



Larwood Academy Trust

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Larwood School

Deputy Headteacher: Mr Pierre Van Der Merwe | BA, NPQH |

Brandles School

Headteacher: Mr David Pearce | BA (hons), PGCE, NPQH |

The Trust approach to Covid 19 so far...

March –end of summer term 2020

Just like many schools, workplaces, individuals, families and the government, there has been an element of 'finding our way' during this time. However, we quickly established a principle of 'first do no harm' and then moved on with this firmly in mind. Therefore we:

- Closed both schools in the Trust just before the Easter holidays due to the high number of staff/pupils experiencing potential symptoms or being within family units that needed to self-isolate.
- Maintained frequent communication with all parties. This has been essential and many parents have made direct comparison between our approach and that of others.
- We quickly moved to reorganise ourselves to deal with the nature of the event. For example, we swiftly moved to using Teams meetings, began to develop online learning and make use of the schools YouTube site for lessons
- Ensured that some provision continued throughout the summer holidays and at the start of the summer term for those classified as most vulnerable. This was based on our own definition and not the generic one created by the DFE.
- Quickly established PPE materials that were appropriate and did not run out.
- Navigated the free school meal system to ensure that families did not go hungry.
- Developed and stuck to a rota system until it was deemed safe to make changes
- Gradually extended the number of staff/pupils on site over time, ensuring that infection rates were going down and maintaining a tight grip on protocols and safety.
- Keep Trustee's informed at regular intervals and ensured that statutory governance requirements were met.
- Provided mental health support where needed and checked regularly on pupils where safeguarding was of greater risk
- Reviewed, modelled and adapted our risk assessments over time.
- Provided a socially distanced holiday club (primary) for our pupils during the summer holiday period.
- Adjusted the curriculum to include more outside activities and less academic emphasis. We wanted the school based option to be as appealing as staying at home if possible and appropriate.
- Dealt with the ever changing nature of advice, conflicting messages and 'shifting sands' as best we could.
- Created 'bubbles' and systems that would support their operation.

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- Ensured that no member of staff or external supporting colleague lost out financially due to Covid.

Our approach since September.

At the start of the academic year, we have met with all staff, provided training and spent time dedicated to Covid best practice. Each school has its own set of procedures but retain common principles. Our risk assessments have been reviewed and we have welcomed back all staff and pupils*.

Since the start of the term we have experienced:

- Many smiling faces and pupils happy to be back (some may not openly admit it!)
- Revised special school guidance for opening being released on 11th September!
- A number of staff/pupils having to require a test due to Covid symptoms
- We have continued to only have essential external support in school
- The gradual increase of infection and death rate (this document being written on 14th September) and causing nationwide and school based anxiety/concern
- Repeated messages about how schools are safe places to be, yet national expectations are far from allowing the numbers that meet up daily in schools
- A complete breakdown in the ability to access testing. Example Staff X needed to access a test in the summer holidays and was seen on same day with result back very early the following morning. Staff Y needed to access the test in our week 2 of term (many school equivalent week 1 due to use of training days). Nearest possible test was over 100 miles away and no postal tests were available.
- Various schools within our locality have already had to close down year groups or whole school due to positive tests. This has an impact of staffing levels and the need for staff to isolate for a 14 day period.
- Consistent contradiction and change in approach from the DFE/government

Lessons to be learned and actions at this early stage of the year:

1. Take nothing for granted as to the way we will work this year. Be prepared for change and flexibility and this needs to be shared with all staff. There are actions here in terms of staff support for flexibility, resilience and training.
2. Be aware that Covid 19, risk assessments, testing etc. will take time away from other themes. It is my opinion that it is leadership's responsibility to protect teachers/support staff and pupils, as best they can, to get on with the delivery of the curriculum.
3. Maximise use of technology (Teams) to limit potential exposure and transfer. Staff training, lesson observations and intra school meetings where possible will be via Teams. Other visiting professionals, parents, etc. will be limited to absolutely essential. See also note 8.

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4. We will need to prepare staff to be able to deliver lessons online ie teach a class using Teams
5. At this stage and based on current data and experiences so far this term, we will experience year group closure and need to be ready to quickly switch back to virtual learning.
6. Continue to review, monitor and act upon gaps in learning. Intervention programs and support will need to be extended and carefully directed.
7. Maintain as tight a 'bubble' as we can to minimise the effect of an outbreak. Head/Exec Head will also campaign robustly for improved testing
8. Initiate plans that support minimum issues when infection rate rises:
 - If daily infection rate rises above 4000/day-SLT to only meet remotely rather than socially distanced and in the same room.
 - If above xxxx, then no physical interaction between schools in the Trust

Update-December 2020

Our approach to the virus was tested when during December, we had a case of CV 19 with a member of staff. As predicted, we knew this would happen and our systems/approaches were tested. The actual case confirmed the following:

- ✓ When a case is confirmed, time is of the essence. This is particularly acute for us when we have many children travelling from differing areas of Hertfordshire and if the test result is known early morning.
- ✓ Carefully planned roles help. This comprised of the following:
 - ST making contact with DFE/the LA to discuss plans/confirm the case
 - PV-making contact with staff/taxi's
 - BO/IR making contact with parents

The case also highlighted a really important point in relation to our current procedures. Due to our approach, with staff and pupils, this case remained an isolated case. Therefore it is vital that we continue to stick and reinforce our procedures/bubbles on a day to day basis.

Online learning again was tested during this phase. This included:

- ✚ The pupils that has to isolate due to being in the effected bubble
- ✚ Those that were not in the effected bubble but had to isolate due to being in taxi transport with those in the effected bubble.

Therefore we had a whole class being taught remotely and some pupils 'dropping into' physical classes at school whilst in isolation. Both worked well but there were some hitches/issues that came to light. These were shared with all staff on the first training session back in January 2021.

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NB-Please note that both schools will have pupils returning over weeks. This is standard practice to aid carefully planned expansion of numbers, care, and school ethos. It is also really helpful with Covid 19!

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