



FOREST ROW COMMUNITY PRE-SCHOOL POLICY 27 PREPARING FOR A PANDEMIC POLICY

This policy has been written with guidance from the Department for Education and Skills – “Planning for a human influenza pandemic – Guidance to Schools and Children’s Services”. A copy is available at the pre-school or you may download this at www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flupandemic/

Background

It is impossible to predict when the next pandemic might occur or how severe its consequences might be. On average, three pandemics per century have been documented since the 16th century, occurring at intervals of 10 - 50 years. In the 20th century, pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The pandemic of 1918 is estimated to have killed more than 40 million people in less than a year, with peak mortality rates occurring in those aged 20 - 45 years. The pandemics of 1957 and 1968 were milder with 1 - 4 million estimated deaths primarily in traditional groups such as the elderly, but many countries nevertheless experienced strains on health-care resources. If an influenza pandemic virus were to appear again similar to the 1918 strain, even taking account of recent medical advances, unparalleled tolls of illness and death could be expected. Air travel would hasten the spread of transmission of the virus and decrease the time available for preparing intervention. Although it is not considered to be feasible to halt the spread of a pandemic virus, it should be possible to minimize its consequences through advance preparation. This note, which will be reviewed and re-issued annually, sets out guidelines in the event of a pandemic together with the pre-school's policy in relation to the control and prevention of flu-like symptoms as a matter of routine.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO constantly monitors the various flu-type viruses that emerge each year and categorises the development of each within five defined phases, with particular concern where there is evidence that a virus that emanated in animals or birds has become adapted to humans. Advice will also be issued through the ISBA, MOSA and the Pandemic Influenza Planning Group established in the Health Protection Agency.

Planning Assumptions.

Advice to all sectors is that they should seek to continue operating as normally as possible during a pandemic, but should plan for much higher than usual levels of staff absence and the consequences as well as for other possible disruption resulting from the pandemic's impact

on other services. However, early years settings are potentially different from other settings. Children are highly efficient "spreaders" of respiratory infections, amongst themselves and to adults. There is some evidence that such infections spread less amongst children in holiday periods than in term-time. Thus, closing Pre-school for a period might reduce significantly the number of children infected. Once the nature of any future pandemic is detected, the Government may advise schools to close for a stated period. Our response to any pandemic should cover both closure and the Pre-school remaining open.

The pre-school's Response

The Supervisor and chair of the management committee will be responsible for co-ordinating the pre-school's response, which will be graduated according to what may be a quickly changing scenario. Unless advised to close, or forced to through staff absences, the aim will be to continue to operate pre-school as normal within the following:

- Staff feeling unwell or displaying symptoms such as a high temperature will be sent home immediately.
- Bank staff will be contacted where possible to cover staff absences to try to ensure the setting is able to remain open where it is appropriate for it to be so.
- Staff may need to take on a different role where it is necessary to do so, in the case of staff absences. It will be ensured that this is appropriate by checking where appropriate with relevant bodies (i.e. Ofsted and East Sussex County Council). Where staff are taking on different unfamiliar tasks it may be appropriate for additional risk assessments to be undertaken
- A sick child will be separated from other children, in accordance with the 'Sick Child Policy' and their contact with staff will be minimised until the child can be collected by their parents. It is very important that the pre-school retains an up-to-date list of parent's contact details and emergency contact details.
- Staff and children deemed to be at high risk due to pre-existing conditions should be advised to stay at home for all or part of any pandemic.
- Central Government, through the local authority, will advise on any mandatory closure of the pre-school. Should local conditions, such as general shortages of food, the disruption of power supplies, or insufficient staff to ensure the appropriate staffing ratios can be put in place the Supervisor will inform the chair of the committee and will order closure.
- If the pre-school is to close the following procedures will be put in place:
 - The Supervisor, Deputy will notify the parents that the pre-school will be closed until further notice.
 - The Supervisor, or a designated member of staff, will stand outside the pre-school at normal opening time to ensure that parents who were not able to be contacted by telephone are aware of the situation.

Infection Control

As a matter of course, staff follow good hygiene policies to ensure infection, including potential influenza transmission, is minimized. These practices are already encouraged for the children and during an influenza pandemic the staff will stress the importance to parents of teaching good hygiene. These measures include:

- Encouraging thorough frequent hand-washing;

- Encouraging covering the nose and mouth with single-use tissues when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing noses;
- Disposing of used tissues in the nearest bin.
- Providing any information requested by the pre-school's local authority (e.g. absence rates)

Cleaning and Waste Disposal

- Any cleaning should be undertaken with non-latex gloves and, if necessary, medicated facemasks which are to be worn when undertaking any cleaning activities.
- All bins should contain sealable plastic bags deployed for the collection of used paper tissues. They are to be emptied on a daily basis and disposed of in sealed plastic bags: if practical, they should be burnt.
- All nappies to be sealed in 'double' bags.

Pre-stocking

The pre-school is to hold three months' stocks of non-latex gloves, medicated facemasks and suitable plastic bags. Perishable stocks are to be turned-over on a regular basis.

Conclusion

It is difficult to determine in advance the likely consequences for the pre-school in the event of a major pandemic. The pre-school should continue to function unless instructed to close or in the event of local conditions making continuation impossible or unsafe. Flexibility would be required by all staffs, with due emphasis at all levels being given to minimising the risk through good and responsible personal and general hygiene.

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