****

**Epidemic and Pandemic Policy**

**(Covid 19)**

**Statement of Intent**

Mudeford Wood Playgroup will 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.

**Aim of Policy**

This Policy defines and assists the operating arrangements in place within the pre-school that assures compliance with the Government and leading bodies requirements in 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, childcare and education. The fundamental principles outlined in this policy are set out to ensure that physical distancing and good hygiene practices are implemented to avoid coming into contact with infected children, adults or anyone displaying symptoms and contracting the virus. 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 there is no conflict 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)
* Minimising general contact and mixing (creating bubbles and limiting numbers)
* The use of Protective and Personal Equipment (PPE)
* Testing

**Focus/ Areas of Consideration / Recommendations**

**Children**

*Attendance*

* Only children who are symptom free or have completed the required isolation period should attend the setting.
* Parents to be asked by staff on arrival if the child or any member of the household has any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature or a persistent cough). If yes, the child should be taken home and can only return after 14 days in isolation or all household members have tested negative for the virus.
* Risk assessing with health questionnaires for returning children.
* Extremely vulnerable children should continue to follow their own Medical Professional and Government’s advice.
* Families who attend more than one setting should attend only one when possible, whilst social distancing measures remain in place.

*Physical Distancing/grouping*

* Children will be organised into small groups (social bubbles) within the setting which will be maintained during any periods of attendance. These small groups or ‘bubbles’ will not mix during the day as far as is possible to minimise contact with others. Staff will exercise their own judgement during the day to preserve the safety of all children.
* Wherever possible each bubble will have the same staff team caring for them to limit contact for both staff and children.
* Smaller numbers of children will attend the setting at any one time. If the playgroup reaches capacity this could be achieved by, but not limited to:
	+ A temporary cap on the amount of children in the setting at any one time.
	+ Temporarily limiting hours attended to ensure all children have access to some

pre-school time.

* + Changing children’s hours to enable the creation of social bubbles.
	+ Only allowing the older children or those moving to school to attend.
	+ Grouping the children moving on to school to certain days to help with transition.
	+ Changing the pre-school opening hours to reduce the period of risk
	+ Prioritising children who are vulnerable, have special educational needs or key worker parents
* Each bubble will have its own dedicated area and routines including handwashing, provision of meals and nappy changing should be within the space allocated to each ‘bubble’ wherever possible.
* The use of communal internal spaces should be restricted as much as possible and outdoor spaces should be utilised as much as possible and used by ‘bubbles’ in different areas during the day.
* A phased return may be best to ease their transition back into pre-school where it has been closed for a while or only open for critical workers.

*Wellbeing and education*

* Staff will complete a risk assessment before opening to address any risks from the virus, ensure sensible measures are in place to control risks.
* 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.
* Staff will monitor their ‘bubble’ for symptoms throughout the day and consider taking a child’s temperature if necessary.
* EYFS framework will continue to be delivered through child and adult led activities.
* Lunch and snack times will be carefully monitored and take place within each ’bubble’.
* Lunches (including drink) will be provided by parents as usual.
* Children should be dressed in weather appropriate clothing that covers their arms and shoulders and (long lasting) sunscreen applied by the parents /carers before the child arrives at the

pre-school during warm weather. They should also bring a named hat and coat.

* To minimise risk, staff will not be expected to reapply sunscreen at the pre-school.

**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. All staff and their household are eligible for testing if they display symptoms.
* Providers may consider taking temperature of staff on arrival and risk assessing with regular health questionnaires for returning staff.
* Consideration should be given to limiting the number of staff in the pre-school at any one time to only those required to care for the expected occupancy levels on any given day
* 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*

* Staff will complete a risk assessment before opening to address any risks from the virus, ensure sensible measures are in place to control risks.
* Staff to be informed of measures in place and sign a disclaimer to say they have read and understood the pre-school policies and procedures.
* Wherever possible staff should remain with the small group of children, the ‘bubble’ of children they have been allocated to and not come into contact with other groups.
* Emergency revisions to the EYFS may have been implemented which provides some flexibility on ratios and qualifications to make this feasible.
* 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 distance of 2 metres 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.
* 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 child who is unwell does not need to go home unless they are developing symptoms themselves.
* Social distancing must be maintained between adults at all times including breaks. This may be achieved through a range of strategies including the staggering of breaks and subdivision of spaces allocated to team breaks where possible.
* Staff may be required to be in charge of specific rooms or areas including the outdoors to minimise their contact with surfaces etc. This includes potentially working from one particular table if table top toys are available. Staff will be responsible to ensure appropriate cleaning takes place and enough ventilation is in the room such as opening windows. If doors are open ensure the safety of the children is maintained.
* Staff members should avoid physical contact with each other including handshakes, hugs etc.
* Staff to wear fresh, clean clothes for each session.
* Advise staff to remove their work clothes before they enter their home and take a shower immediately to remove any germs they may have picked up.

*Wellbeing*

* Breaks may be taken as and when necessary.
* The setting will follow official public health and medical advice and keep staff informed of the measures being taken to manage the situation.
* Stress levels must be monitored and staff members given the opportunity to discuss any concerns they might have.
* Staff concerns must be taken seriously and appropriate support put in place as soon as possible.
* Provide advice about isolation and testing procedures

*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.
* Online training may be available to allow their training levels to be maintained if appropriate.

**Parents**

*Physical distancing*

* Only parents who are symptom free and or have completed the required isolation periods will be able to drop off or collect their child.
* ‘Pinch points’ will be limited as far as possible and drop off and pick up will be limited to one parent per family.
* Each bubble will have their own drop off and collection door to avoid a queue of families waiting to enter pre-school.
* Drop off and pick up will be at an allocated pre-school entrance to avoid parents entering the pre-school unnecessarily.
* When parents are waiting to drop off or collect their child, physical distancing should be maintained in a safe area sticking to government social distancing policies.
* Consider measures to minimise contact between parents and staff members.

*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 the setting to conform to our safeguarding policy.
* Parents may be needed to support the running of the pre-school by providing extra resources and consumables that they are unable to source such as cleaning wipes or antibacterial gel etc. This is to ensure the safe running of the pre-school is not hindered by lack of equipment and resources.

**Visitors**

* Attendance to the setting should be restricted to only children and staff as far as practically possible and visitors should not be permitted to the pre-school unless essential (e.g. essential building maintenance).
* Where essential visits are required these should be made outside of the usual operating hours where possible.
* As far as possible parents and carers should not enter the premises.

**Travel**

* Wherever possible staff and parents should travel to pre-school alone, using their own transport or if possible cycle or walk.
* If public transport is necessary, current guidance on the use of public transport must be followed.
* Parents should be encouraged to ensure they do not leave travel accessories including buggies, car seats, scooters in the setting premises or grounds.

**Hygiene and Health & Safety**

*Hand Washing*

* All children and staff must use the hand gel and wash their hands upon arrival at the nursery 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 people who are unwell.
* Any bodily fluids should be cleaned up in line with existing policy.

*Cleaning*

* An enhanced cleaning schedule must be implemented that includes furniture, surfaces and children’s toys and equipment and all staff are responsible for this in their own designated 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.

*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, lid and foot pedal.
* Bodily fluids must be double bagged and disposed of in a bin with a bag, lid and foot pedal.

*Laundry*

* All items within the setting requiring laundering must be washed in line with NHS laundry guidelines.
* Items such as towels, flannels and bedding must not be shared by children.

*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.
* It is expected that would include, but not be limited to, the suspension of learning experiences involving materials which are not easily washable and the suspension of the sharing of food and utensils.
* Remove anything which cannot be easily wiped down or washed at the end of the day.

*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.
* If a child shows symptoms, staff should wear a face mask, visor, disposable gloves and apron if a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained at all times. PPE should be taken off and then disposed in line with Government guidelines.
* An emergency pack of PPE will be available in each area.

*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.
* Windows should be kept open where possible to ensure good levels of ventilation.

*Resources*

* Children should not be permitted to bring items from home into the setting unless absolutely essential for their wellbeing. Anything that is brought in from home should remain in the child’s bag on their peg.
* All resources required for play and learning experiences should be regularly washed and/or sterilized. Any resources which are difficult to clean should be removed.
* Equipment used by staff such as stationery, 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.
* The pre-school will not be able to operate without essential supplies required for ensuring infection control.
* A monitoring system for the usage of PPE is essential to ensure that a supply of stock is available to all who require it as and when required to meet the operational needs of the setting. When stocks are low, other options may be considered, such as the use of washable tabards and facemasks. These items will be washed at a high temperature in accordance with relevant guidelines and separate to any other pre-school washing.

*Responding to a suspected case*

* In the event of a child 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.
* Whilst waiting for the child to be collected they should be isolated from others in a previously identified room or 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 ‘bubble’. 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 should ideally be the person dealing with the child who is unwell. They should continue to wear their PPE and then dispose of it according to current Government guidelines.
* Any staff member that develops suspected Coronavirus symptoms whilst working at the setting should return home immediately and isolate in line with the NHS guidance. They should also follow current testing procedures for themselves and their household.

**Monitoring of this policy**

*This policy will be initially be reviewed weekly by the manager and staff team and new government legislation and policies will be incorporated appropriately as and when required or informed.*

Reviewed August 2020