required isolation period should attend the setting.

*Physical Distancing/grouping*

* Due to the nature of the setting, the whole Pre-School cohort and staff team will become one group. Although Class 1 and 2 will separate for most sessions during the day, we will come together at lunchtimes and for some sessions the staff team will work across both rooms.
* These measures will be reviewed and amended as necessary dependent upon the settings ability to operate under these circumstances and mindful of future directives/developments
* Care routines including, washing hands, nappy changing and toileting, should be within the groups.
* Children within their groups will have snack, provided by the setting.
* The use of communal internal spaces should be monitored as much as possible and outdoor spaces should be utilised as much as possible.
* When required Sunscreen should be applied by the parents / carers before the child arrives at the Pre-School. We will reapply at lunchtime.

*Wellbeing and education*

* Children should be supported in age appropriate ways to understand the steps they can take to keep themselves safe including regular hand washing, coughing into an elbow, using a tissue and adopting a catch it, kill it, bin it regime.
* Children should be supported to understand the changes and challenges they may be encountering as a result of Covid-19 and staff need to ensure they are aware of children’s attachments and their need for emotional support at this time.
* EYFS framework will continue to be delivered through play and adult led activities.

Holiday Travel

* If a family goes on holiday to another country they must inform the setting of their plans
* Should they be required to self isolate on return session fees are still required to be paid

**Workforce**

*Attendance*

* Staff should only attend Pre-School if they are symptom free, have completed the required isolation period or achieved a negative test result
* Staff hours, days they work and length of day may change in order to meet childcare demands and considerations within this policy.

*Physical distancing/ grouping /safety*

* A thorough and comprehensive risk assessment will be reviewed to address any risks from the virus, and to ensure sensible measures are in place to control risks.
* Staff to be fully informed of measures in place and to have read and signed all new/updated policies, guidance etc to state they have read and understood the preschool policies and procedures.
* Emergency revisions to the EYFS may have been implemented which provides some flexibility on ratios and qualifications.
* Staff have been advised by the government not to wear PPE such as facemasks during their day, but should continue to wear PPE at the usual times such as intimate care and wear disposable gloves and apron if completing one to one care and if supporting an ill child a face mask and visor should also be worn if a 2 meter distance cannot be maintained.
* After dealing with an ill child who displayed symptoms the staff member should continue to wear PPE and clean the affected area with disinfectant.
* All PPE should be removed and disposed of following current government guidelines, the staff member should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
* The staff member who supported the unwell child does not need to go home unless they are developing symptoms themselves.
* Staff members should avoid physical contact with each other including handshakes, hugs etc.
* If we need to close/partially close we will support staff by keeping in contact with them on a regular basis

*Training*

* Where possible, meetings and training sessions should be conducted through virtual conferencing.
* All staff members must receive appropriate instruction and training in infection control and the standard operating procedure and risk assessments within which they will be operating.
* Where necessary training such as Safeguarding etc requires updating, online training may be available to allow staff training levels to be maintained as appropriate.

**Parents/carers**

*Physical distancing*

* Parents/carers will be encouraged to drop off ideally only one adult per family, this is to minimise any ‘pinch points’.
* When parents are waiting to drop off or collect their child, physical distancing should be maintained in a safe area adhering to government social distancing policies.
* The garden gates will remain open until 9.30am so parents have no need to touch them

*Communications*

* Parents should receive clear communication regarding the role they play in the safe operating procedure and all measures being taken to ensure the safety of their children and themselves.
* Parents should inform Pre-School of their circumstances and if they plan to keep their child away, this helps Pre-School to conform to our safeguarding policy.

**Visitors**

* Visitors can now enter the setting, they will be asked to wash their hands on arrival and sign in to the visitor book. Visitors should not attend the setting if they are feeling unwell.

**Ne**w **admissions**

For new admissions, families are invited to attend the Pre-School to look around and to engage with the settling in procedure.

* there must be regular handwashing, especially before and after the visit

Prior to a visit, we will ensure that parents and carers are aware:

* of the ‘system of controls’
* how this impacts them and their responsibilities during their visit

**Parents settling children**

Guidance from PHE outlines how parents and carers are able to enter a setting to help their children adapt to their new environment. We will ensure that parents and carers:

* stay for a limited amount of time (ideally not more than an hour)
* avoid close contact with other children
* are aware of the ‘system of controls’, how this impacts them, and their responsibilities in supporting it when visiting a setting with their child

**Other visits by parents and carers**

* Parents and carers are now invited into the setting for settling in , meeting and collecting at the end of the day.

**Staff Ratios**

**If there is a local outbreak we may have to take the following action:**

* If we do not have sufficient staff to maintain ratios we may need to reduce the number of children attending the setting. Priority will be given to pupils as follows:
  + Prioritising children such as those who are vulnerable, those with special educational needs, those from households where both parents are key workers/work (or work full time)
  + Those who receive 2 year old funding
  + Offering places to those children transferring to Primary school
  + Offering places to pupils by date of birth

We may also need to reduce the number of overall weekly sessions a child attends to ensure we can cater for needs of priority pupils

**Hygiene and Health & Safety**

*Hand Washing*

* All children and staff must wash their hands upon arrival at the setting for at least 20 seconds.
* Children and staff members should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently, this includes before and after eating food, after visiting the toilet or playing outdoors, after sneezing, blowing their nose or coughing into their hand and dealing with unwell people.
* Bodily fluid spills should follow the correct procedures as normal.

*Cleaning*

* An enhanced cleaning schedule is in place that includes furniture, surfaces and children’s toys and equipment and all staff are responsible in their area of work.
* Communal area, touch points and hand washing facilities must be cleaned and sanitised regularly and cleaned thoroughly every night.
* A deep clean may be needed after a child has become ill in the area they were waiting.

*Waste disposal*

* All waste must be disposed of in a hygienic and safe manner following government guidelines.
* Tissues must be immediately disposed of and placed in a bin with a bag and lid.
* Bodily fluids must be double bagged and disposed of in a bin with a bag and lid.

*Risk assessment*

* The setting and all activity should be risk assessed before opening or going ahead to address the risks from the virus and due consideration given to any adaptations to usual practice. Sensible measures should be put in place and policies and procedures followed.

*PPE*

* Government guidance is that PPE is not required for general use in early years settings to protect against COVID- 19 transmission.
* PPE should continue to be worn and disposed of as normal for nappy changing, one to one care and the administration of first aid.

*Premises Building*

* Where premises have been temporarily closed during the lockdown period or where they may need to temporarily close during future lockdowns appropriate Health & Safety checks should be conducted prior to reopening including legionnaires checks.
* Keep windows open where possible to ensure good levels of ventilation. If doors are opened ensure the children safety is maintained with locked gates.

*Resources*

* Children should be limited on bringing items such as toys from home into the setting. We will accept comforters for children who are settling in.
* All resources required for play and learning experiences of children should be regularly washed and/or sterilized.
* Equipment used by staff such as stationary, tablets etc. should be allocated to individual staff members where possible and cleaned regularly.

*Supplies Procurement & monitoring*

* The Pre-School should ensure an adequate supply of essential supplies and contingency plans such as additional suppliers are in place to minimise the impact of any shortages of supplies.
* The Pre-School will not be able to operate without essential supplies required for ensuring infection control.

*Responding to a suspected case*

In the event of a child/staff member developing suspected coronavirus symptoms whilst attending the setting, they should be collected as soon as possible and isolate at home in line with the current NHS guidance.

If a child or staff member has a test and it comes back negative the child/staff member may return to the setting once they are well. If a positive test result, that individual would be advised to follow current guidance. The setting would expect, if applicable, fees to be continued to be paid during this period.

* Whilst waiting for the child to be collected they should be isolated from others in a previously identified area. If possible, a window should be opened for ventilation.
* The staff member responsible for the child during this time should be a staff member from their ‘room’. The provider may consider suitable PPE for this staff member such as the addition of face mask, visor disposable gloves and apron.
* The area should be thoroughly cleaned, immediately if the area cannot be left unvisited, and if the area can be left unvisited then cleaned after 72 hours.
* The person responsible for cleaning ideally should be the person dealing with the unwell child and should continue to wear their PPE. This should then be disposed of in 2 bags and taken straight to the biffa bins.
* In the event of a staff member developing suspected coronavirus symptoms whilst working at the setting they should return home immediately and isolate at home in line with the NHS guidance. They should also follow current testing advice for themselves and the results to be shared with the manager. If it is negative the member of staff can return to work immediately. If positive they should isolate for 5 days.

**Managing confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting**

When we are made aware that someone who has attended the setting has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), we will follow government advice and guidance regarding any isolation periods. It is currently recommended that children under the age of 18 years isolate for 3 days and over 18 years old for 5 days. We will recommend any close contact to take a PCR test. If there are 5 positive cases or 10% of the children and/or staff test positive, we will contact public health for advice on the action to take.

We will not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others.

We will not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back.

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 a positive COVID-19 case and any of the following apply:

Settings will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. If there is a substantial increase in the number of positive cases in a setting (see [local outbreaks](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/actions-for-early-years-and-childcare-providers-during-the-covid-19-pandemic#local-outbreaks) section for more information) or if central government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures.

If your child does not attend the setting due to any of the following, fees will still be required to be paid:

1. Waiting for a virus test/test results
2. Self isolating
3. Generally unwell
4. If you decide to keep your child at home

* If we are required to close or partially close fees will not be required but we will ask for voluntary contributions to help towards our running costs
* We will notify staff and parents of any closure by email as soon as possible and advise of the reason for closure and when we hope to re-open
* We will support all our children during a full/partial lockdown – please see our Remote Learning Policy.

**Local lockdown**

***Process in the event of local outbreaks***

If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that results in localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread. DfE will be involved in decisions at a local and national level and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice.

If we are required to reduce the number of children attending due to a local lockdown we will follow the criteria below:

* + A temporary cap on the amount of children in the setting at any one time.
  + Temporarily limiting funded hours to provide two whole days (12 hours per week)

to pupils regardless of the amount of funding normally received.

* + Temporarily offering non funded pupils 12 hours per week to be split into whole days – no morning/afternoon sessions to be made available
  + Prioritising children such as those who are vulnerable, those with special educational needs, those from households where both parents are key workers/work (or work full time)
  + Offering places to those children transferring to Primary school
  + Offering places to pupils by date of birth

**EYFS disapplications**

***Application of the early years foundation stage framework***

These temporary changes came into force on 24 April 2020 and ended on 25 September 2020.

New regulations that come into force on 26 September 2020 will allow temporary changes to be reapplied if coronavirus (COVID-19) related local lockdowns are imposed by government. This is because a local lockdown may affect a provider’s ability to comply with the EYFS.

**This policy was adopted on 20th May 2020 and reviewed on 28th April 2023**

**Bryony Smith - Chair of Windmill Pre-School Management Committee**

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**Claire Baker –Manager of Windmill Pre-School**

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**This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect any new guidance related to an epidemic or pandemic.**