

Coronavirus (COVID-19) 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 The Ark. Current Government guidance states 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 following the procedure laid out below.

The Ark staff will:

- ensure children, staff and other adults do not come into The Ark if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or have tested positive in the last 10 days and anyone developing those symptoms during the day will be sent home.
- organise children into groups, and minimise contact between groups where possible.
- ensure that all adults and children clean their hands on arrival at The Ark, and wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry them thoroughly before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing.
- encourage children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
- help children who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
- encourage children not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
- limit the number of children who use the toilet facilities at any one time
- ensure that the same staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, keep this arrangement throughout the day and on subsequent days.
- ensure, wherever possible, children use the same room throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of 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, when possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff.
- ensure outdoor equipment is appropriately cleaned after use.
- 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
- 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
- ask parents and visitors to wear face coverings at The Ark in certain circumstances. Hands will need to be washed or sanitised both when putting face coverings on and when removing them. used face coverings must be stored in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully.
- clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including regularly cleaning frequently touched surfaces using standard products, such as detergents and bleach.
- where necessary, ensure staff wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- remove unnecessary items from learning environments, for example, soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean

Procedure to follow in response to any infection

If anyone in The Ark becomes unwell with a new, persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia) they will be sent home.

If a child is awaiting collection they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door with appropriate adult supervision and ideally, a window should 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 bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should be taken to a separate bathroom if possible - the bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

In an emergency situation staff should call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk - anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any children who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate. However, they must self-isolate and arrange for a test if: they develop symptoms themselves, if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell - the area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people; see the guidance on [cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home](#)

The Ark manager will ensure that all staff and parents understand the NHS Test and Trace process. The Ark will ensure that staff members and parents/carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they are displaying symptoms. Staff and children must not come into The Ark if they have symptoms and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them whilst at The Ark. All children can be tested.
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

The manager will ask parents, carers and staff to inform them immediately of the results of the test:

- if someone begins to self-isolate because they have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19) and they have a test which delivers a **negative** result. If they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can also stop self-isolating
- if someone tests **positive**, they should follow [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#). They must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to The Ark only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or

loss of sense of smell or taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The minimum 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days

As part of the national test and Track and Trace programme, if other cases are detected within the group or in The Ark, 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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>

The manager will take swift action when someone who has attended The Ark has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) by contacting the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. She will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform her what action is needed based on the latest public health advice.

The advice service will work with the manager of The Ark to carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate. If, following triage, further expert advice is required the adviser will escalate your call to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with the manager of The Ark to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on their advice, The Ark manager should send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days from when they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact includes:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home.

- children and staff in specific groups/rooms (where applicable)
- close contact that takes places between children and staff in different groups/rooms

A template letter will be provided to The Ark on the advice of the advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated), to send to parents, carers and staff if needed. The Ark staff must not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others. The PHE local health protection team will also contact The Ark directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended The Ark - as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

Household members of those who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period, they should follow [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#). They should get a test.

If someone who is self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) starts to feel unwell and has a test for coronavirus themselves, and the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days. If the test result is positive, they should inform The Ark immediately, and should isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#).

The Ark staff should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

In the vast majority of cases, The Ark staff and parents and carers will be in agreement that a child with symptoms should not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer insists on a child attending The Ark, The Ark manager can take the decision to refuse the child if in their reasonable judgement it is necessary to protect their children and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Any such decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and the current public health advice.

If The Ark has 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, The Ark may have an outbreak, and the manager should work with their local health protection team who will be able to advise if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other children self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole site or a group.

In the event of any confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in The Ark (either child or staff member), and/or if The Ark is advised to close as a result, this should be swiftly reported to Ofsted through the usual notification channels.