

COVID-19 Policy - updated March 2021

From 8th March 2021 all learners will be able to start returning to on-site education. During lockdown vulnerable learners and children of key workers could access on-site education. The ways to control the virus are the same, even with the current new variants. We are strengthening the measures to provide more reassurance and to decrease disruption.

VLUK accepts our responsibilities during the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic to ensure we are protecting our learners and workforce and minimising the risk of spread of infection.

This policy is intended to introduce consistent measures in line with the Government's recommendations. These are exceptional circumstances and we will comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus at all times.

We have undertaken a risk assessment to make the working environment as safe as it possibly can be to follow the Government's guidance on Coronavirus. A copy of this has been shared with all staff, learners and parents/carers and is also available on our website. The risk assessment should be read in conjunction with this policy.

The health and safety requirements of any business activity must also not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel being available or social distancing being implemented, it should not take place.

If a partner site does not consistently implement the measures set out below, it may be required to shut down.

This policy will be reviewed regularly and revised as necessary in response to changes in legislation or guidance on methods of working.

The aim of the policy is to balance minimising any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) by maximising control measures with providing a full educational experience for our learners.

VLUK will liaise where necessary with Education Funding Partners regarding these measures and if any cases arise.

Our risk assessment and guidance is based on the following principles

Prevention:

1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting.

2) Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.

- 3) Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual.
- 4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- 5) Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.
- 6) Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- 7) Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
- 8) In specific circumstances ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.
- 9) And promote and engage in asymptomatic testing.

Response to any infection:

- 10) Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.
- 11) Manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community.
- 12) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

1 - Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting.

Learners, staff and other adults must not come into the setting if:

- they have one or more coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#)
- a member of their household (including someone in their support bubble or childcare bubble if they have one) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- they are required to isolate having recently visited countries outside the [Common Travel Area](#)
- they have had a positive test

They must immediately cease to attend and not attend for at least 10 full days from the day after:

- the start of their symptoms
- the test date if they didn't have any symptoms but have had a positive test (whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test)

Anyone told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their public health protection team, has a legal obligation to self-isolate, but you may leave home to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm. More information can be found on [NHS Test and Trace: how it works](#).

If anyone in the setting develops a new and continuous 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 to begin isolation. The isolation period includes the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days
- advised to follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
- advised to arrange to have a test as soon as possible to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19)

Other members of their household (including any siblings and members of their support or childcare bubble if they have one) should self-isolate. Their isolation period includes the day symptoms started for the first person in their household, or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms, whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test), and the next 10 full days. If a member of the household starts to display symptoms while self-isolating, they will need to restart the 10 day isolation period and book a test.

If anyone tests positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develops symptoms during the isolation period, they must restart the 10 day isolation period from the day they developed symptoms.

If a learner displays coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or has a positive test, while at their setting they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household. Alternatively, if safe, they should walk, ride, cycle or drive wherever possible.

If a learner is awaiting collection:

- they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the needs of the learner, with appropriate adult supervision if required.
- a window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if it is safe to do so
- if it is not possible to isolate them, move them 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 use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else
- personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by staff caring for the learner while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

In an emergency, 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, unless advised to.

When an individual has had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID19) symptoms

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, regardless of whether they are wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or learners who have been in close contact with that person, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should self-isolate immediately and arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the Public Health England (PHE) advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)
- they have tested positive from an LFD test as part of a community or worker programme

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 after they have left, to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace, or your local health protection team, and told to self isolate because you have been a close contact of a positive case, you have a legal obligation to do so.

Staff **must** communicate with their line manager or the Operations Director if anyone becomes ill with suspected Coronavirus, or tests positive.

2- Face Coverings

Face coverings should be worn by adults and learners when moving around the site and in classrooms where social distancing cannot be easily maintained, except where exemptions apply for individuals.

Face coverings do not need to be worn outside, or during sport/physical activity.

Face visors are not acceptable instead of a face covering, although can be used in addition.

Any learners or staff who are exempt from wearing face coverings will not be required to do so, staff should discuss this with the Operations Director and learners should discuss this with their tutor in the first instance.

We will supply each site with a supply of disposable face coverings incase learners forget theirs, or are unable to access one, or it becomes damaged during the day.

No learner will be denied education if they are not wearing a face covering.

See annex 1 for details for advice on how to wear and remove face coverings.

3 - Hygiene

Learners and staff should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently, including when they arrive at the setting, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating.

4 - Catch it, bin it, kill it

There should be enough tissues and bins available to enable learners and staff to be encouraged to “catch it, bin it, kill it”.

5 - Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning will be overseen directly by the venue. Cleaning products will be available to ensure that staff/learners can clean desks, shared materials etc more often than usual.

6 - Social Distancing

We will minimise the number of contacts that a learner has during the day whilst still delivering the necessary curriculum.

Learners will be placed either in whole site “bubbles”, or year group bubbles so we reduce the contact between learners and staff.

Learners should still be encouraged to social distance within their bubbles. Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face contact lowers the risk of transmission.

It is strong public health advice that staff should maintain distance from learners, staying at the front of the room, and away from colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other, and from learners when possible.

Close, direct face to face contact should be avoided, and time spent within 1 meter minimised.

Where possible classrooms will be set up with forward facing desks, sitting learners side by side.

Large gatherings will be avoided, e.g. group meetings.

Parents/carers will be asked not to gather at the venue or come onto the site without an appointment.

Staff and Learners should limit the amount of equipment they bring in each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, coats, books, stationary and mobile phones. Bags are allowed. Sharing of equipment should be avoided.

The behaviour policy has been updated to explain the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules around distancing and hygiene and how we will enforce those rules including any sanctions. For example, deliberately coughing in the face of others within the context of a pandemic.

7 - Ventilation

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risks from airborne transmission.

Rooms should be well ventilated, either by mechanical ventilation systems or natural ventilation.

Windows should be opened (in cooler weather just enough to provide constant background ventilation and opened more fully in breaks). Internal doors can be opened to create a throughput of air.

Additional clothing can be worn if the classrooms are colder than normal due to increased ventilation.

8 - PPE

PPE (face coverings are not classified as PPE) should only be needed if a student becomes ill with coronavirus symptoms, and a 2 meter distance can not be maintained.

9 - Testing

Where available we will manage asymptomatic testing in our setting using Lateral Flow Devices (LFD). One test will be completed on site and then home testing kits supplied.

Home test kits will be supplied to all staff and learners between 8 March and the end of March.

Testing although voluntary is strongly encouraged.

For home testing staff and learners can self swab and test twice a week at home. The result must then be reported to the NHS Test and Trace either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the kit. Staff and Learners should also let VLUK know their result.

Learners 18 and over can self test and report their result, with assistance if needed. Learners aged under 17 should self test and report with adult supervision, the adult can conduct the test if needed.

A positive LFD test result will need to isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. They will also need to arrange a lab based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result.

This does not replace the testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms should still self isolate even if they recently had a negative LFD test result, and order a test.

10 - Test and Trace

Staff, learners and parents/carers will need to

- book a test if they or their child are displaying symptoms.
- self-isolate immediately and not come to the setting if they;
 - Develop symptoms
 - Have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus
 - Anyone in their household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus
 - They are required to do so having recently travelled from certain countries
 - They have been advised to by NHS Track and Trace or the PHE local health protection team, which is a legal obligation
- 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

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

NHS COVID-19 app

Learners and staff can download and use the app. If a learner receives notification during the day that they have been in contact with a positive case they should inform their tutor. In this situation staff should organise for learners to go home as per the protocols described earlier. If staff receive a notification from the app during the day they should contact the Operations Director to discuss protocols.

11 & 12 - Confirmed cases

VLUK will take swift action once aware of a confirmed case and will contact the local [Public Health England health protection team](#) as needed and follow their instructions.

Process in the event of local outbreaks

If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread. The

Department for Education will be involved in decisions at a local and national level affecting a geographical area, and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice.

Travel to the setting

Staff, parents/carers and learners are encouraged to walk or cycle to school if at all possible rather than use public transport.

Families using public transport should refer to the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#) guidance.

Learners who cannot attend the education setting

A small number of learners will be unable to attend the setting in line with public health advice because they are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) or Clinically Vulnerable. These learners will be able to work remotely at home.

Learners who live with someone who is CEV should still attend.

Learners who are isolating due to COVID-19 will be able to join all normal lessons from home, if they are well enough to do so.

Please refer to VLUK Blended learning policy for details.

Performing Arts

There are additional measures that apply to the Performing Arts sessions.

Singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible . If indoors, a room should be used with as much space as possible. Learners should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.

The use of microphones will be encouraged where possible or learners will be encouraged to sing quietly.

Where possible to reduce the number of people each learner has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each learner works with only a few others).

Wearing face coverings should be worn where singing or taking part in other performing arts activity where this is feasible.

Work Experience

Organised indoor and outdoor sport is permitted as it is part of an education programme. This guidance and our risk assessments will be followed during these sessions also.

Safe behaviour off site

Learners will be reminded about their conduct when entering and leaving the setting and to follow guidelines at all times when off site also.

Monitoring and review of risk controls

We will monitor and review these measures regularly, to ensure they are working, and taking action to address any shortfalls, and update documents as advice changes.