**COVID-19 Response Policy**

This policy sets out the measures that Alphabets is putting in place and the steps that parents and carers can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is for the protection of all team members, children, parents and families at Alphabets. It will be reviewed and updated regularly, in line with Government guidelines.

As a preschool we are aware of the dangers of being exposed to COVID-19 and we will do our utmost to ensure the safety of every single person that enters our setting.

Parents and carers wishing to raise questions or concerns they may have, are welcome to do so via email, telephone or video call.

**Social Distancing**

*Social distancing between staff and children will not be possible as close contact is required in a preschool setting.*

* The number of children attending each day will be reduced so that we can keep to smaller manageable groups.
* Children and staff will operate in bubbles, and in line with ratio requirements.
* Children and staff members will operate on a rota system each week.
* Where possible, original key groupings will be maintained, however this will not always be practical given the rota system. When a child is not with their key person they will be assigned to the practitioner of their bubble.

*Social distancing between the staff, parents/carers and other adults will be required.*

* Staff will operate on a rota system and remain with the children assigned to their bubble.
* The setting itself will have markers and be organised in such a way that each bubble can remain separate.
* No parents or other adults will be allowed into the setting, unless absolutely necessary.
* In any situation where an adult is required to enter the setting (for example in an emergency, parish council and affiliates), social distancing will be observed.
* Only one parent/carer should attend drop off/collection at any one time.
* Parents/carers will not be allowed to enter the setting. Handover will take place at the outside door.
* Parents/carers must not congregate outside the building, recreation ground or car park.
* 2 metre markers will be painted along the path outside the main entrance to ensure social distancing is observed.
* Children must be emotionally ready to return as staff will only be able to accept the child in and not physically take them from the parent/carer.

**Daily Routine**

*Travel to and from the setting*

* Staff have been advised not to car share on their way to work.
* Staff will be aware of and adhere totravel guidelines if having to use public transport to get to and from work.
* We ask that parents walk their child to Alphabets where possible.
* Alphabets will continue to promote and encourage walking and cycling as a means of transport and a healthy lifestyle.

*Entering/leaving the setting*

* Children and staff will use hand sanitiser on arrival.
* Staff will sign children in and out of the setting.
* Children will bring a bag with extra clothing and any required personal items that will remain at the setting. Bags and clothes will not go home, unless they have become wet or soiled throughout the day.
* Parents should apply an all-day suncream to their child(ren) before entering the setting.
* Children will not be able to bring any toys or comforters from home into the setting.
* Parents of children in nappies will be asked to supply a named pack for the individual child. Staff will inform them when more are needed
* Each child will be required to bring a clearly labelled water bottle that will remain at Alphabets, being washed and refilled by a member of staff.
* Children and staff should wear freshly laundered clothes daily.
* We will not be able to send art home for the time being as the emphasis is on limiting things going backwards and forwards.
* We will continue to share updates on what we have been doing and communicate with parents via email, our website, Tapestry and Facebook

*Changes to the setting*

* Opening hours will be reduced to enable staff to drop off and collect their children at school and to complete the additional cleaning measures that will be required. Parents will be notified of details.
* Staff will try to keep the children outside as much as possible as there is less chance of infection outdoors.
* There will be a greater focus on activities that promote children’s well being and physical fitness.
* Soft toys, furnishings and any resources that are not easy to regularly clean will be put away for now. Hard-surfaced toys will be offered which will be regularly sanitised.
* Windows are to be opened at the beginning of the day for ventilation and will remain open throughout the day.

*Eating and drinking*

* There will be no self-serving at snack time. One staff member will prepare snack then the children and bubble staff member will have snack in their bubble. Staff will prepare, handle and dispose of food and drink using disposable gloves.
* Lunch tables will be separated and children spread out as much as possible.
* Parents will provide their child with a packed lunch in a container that can be wiped with anti-bacterial solution and that they can open and eat with minimal help or intervention from an adult.
* Staff will bring their own lunch in a hard plastic container which will be sanitised on arrival and taken home at the end of the day. No food is to be left in the fridge, freezer or kitchen overnight.
* Staff breaks and lunchtimes will be staggered.

**Hygiene**

*Staff*

* Staff will wash hands on arrival and throughout the day.
* Staff will avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth with unclean hands.
* Hand sanitiser will be available in the foyer, main room, kitchen and garden.
* Staff are not required to wear masks but can do so if they wish.

*Children*

* Children will wash hands regularly, and use hand sanitiser when hand washing is not immediately available.
* Children will be supervised when washing their hands and will be taught how to do it effectively.
* A good supply of disposable tissues will be made available and we will be teaching and encouraging the “Catch it, Kill it, Bin it” strategy with the children to help them understand how they can keep themselves and others safe. Posters within the setting will reinforce this teaching.
* We will provide activities that promote good hand washing, personal space and hygiene.
* Children must wear freshly laundered clothes daily.
* Nappy changes/personal care will be undertaken by an adult from a child’s bubble using PPE. This staff member may choose to wear a face mask.
* The toilet and sink will be cleaned after each use. The children will be grouped and have an assigned toilet and sink (rainbow or star).

*Cleaning*

Cleaning of the environment, including toys and equipment, will be frequent, thorough and follow a recognised procedure in line with Government guidance and the guidance issued by the Early Years Alliance.

* A COVID-19 daily cleaning checklist will be completed.
* A COVID-19 hourly cleaning checklist will be completed.
* Practitioners and cleaning staff in the setting will adopt a colour-coded system for cleaning materials and equipment.
* There will be a cleaning schedule for all toys, books and outdoor equipment.
* Swing top bins will be provided throughout the setting.

*Record keeping*

* Senior staff member on site to complete the COVID-19 daily management checklist.
* Staff members to complete COVID-19 daily cleaning checklist.
* Contact details for staff and children are to be kept up to date.
* Risk assessments to be completed for any staff and children that are vulnerable – eg new and expectant mothers or those with medical conditions.

**Infection Control**

*Attendance*

* Following Government guidance, if a staff member, child, or anyone in their household displays symptoms, they must not attend nursery and should isolate for a minimum of 7 days, pending testing.
* Children who use an inhaler will need to provide evidence from a doctor that their child is fit to attend preschool.
* Alphabets may need to close at short notice due to staff shortages or sickness. We will try to cover staffing to prevent this happening but we are unable to use Agency staff during this time.
* Currently demand for places at Alphabets is low. However, if demand exceeds capacity, staff will prioritise children as follows: essential workers, vulnerable children, children whose parents cannot work from home, 3 and 4 year olds, then younger children.
* Parents should inform Alphabets if their child is going to be absent.

*Awareness*

* Staff members are to refer to the Covid-19 risk assessment and ensure all staff are aware of its contents and new protocols.
* Parents will be made aware of and have access to the COVID-19 response policy (this document) and Alphabet’s COVID-19 risk assessment on the website.
* Posters re social distancing, hand washing etc will be displayed through the setting.

*PPE*

* Staff to only wear clothes that they would be prepared to dispose of if required in the case of any infection
* Staff to wear aprons and gloves for cleaning.
* Additional PPE must be used where there is a child with suspected coronavirus.
* Disposable face masks and face shields will be provided.
* Staff will be made aware of how to correctly remove PPE.

*If a child is symptomatic*

* If a child shows symptoms of Coronavirus while at Alphabets (a new persistent cough or temperature of 37.8 or above), the manager should be informed and parents/carers contacted. They will need to be collected immediately. The committee will be informed.
* The senior member of staff’s judgement on coughs will be final. The child will wait in the foyer, with a member of staff, who will be required to wear PPE, until they are collected.
* If a child shows symptoms of Coronavirus at preschool, or whilst at home and between sessions at the preschool, then the child and their household must follow the guidance of self-isolating.
* If a child develops coronavirus-symptoms at home then parents must inform Alphabets..
* Children attending childcare are eligible for Coronavirus testing if they display coronavirus-symptoms, and will be required to do so. Parents will be asked to inform Alphabets of the result.
* There are procedures available for parents/carers to have their children tested and if they have a positive result then the child must complete their self-isolation for 7 days and their family must complete their self-isolation for 14 days.
* Children with a negative result can end their self-isolation and may return to preschool. Household members can also end their self-isolation.
* If a child’s test is positive, **all** members of a child’s bubble, both staff and other children, will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days, in accordance with the Government guidance, and parents/carers of children from other bubbles will be informed. The Government guidance does not require that the other members of the household, of a child/staff member who is self-isolating because of a case of confirmed coronavirus within their bubble, need to self-isolate as well, unless the child/staff member subsequently develops symptoms.
* Only children who are symptom free or have completed the required isolation period are able to return to the setting.

*If a staff member is symptomatic*

* If a staff member shows symptoms of Coronavirus while at Alphabets (a new persistent cough or temperature of 37.8 or above), the manager should be informed and they should return home immediately in order to self-isolate, along with the members of their household. Adult to child ratio will still be met with current staffing levels.The committee will be informed.
* If they are concerned about symptoms they should call NHS111. They should not visit their GP or health centre, in line with Government guidelines.
* Where there are symptoms, employees are required to take part in the government’s testing programme for Covid-19 and ensure that the results are communicated to management. If the test results reveal that the individual has contracted Covid-19, they will need to self-isolate for the required 7days and a decision will be made about when they can return to work. If the test result is negative, the staff member can end their self-isolation and return to work.
* If an employee’s test is positive, **all** members of their bubble, both staff and other children, will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days, in accordance with the Government guidance, and parents/carers of children from other bubbles will be informed. The Government guidance does not require that the other members of the household, of a child/staff member who is self-isolating because of a case of confirmed coronavirus within their bubble, need to self-isolate as well, unless the child/staff member subsequently develops symptoms.

*Decontamination*

* All waste that has been in contact with a person displaying coronavirus symptoms including tissues and masks, if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste. Should the person test positive, the current government guidelines will provide instructions about what to do with the waste.
* Staff to wear disposable gloves when handling these items. Packaging and gloves to be double bagged after use for disposal.
* All surfaces that a person showing coronavirus symptoms has been in contact with must be cleaned.

*Safeguarding*

* Staff will plan for 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.
* Staff will be alert to harms that may have been hidden or missed while children have not been attending settings.
* Staff will plan for the transition period for children returning to preschool, considering the mental health, pastoral or wider health and wellbeing support children may need.
* Staff will involve parents and carers to identify specific support for children and how children’s needs may have changed, preparing for their return to preschool.
* Staff will identify and plan how best to support high needs groups, including children with SEND, vulnerable children and disadvantaged children when the setting reopens.

*Staff well-being*

* In advance of opening, meetings will be held virtually to share expectations with all staff and to address concerns.
* One to one opportunities available to allow staff to express concerns.
* Access to well-being and mental health support communicated has been shared with staff.
* A contingency plan has been developed to cover staff absence/sickness.

*Planning and policies*

* Staff and Committee will review and update all policies in line with government guidelines.
* Fire procedures and assembly points will need to be reviewed in light of social distancing and staff to be trained.
* All planned activities should be risk assessed in light of coronavirus and may need to be adapted.

**Further guidance**

Guidance and recommended actions from Gov.uk, HCC & EYA to be followed wherever possible.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance to-employers-and-businessess-about-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance%20to-employers-and-businessess-about-covid-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-early-years-and-childcare-settings-from-1-june>

<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/coronavirus-info-for-nurseries>

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>