



# The Oak-Tree Group of Schools

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## Group Managing Principal

Mr Matthew Hagger B.A. (Hons), M.Ed., PGCE

31 August 2021

Dear Parents

### Re: Covid-19 Procedures for the Autumn Term 2021

I hope you were able to get something of a break with your family over the summer, despite the travel restrictions that have governed the holiday period.

As you will have etched in your diaries, we will be welcoming the children back to school on Monday 6 September. The Department for Education has released the latest set of operational guidelines for schools to help reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. The measures we will be following are outlined below and summarised in the Government's publications:

- [Schools' Covid-19 operational guidance](#)
- [Guidance for parents and carers about schools](#)
- [Contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#)

### No more 'Bubbles' or Social Distancing in School

The Department for Education no longer recommends that it is necessary to keep children in consistent 'bubbles'. This means that activities such as assemblies can resume and we no longer need to make alternative arrangements to avoid mixing at break/lunch times or for communal activities.

Similarly, social distancing measures have now ended and it is no longer necessary for anybody to shield or work from home.

### Covid-19 Testing for Senior Pupils (Normanhurst and Braeside)

As happened last academic year, the Government is advocating regular asymptomatic testing to help prevent the transmission of Covid-19. This will help us to identify and help prevent staff and pupils without symptoms from transmitting and spreading the virus unknowingly. In turn, this will allow us to operate as safely as possible by self-isolating those who are contagious as soon as is practically possible.

To this extent, we are required to conduct two in-school Lateral Flow Tests for all pupils in Year 7 and above during the first week back. This is for pupils to undertake some testing in a supervised environment and so they can (re-)familiarise themselves with self-swabbing.

The first test will be carried out during the morning of Monday 6 September. The second will take place after the minimum three days on either Thursday 9 or Friday 10 September. As before, tests will be administered by school staff who have received the appropriate training. Tests require parental consent for under 16s, so we will text you tomorrow, on Thursday 2 September. Please reply to the text as soon as possible.

Please note that we will only notify pupils if there is a positive result. In such cases, parents will be contacted to collect their child so they can start the required isolation as soon as possible.

Following these two initial tests, all pupils from Year 7 upwards will be issued with their home testing kits to test twice each week. As previously, we recommend testing on Sundays and Wednesdays.



#### Braeside School

130 High Road, Buckhurst Hill  
Essex IG9 5SD  
020 8504 1133

Braeside School is the trading name of Braeside School Ltd, registered in England to 6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA  
Company no: 0783067



#### Coopersale Hall School

Flux's Lane, Epping  
Essex CM16 7PE  
01992 577133

Coopersale Hall School is the trading name of Coopersale Hall School Ltd, registered in England to 6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA  
Company no: 3524644



#### Normanhurst School

68-74 Station Road  
North Chingford E4 7BA  
020 8529 4307

Normanhurst School is the trading name of Normanhurst School Ltd, registered in England to 6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA  
Company no: 9380841



#### Oaklands School

8 Albion Hill, Loughton  
Essex IG10 4RA  
020 8508 3517

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Company no: 3654053



**The Oak-Tree Group of Schools**  
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Oak-Tree Schools Holdings Ltd,  
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6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA  
Company no: 03033574

#### Directors:

Mr M Hagger B.A. (Hons), M.Ed., PGCE  
Mr N Hagger M.A. (Oxon)  
Mrs A Hagger Cert.Ed.

#### Principals:

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Mrs C Osborn B.A. (Hons), MSc., PGCE

**Group Bursar:**  
Mrs S Hewitt

## Covid-19 Testing for Staff

As previously, all staff will test twice each week with home test kits that will be issued to them. The majority of our staff have received both vaccinations.

## Control Measures

We will continue to reinforce the following:

- **Ensuring good hygiene for everyone**  
This includes maintaining all sanitising stations around the premises and reinforcing the importance of frequent and thorough hand cleaning.
- **Maintaining excellent cleaning regimes**  
Our cleaning teams' hours will continue to be extended to ensure that all hard areas and touch points are properly sanitised each evening in addition to their normal duties.
- **Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated**  
We have taken steps to ensure that fresh air flow is available in the classrooms and offices throughout the premises and that there is sufficient ventilation. It is a balancing act to increase ventilation while maintaining a comfortable working temperature.
- **Following public health advice at all times**  
This includes following the measures below, continuing to encourage asymptomatic Covid-19 testing for staff and senior pupils, with confirmatory PCR tests for those with a positive Lateral Flow test result.

## Face Coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised to be worn by pupils, staff or visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas. Many of our older pupils travel to and from school independently via public transport, and face coverings should continue to be worn if using buses and/or trains.

The Government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings, but recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where there is close contact with people we don't normally meet. Such circumstances might include any future trips that rely on public transport, in which case we will build the wearing of face coverings into our planning.

We respect that, depending on their own personal circumstances, people will feel differently about face coverings. Therefore, it will be the personal choice of our staff and senior pupils as to whether or not to wear face coverings in school. Similarly, while not compulsory, parents and visitors are welcome to wear face coverings whilst on the premises.

## Households with a positive case of Covid-19

From 16 August, if you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years, you are no longer required to self-isolate if you live in the same household as someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. This means that a child can now attend school even if a sibling or parent has tested positive, as long as the child tests negative. See the Government guidance [here](#) for further information.

## Positive Cases of Covid-19 in School

Individuals are no longer required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of somebody who has tested positive for Covid-19 if they are fully vaccinated or they are under 18 years. Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and advised to take a PCR test. This means that large groups of children will no longer need to self-isolate if there is a positive case in the class. The position is still unclear about what we do for staff who are identified as being close contacts but who have not been fully vaccinated.



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Mrs S Hewitt BAGA L4

## Contingency Planning

If there is a 'substantial increase' in the number of positive cases in school, then we will work with the Department for Education and Local Authority to manage the 'outbreak'. The Government defines the threshold as:

- at least 5 pupils or staff who are likely to have mixed closely testing positive for Covid-19 within a 10-day period, or
- 10% of children or staff who are likely to have mixed closely testing positive for Covid-19 within a 10-day period.

Identifying a group that is likely to have mixed closely will be different in many circumstances. In our schools, this could include:

- a form group, subject class or sports team
- a friendship group mixing at break times
- a group in an after-school activity

At the point of reaching a threshold, we will first review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures already in place. If required, we will put in place the following Contingency Plan for a short, temporary period:

- assist NHS Test & Trace to identify close contacts who need to take a PCR test
- require face coverings to be worn in school by all staff, visitors and senior pupils
- reintroduce bubbles to reduce mixing between groups
- cancel or postpone educational visits, live performances, events, open days etc
- limit visitors to the premises.

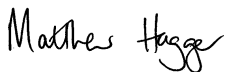
The Government has asked schools to endeavour to keep any measures to the minimum number of pupils possible and for the shortest amount of time possible. Any measures affecting education will be under regular review and will be lifted as soon as the evidence supports doing so. Attendance restrictions will only ever be considered as a last resort, so we will only move back to remote home learning in more extreme circumstances if specifically directed by the Government.

While we are required to have a Contingency Plan ready to use, clearly we hope never to do so. Our new Contingency Plan is available to download [here](#) and our updated Covid-19 Risk Assessment is available to download [here](#).

The excellent news is that we are seeing a giant leap towards a return to the normality that we last saw some 18 months ago. We now need to ensure that we keep the children in school for as much time as possible by following the Government guidelines and public health advice. In any case, we are looking forward to welcoming you and your children back to school on Monday.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



Matthew Hagger  
Group Managing Principal



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