**COVID update for schools 17th May 2021**

The following is taken from the guidance for schools that has been updated to reflect changes made in the May 17th 2021 government road map of easing restrictions. It covers controls that are likely to be in your current risk assessments.

**Face coverings**

From the 17th May 2021 pupils will no longer be required to wear face coverings in classrooms or communal areas in schools and colleges. This does not mean you have to change your current arrangements. Guidance to reintroduce face coverings again may come in at short notice if there are spikes in cases or concerns around new variants. You may wish to consider relaxing the use in classrooms but continuing to request they are worn by secondary age pupils in communal areas.

Staff in all schools no longer have to wear face coverings in classrooms but it is still recommended that face coverings are worn in communal areas where social distancing is difficult.

Those who are exempt from wearing face covering are still excluded from this guidance.

**School transport**

Face coverings are still required to be worn on public and dedicated school transport services. There is no change to the previous advice and controls

**Bubbles**

There is no change to the previous advice and controls

Currently there is no indication from the Department for Education (DfE) that a relaxation in bubbles will happen in line with relaxations in social interactions. They will make a decision nearer to the expected changes to the road map in June and we will let you know as soon as we have the information.

Where the requirement to self-isolate close contacts remains it is possible that bubbles will remain in place in schools. This is to try to control the number of pupils who would be required to self-isolate if there is a confirmed case of Covid 19.

The bubble system currently enables schools to identify close contacts with a good degree of confidence, this task will be made significantly harder and less reliable if you have no bubble controls in place.

We hope that the guidance around bubbles will be relaxed however I would urge you not to plan on them being removed on the 21st June and we should await further announcements on or before the 21st June and any subsequent guidance. The guidance issued to schools has been different to other settings throughout the pandemic.

**Lateral Flow testing**

There is no change to the previous advice for staff or pupils. Please continue to encourage secondary age pupils and all parents to LFD test twice a week.

**Hand washing**

There is no change to the previous advice and controls

**Enhanced cleaning**

There is no change to the previous advice and controls

**Sharing of resources**

There is no change to the previous advice and controls

**Assemblies/collective worship**

There is no change to the previous advice and controls.

They can still happen within bubbles but mixing of bubbles is not recommended

**Wrap around care**

This can now be opened up to anyone who wishes to use it. You will still need to maintain the group and bubble controls you currently have in place.

**Educational Day trips**

These are allowed with an appropriate risk assessment and within the bubble system. All off site trips should be entered onto Evolve.

**Residential trips**

These are permitted within the bubble structure and we would suggest you read the guidance on this as there are suggestions around insurance and bookings that may help you decide if you are going to go ahead with residential trips this term. You can also contact Evolve for advice.

**Transitional visits and open days**

These visits are allowed but need to be conducted in line with your current covid safe controls. Bubbles should not mix during visits and you will need to risk assess each visit. Transition days and face to face visits can happen but they need to be within the bubble structure of schools and must be risk assessed.  A year 6 group can visit a secondary school as a group as long as they are from the same school, if multiple groups visit they must be kept socially distant. Visiting groups should not interact with the bubbles in the secondary school.

For taster days and longer visits the children visiting should grouped as a consistent bubble and they do not interact with current bubbles, this may cause some logistical issues with space in some schools.

Parental visits and open days need to be arranged with social distancing and hand sanitation, if possible they should outside only or outside of school hours to protect the bubbles but still allow parents to see the school. If you choose to conduct visits in school hours they must be in small groups to allow social distancing and ensure that visitors do not break your bubbles.

Records and contact details of all visitors to site must be kept in line with current test and trace guidance.

**Pregnant staff**

The guidance issued previously has not changed. Staff over 28 weeks pregnant and/or with an underlying health conditions should only be in school if they are able to socially distance in their role. Alternative duties can be offered.

**Interviews for new staff**

It is still recommended that where possible these are undertaken virtually however it is recognised that this is not always possible and therefore it is acceptable for face to face interviews to take place with appropriate social distancing measures in place.

**Singing in school**

The guidance for performing arts has not been updated to reflect step 3 of the road map yet. The advice is to carry on with the previous guidance for performing arts, music and singing. Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles, or assemblies unless significant space, natural airflow and strict social distancing and mitigation can be maintained.

Singing should only take place in larger well-ventilated spaces, or outdoors. Performance or rehearsal is for limited periods of time at a reduced level of loudness, using microphones for amplification if available. Limited numbers of people sing together, they should be socially distanced where possible and should not sing face to face. Pupils can remain seated and back to back or side by side wherever possible and brass and woodwind players should be positioned so the direction of air flow is not towards another person. Bubbles should not be mixed.