

Coronavirus Policy and Procedure

The Ark's main priority at this current time is to ensure the health and safety of all children, their families, carers, staff and volunteers who attend. In order to comply with government guidance to open The Ark to a wider group of children on June 1st 2020, The Ark will focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups and then, to support children's early learning, will prioritise 3 and 4 year olds, followed by younger age groups.

We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children and staff, where possible, only mix in small, consistent groups and that every small group stays away from other people and groups.

The Ark will:

- organise children into small groups, as described above
- plan and stagger times for parents' drop-off and pick-up routines, asking only one parent to attend to minimise adult to adult contact.
- make clear to parents that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the building
- keep small groups of children together throughout the day and avoid larger groups of children mixing
- ensure play equipment is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously
- remove unnecessary items from learning environments, for example, soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean
- tell children, parents, carers and any visitors, such as suppliers, not to enter The Ark if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus
- talk to staff about the plans and discuss whether training would be helpful
- communicate early with contractors and suppliers that will be needed to support our plans for opening (for example, cleaning, catering, food supplies, hygiene suppliers)

The Ark will keep groups together where possible and ensure that:

- children are in the same small groups at all times each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day, or on subsequent days.
- the number of children who use the toilet facilities at any one time are limited.
- the same staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, this arrangement will stay the same during the day and on subsequent days.
- wherever possible, children use the same room throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day.

Cleaning and hygiene:

The Ark will:

- follow the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- ensure that sufficient hand washing facilities are available

- clean surfaces that children touch, such as toys, books, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, hand rails, more regularly than normal

The Ark will ensure that all adults and children:

- clean their hands on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing
- frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly.
- are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
- use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste 'catch it, bin it, kill it'

The Ark staff will:

- help children who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
- encourage children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
- ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
- where possible, ventilate all spaces well, using natural ventilation, opening windows and propping doors open, and where safe to do so, limit use of door handles
- use outside space for outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff. Outdoor equipment will not be used unless The Ark is able to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously.
- use shared rooms when necessary. Where two groups of children use the same room at different times, for example The Raft used by both Pre-school and school-aged children, then adequate cleaning between groups will take place, following the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance
- stagger the use of staff rooms and offices to limit occupancy
- reduce the use of shared resources:
- clean and disinfect shared materials and surfaces more frequently

What happens if someone becomes unwell at The Ark?

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough, a high temperature or loses their sense of taste and smell they will be sent home and advised to follow the COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If a child becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while at The Ark and needs direct personal care until they can return home, a face mask will be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection will also be worn.

If a child is awaiting collection, they will be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window will be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, they will be moved to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the toilet while waiting to be collected, they will use the staff toilet next to the staff room. The toilet room will be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

In an emergency, 999 will be called if a child is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Staff will not take the child to a GP surgery, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped a child who was unwell with a new, continuous cough, high temperature or loss of their sense of taste and smell, they will not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves (and in which case, a test is available) or the child subsequently tests positive. They will wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. The affected area will be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus at The Ark?

When a child or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children who are attending The Ark will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to The Ark and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

Where the child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their group within The Ark will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that group do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the group or in the wider setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise The Ark on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger number of other children may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole room group.

Will children be eligible for testing?

When The Ark opens to the wider cohort of children, all those children eligible to attend, and members of their households, will have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus. This will enable them to get back into childcare or education, and their parents or carers to get back to work, if the test proves to be negative. To access testing parents will be able to use the 111 online coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is aged under 5.

Access to testing is already available to all essential workers. This includes childcare workers. The Ark can book tests through an online digital portal. There is also an option for staff to book tests directly on the portal.