



Confederation of School Trusts

Full opening of schools: a decision-making framework for Trust Boards

The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) is the national organisation and sector body for academy and multi-academy trusts. We believe that strong and resilient governance and decision-making are essential to help schools and trusts deal with the current challenging circumstances. We have updated our decision-making framework to reflect the [DfE guidance on the full opening of schools in the Autumn 2020](#).

The framework outlines a series of strategic actions for trust boards to take before decisions can be made about the full opening of schools in September in the safest possible way. It does not include all possible actions that could or should be taken in the specific context of your trust or your group of schools. It is intended to be a strategic framework to guide decision-making and we have therefore attempted to be concise.

The sections in the framework could be used as your board agenda. In each case, risks and actions to mitigate risks should be identified and recorded formally by the trust board. This is because the trust board is the responsible body, legal entity and employer.

Some of the actions identified in this framework may be delegated to school-level and/or your scheme of delegation may need to be amended for a specified period to give delegations or withdraw delegations, depending on your risk assessment and risk tolerances.

*If you follow the **system of controls** set out in annex A of this guidance, you will effectively reduce risks in the school or groups of schools and create an inherently safer environment. CST has separately commissioned Browne Jacobson to provide clarity on [directors' liabilities](#).*

The strategic job now is to ensure a balance of risk - using the system of controls to prevent infection alongside ensuring pupils have a broad and ambitious curriculum.

We will keep this framework up to date as the DfE publishes additional guidance.

Decisions and actions to take before opening the schools in your trust in September

Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Review health and safety risk assessments ensuring these are based on the Public Health System of Nine Controls in the DfE guidance summarised in annex A below. More information about health and safety risk assessments in set out in annex A of the DfE guidance. Consider using HSE managing risks and risk templates. □ Ensure consultation has taken place with all staff and their representatives in line with HSE requirements □ Ensure statutory site checks are carried out, if required (DfE guidance here. Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers' guidance on emerging from lockdown) □ Commission cleaning of all sites using guidance on cleaning non-health care settings □ Review arrangements to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak □ Agree a policy and procedures should a child or adult fall ill with the coronavirus on site, fall ill having recently been on site and/or if a number of people fall ill related to a particular site (use DfE guidance on the system of controls, response to any infection points 7-9 here and guidance on testing here) 	<p>Risk assessment reviewed in line with DfE guidance Shared with Staff March 5th 201 Placed on website to inform stakeholders steps in place</p> <p>Updated risk assessments shared with staff and changes to Covid Staff Handbook reflect these changes and shared with staff . Quiz given to staff to ensure they have read and understood changes .</p> <p>Programme of site checks included on Every system with alerts to ensure conformity and logged when completed for records.</p> <p>Covid Ready Full return walk around held March 5th with KR/AL</p> <p>Cleaning rota in place to ensure increased cleaning takes place across the day of frequently touched surfaces , toilets and bins emptied .</p> <p>Air conditioning units in school are individual and are not centralised so can continue to be used.</p> <p>Rooms used to have window ventilation where ever possible and windows opened for good air circulation</p> <p>Policy in place and included within Covid 19 staff handbook which lays out steps to be taken from DfE guidance / to be displayed by each First Aid stand and in each staffroom</p> <p>If possible keep outside , where not possible walk around the outside of the building and use SLT room . Keep 2m distance where not possible full PPE equipment is available and should be used .</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is a critical path decision making process/ contingency plan in case of the need for further closures, or scaling back operations, to address local infections (local lockdown guidance can be found here) • Assess transport-related health and safety risks and how these can be mitigated 	<p>Keeping bubbles as small as possible majority will be individual classes help to minimise size of lockdown in school</p> <p>Lunchtime - R, Yr1 and Yr 2 in hall at same time but sep year group tables and distanced between</p> <p>Staggered starts and playtimes , lunchtimes</p> <p>Keeping movement to a minimum and use of outside of building when needed</p> <p>Track and trace contacts across each day with adults</p> <p>Twice weekly LFT testing in place for staff and regular visitors in place.</p> <p>Use of National Oak Academy resources for continued learning - linked to current learning in class at the time.</p> <p>Office - 2 members live in same household . If 1 has potential symptoms or becomes infected with Covid 19 no office staff in school . Work will still be able to be completed remotely but rota of TAs to cover phone calls and visitors will need to be followed - half a day each at a time.</p> <p>No children currently use bus transport to come to school .</p> <p>No planned visits outside of school at this time - review guidance once again when this is planned .</p>
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Pupils and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess parental confidence and ensure processes are in place to communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families throughout the summer ahead of the new school year • Ensure appropriate support and arrangements are in place for pupils with EHC plans • Ensure that pupils most at risk of disengagement/ most in need of additional support are identified and support is in place • Audit wider family services supporting mental health, bereavement, domestic violence etc in order to be able to signpost/refer families where required (Public Health England has published guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health, Every Mind Matters and advice for groups with specific mental health needs) 	<p>Letter sent to parents March 2nd for full reopening of school and safety procedures in place to follow. Staff weekly phonecalls to check on any concerns adaptations needed to support return to school Information linked to March full opening on FB and Twitter / Website</p> <p>SEND lead phonecall to parents with regards planned return to school and support needed to achieve this</p> <p>Risk assessment tracker completed for each year group identifying standards achieved at start of lock down and level of engagement during lock down to identify initial needs of children/ catch up programmes</p> <p>Mental health team in LA update regularly with services available to signpost and J Barnett collates for the trust schools and shares on TEAMS and through monthly safeguarding audits</p>
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Workforce and HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review your trust's workforce audit. The clinically extremely vulnerable list will be paused on 1st August. Some people on this list will remain under the care of their doctor or specialist and may be advised not to return to work. Assess how many staff remain in this much smaller group and the impact on the workforce - CST is seeking further clarification on clinical vulnerability Assess how many staff may be at increased risk due to protected characteristics and disparities in outcomes. Consider using an Equalities Impact Assessment. CST will ask Stone King to update advice on this issue In light of this assessment, scrutinise how staff will be deployed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary and applicable in your circumstances, consider using longer assignments with supply teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year Determine whether staff training is required prior to the full return of pupils in March Consider what arrangements might be put in place for staff wellbeing Ensure designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) are provided with more time, especially in the first few weeks of term, to help them provide support to staff and children regarding any new safeguarding and welfare concerns and the handling of referrals to children social care and other agencies where these are appropriate 	<p>1 member staff clinically extremely vulnerable and shielding until March 31st</p> <p>3 members of staff with asthma .</p> <p>Clinically vulnerable work within KS2 where social distancing easier with this age group or within the office environment . Screen shield has been installed at the window for when visitors come and social distancing marks in place within the office. Social distancing marks for staff to continue to be in place in September within the classrooms and areas of work.</p> <p>Team Meetings on organisation and Covid requirements in classrooms and around building</p> <p>Team leaders regular check ins with staff . Head with Team leaders. Keeping communication open and listening to any concerns raised to work through and mitigate against absence due to poor mental well being . Ensure staff are clear on steps to ensure safety for all are adhered to by everyone.</p> <p>Initial two weeks no intervention TAs available for pastoral support - review after 2 weeks</p>
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Curriculum and timetabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise the plans for identifying the most important missed knowledge and how this will be covered, within a broad curriculum in all subjects • Ensure the curriculum remains broad and ambitious and that all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects • Ensure that there is a staffing plan and timetable for each school, including any special arrangements where necessary and practicable e.g. staggered starting and ending times of the school day, drop off and collection and/or break and lunch arrangements • Scrutinise the plan for spending the trust's allocation of tuition funding and ensure curriculum alignment and relevant training is in place (Education Endowment Foundation guidance can be found here) • Scrutinise plans for how remote education will be offered where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or where there is a local lockdown (online learning resources here, Oak National Academy here, technology support here, guidance for parents on supporting home learning here, guidance for parents of children with SEND to support home learning here and EEF best evidence in remote learning can be found here - there is also a summary of findings and a toolkit to support home learning. DfE has also published case studies using various methods to adapt the curriculum for remote education to best meet the needs of pupils and adapt teaching practice for remote education and keep pupils engaged 	<p>Team leaders to meet with team members looking at key learning from Spring Term prioritise catch up curriculum</p> <p>Long term plan in place to ensure all subjects are taught , greater focus on basic skills and core subjects . Creative use of other subjects to practise and develop key skills in reading , writing and maths .</p> <p>Daily dashboards to quickly review and keep reviewing key content of learning in each subject.</p> <p>Shared resources to be cleaned before next group can use them - PE/ Art /DT .</p> <p>Use of 72 hour quarantine area after use.</p> <p>Use of National Oak Academy resources linked to current teaching topic/focus to be used</p> <p>Continued use of See Saw to send and receive work</p> <p>SEND children's work to be appropriate to their needs and current plan</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the approach to physical activity within the school day, ensuring pupils remain in consistent groups where possible, sports equipment is thoroughly cleaned between each use, contact sports are avoided and outdoor sports are prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where not, maximising distancing between pupils and paying attention to cleaning and hygiene. Review your before and after-school provision and plan whether/ how to restart these in the autumn term. And ensure where parents are using external providers, that the school or trust has a plan in place to and consider how such provision will work alongside their wider protective measures, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible. 	<p>S Rathbone review of equipment needed by each class - and distributed to them / allocated space in PE cupboard to only be used by them.</p> <p>Removal of suedette topped gym equipment</p> <p>Large PE equipment cleaned down after use / 72 hour quarantine of use. Identify 1 class that will be using that equipment at any one time to minimise the need for cleaning every day.</p> <p>Review of PE curriculum - increase amount of PE in a week to support pupils physical wellbeing and fitness after lockdown</p> <p>Inform parents wherever possible PE will be done outside so will need Joggers and Sweatshirts provided for PE In Autumn Term.</p> <p>BR to audit external providers being used by parents - Nurseries / Child Minders</p> <p>Children to stay in class groups for breakfast on tables</p> <p>Table service of breakfast by adults / gloves must be worn</p> <p>Tables cleaned down after use - T Tate</p> <p>Children to go outside to play with their designated box of equipment / game to play on KS2 playground spread out before start of school. D Mcardle and J Winspear</p>
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Policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review at least the following policies and procedures and if you have addendums to policies consider whether these need to be amended or removed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and safety - Child protection and safeguarding (safeguarding and remote education here) - Attendance - Behaviour - Exclusions - Pastoral/Welfare • Consider whether enhanced safeguarding and welfare provision needs to be put in place - plan for the potential increase in disclosures and welfare needs including mental health • Amend procedures for fire drills • Assess whether any other trust and/or school-based policies and procedures need to be reviewed and amended • Consider whether any delegations in your scheme of delegation need to be amended or stood down 	<p>Trustees reviewing as part of Trust arrangements and then communicating to staff and parent key parts that have changed</p> <p>To ensure children and staff are aware of their own emotions and how to manage them each morning and throughout the day sessions will be thrive sessions led by thrive staff virtually to ensure we are meeting the emotional wellbeing of all of children and staff attending school .</p> <p>D McArdle timetable flexible to support alongside KR</p> <p>Review procedures for Fire Bell and Lockdown. Video for children to watch of what to do in first week of returning . Virtual fire drill and lockdown .</p> <p>Trust scheme of delegation reviewed in Autumn Term</p>
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School kitchens, supply chains and contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise plans to reopen school kitchens and compliance with the guidance for food businesses on COVID-19 • Reactivate and amend catering and/or cleaning contracts, including bringing staff out of furlough where necessary if this has not already been done • Reactivate supply chains if this has not already been done • Ensure there is free school meals provision over the summer (see DfE's summer food programme) • Check suppliers know and understand the system of controls and hygiene arrangements • Agree approach to any scheduled or ongoing building works in relation to safety 	<p>Full menu in operation. KS2 to eat at their desks after collection - staggered</p> <p>Recep /Year 1 and 2 to eat in hall separate and distanced tables</p> <p>All tables to be cleaned down by 2 dinner ladies each day after children have left the hall.</p> <p>Copy of Mellors Risk Assessment for Covid 19 procedures in kitchen March 5th</p> <p>Liaise with Mellors on procedures and protocols in place and to follow</p>
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Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and agree communications to staff, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrangements for keeping staff and pupils safe - Staff deployment and attendance expectations - Curriculum and timetabling - Workload and wellbeing - Training • Plan and agree communications to parents/carers, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance expectations - Uniform expectations - The curriculum - Transport - Dropping off and picking up - Parents/ carers visiting the school • Agree the frequency of communications with parents or delegate to school-level 	<p>Covid 19 Staff handbook available to all - iTunes download and in staff rooms - procedures clear for deployment, attendance , sickness reporting,</p> <p>Review of curriculum and timetabling - minimise use of hall other than for lunch and breakfast club</p> <p>Limit number of staff using any one staffroom - keep chairs distanced for safety . Continued use of individual crockery, tea towels , sanitising equipment</p> <p>Limit number of staff working with classes where ever possible and maintain 2m distancing where possible within classrooms for between adults and adult to child .</p> <p>Information packs to be sent out to parents on expectations with updated School Handbook , link on FB/Twitter to website with information</p> <p>Weekly newsletters to resume by staff to classes and keep parents updated</p>
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Decisions and actions to manage the financial and educational impacts and regulatory and accountability environments

Financial impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure additional cost pressures due to COVID-19 have been identified and an end-of-year forecast which factors them in has been produced for the board • Assess whether schools in the trust are eligible for financial support (DFE has published guidance on the financial support schools and trusts will receive to reimburse them for exceptional costs incurred during COVID-19. These relate to increased premises-related costs; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not attending school and where those costs are not covered by the FSM national voucher scheme and additional cleaning costs) • Assess impact on reserves and review reserves policy • Assess impact on three-year financial strategy • Explore additional sources of income • Review policy and procedures related to fraud (see Fraud Control in Emergency Management: COVID-19 UK government guide) 	<p>Continued monthly financial monitoring includes Covid 19 additional spend Furlough Breakfast Club staff up to March 5th</p> <p>Review additional ongoing costs to school for full opening of school - monthly review of income and expenditure</p>
Educational impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep educational impacts under review - ensure a trust-wide plan is in place to assess educational impacts, specifically gaps in learning, and that the plans address these in the short and medium term (see curriculum section above) 	<p>Trust plans to be in place for assessments to identify gaps in learning and address these in the short, medium and long term .</p> <p>Focus for staff meeting time - curriculum gaps and meeting the needs of children</p>

Regulatory environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the new regulatory requirements in the Academies Financial Handbook which comes into place in September 2020 (summarised in annex B below) Agree a plan for internal scrutiny (CST will offer further advice on this) Agree the arrangements for external audit and associated returns - ESFA has confirmed that the current timetable should remain Keep under review the statutory timescales for returns that have been paused or deferred - ESFA published guidance on reducing burdens which includes a full list of returns that have been cancelled, paused or deferred 	<p>KR and BR Review handbook before start of new academic year to be aware of any changes .</p> <p>BR liaise with other SBMs to ensure compliance with new procedures/policy</p> <p>SBM supervision meetings to continue, monthly compliance reporting continue to S Hall. Audit timetable to continue .</p> <p>Audit currently has been by sending information via a portal to the auditors for their scrutiny . This could continue and still meet requirements or space provided with socially distanced space to complete would be possible.</p> <p>SH and AW to liaise with SBM for data needed for timely returns</p>
Accountability environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the arrangements for school and trust accountability and the performance management policy in the light of DfE guidance on how school and trust external accountability will be handled this year. (Schools and trusts will not be held to account based on exams and assessment data from summer 2020 and data will not be used by others, such as Ofsted and local authorities, to hold schools and trusts to account). We await clarification on 2021. 	<p>Trust policy to be reviewed in light of DfE guidance on accountability for year 2020/2021</p> <p>Start to prepare school for Ofsted visit . Previous work up to lockdown. Subject leads clear on variety of curriculum provided for doing lock down . Quality of work prior to lock down in each subject and areas to continue to develop . Gaps identified and plans in place - focus of SIP this year.</p>

Annex A: The Public Health System of Controls

The system of nine controls is the set of actions schools MUST take, grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection.’

There is a lot of detailed guidance about the system of controls including how to group children, measures within the classroom, measures elsewhere and measures for arriving at and leaving school. Schools must work through the system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school, and allows you to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. If you follow the guidance set out here, you will effectively reduce risks in the school or groups of schools and create an inherently safer environment.

<p>A. Prevention</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school 2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach 5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) <p>Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time. Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances (see further detail in the guidance) Number 6 applies in specific circumstances</p>	<p>Twice weekly LFT testing in place for staff and regular visitors .</p> <p>Staff or pupil who becomes unwell when in school will be sent home asap and procedures followed for testing and tracing.</p> <p>Hygiene routine to continue wash hands when enter building, when been outside to play , when come in from outside , before they eat , before they go home.</p> <p>EYFS - gel before they go out to play</p> <p>reinforcing with children each day good respiratory hygiene , ensure disable tissue available to be used. Bin kept outside room and emptied across the day .</p> <p>Tables in class to be cleaned minimum of 4 times a day , clean cloth used each time and cloth bin provided for used cloths.</p> <p>Cleaners to clean toilets 3 times a day and empty bins</p> <p>social distancing marks remain in school in corridor, hall , outside for lining up and entrance/exit to school and within classrooms</p> <p>Staff and visitors to wear face masks in communal areas and walking around building.</p> <p>Daily reminder to children of non contact between each other and with staff to keep everyone safe . Socially distanced games to be played at playtimes/PE</p> <p>PPE available at first aid stations and main office and to be used when need to get closer than 1 m to perform personal hygiene and/or first aid</p>
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B. Response to any infection	<p>7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process 8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community 9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice</p> <p>Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant</p>	<p>Ensure staff and children engage with test and trace process and inform school of outcome Steps identified in staff handbook of steps that need to be taken if a confirmed case of Covid 19 within school community follow local health teams advice if an outbreak does occur. Cleaning company on standby for deep cleaning services should they be required. Review track and trace of individuals in school affected to inform partial or full closure</p>
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Annex B: Main Changes to the Academies Financial Handbook 2020

The main changes to the Academies Financial Handbook 2020, are:

- **Governance:** Further information on governance arrangements including trustees' responsibility to maintain the trust as a going concern [1.14, 2.5 and 2.8], confirmation that members must not be employees or occupy unpaid staff roles [1.4], that members must remain informed about trust business [1.8] and that trusts must appoint a clerk to the board [1.40]. Also clarifying that trusts must keep their register of interests up to date [5.46].
- **Executive team:** Confirmation that both the accounting officer and chief financial officer (CFO) should be employees, and a requirement for ESFA approval if, exceptionally, they are not [1.26 and 1.36]. Also encouraging larger trusts to consider relevant accountancy qualifications for their CFO, and for all CFOs to maintain professional development [1.37 and 1.38].
- **General controls and transparency:** Updated clarifications including maintenance of a fixed asset register [2.7], termly review of pupil number projections [2.12], use of integrated curriculum and financial planning [2.13], avoidance of overdrafts [2.24], publication of information about high pay [2.32] and whistleblowing [2.44], confirmation that the trust's funds must not be used to purchase alcohol [2.35], board and committee responsibilities for risk management [2.38, and 3.6 to 3.8] and completion of the School resource management self-assessment tool [6.8].

- **Internal scrutiny:** Updated text including clarification that internal scrutiny covers both financial and non-financial controls [3.1], removal of the option for internal audit to be performed by the external auditor [3.17 and 3.20] and confirmation that trusts can use additional individuals or organisations to support internal scrutiny where specialist nonfinancial knowledge is required [3.18 and 3.23].
- **Annual accounts:** More on the audit and risk committee's role in relation to external audit [4.17].