**Working at St Luke’s during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Crisis**

**Social distancing - Updated Guidance 5th March 2021**

The government has removed its previous advice on social distancing and has instead issued guidance on how we can put measures into schools to support smaller groups and reduce contact mixing. Though guidance on social distancing has been removed it is still very important that we try to carry out social distancing where possible.

In the absence of advice on social distancing I will keep referring to the previous government guidance (now removed from the Department for Education website). They previously stated:

“Some children, and young people with special educational needs, may be unable to follow social distancing guidelines, or require personal care support. In these circumstances, staff need to increase their level of self-protection, such as minimising close contact (where appropriate), cleaning frequently touched surfaces, and carrying out more frequent handwashing.”

**Department for Education: Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings** Updated 7 April 2020 (now removed)

Please read the following information and try wherever possible to maintain a clean environment, maintain good hand hygiene for staff and children and keep a 2 metre distance from each other.

**Asymptomatic children and adults**

Asymptomatic children and adults are those children that have the virus but do not show any signs of having the virus. It was previously thought that these children were carriers and they would spread the virus to many people. Previous information from the Department for Education (DfE) stated:

“Asymptomatic people (people with the virus but not displaying symptoms) have a reduced viral load and so risk of transmission is considerably reduced.”

**Department for Education: Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings** Updated 7 April 2020 (now removed)

**Social distancing**

We need to be trying to keep **2 metres** from another person, including pupils. If you cannot maintain a two metre distance try to stay within 1 to 2 metres, with additional mitigating factors (e.g. for a short time, wearing PPE).

We need to make sure that we are all trying to make our best efforts to social distance ourselves from each other. This is particularly important between adults as it is adult to adult contact that is more likely to spread the virus at St Luke’s.

The following efforts have been taken to ensure social distancing:

* We have significantly reduced the number of visitors coming into school, unless they are critical to supporting the school during this time.
* We have reduced the number of face to face meetings, including morning shouts
* We have staggered lunchtimes and break times and used both halls for lunches
* We have introduced one way systems for getting children into and out of school

The Department for Education recognised that social distancing may be difficult for young people (and I would extend this to some older children with special educational needs).

“Social distancing within education and childcare settings with very young children will be harder to maintain. Staff should implement the above measures as far as they are able, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for within their settings.”

**Department for Education: Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings** Updated 7 April 2020 (now removed)

At St Luke’s we have developed a curriculum that focuses on Personal, Social and Emotional development which includes developing children’s interactions with and involves close adult contact. If adults stop this close contact it will be very confusing for the children and will not support their emotional development. Therefore, staff should follow the rest of this guidance to help them to reduce risk at St Luke’s, whilst also trying to reduce social contact with the children as is appropriate to their needs.

**Teaching social distancing to children**

It is important that adults talk to the children about safe distances from each other. Adults should talk to the children about not holding hands or hugging (this will be easier with some children than others). In PE sessions adults should remind the children to keep apart and the same when playing outside or inside.

**Expectations of adults**

Adults should social distance from each other, this includes before school, at lunchtime and after school. Where possible, adults need to keep 2 metres away from each other (though we recognise that is difficult because of some of the close care tasks that we have to complete to support the children).

At lunchtime the adults should think carefully about how they congregate. You must sit 2 metres away from each other as a minimum. Try to find different spaces for your lunch where there are not many people.