

Riddlesworth Hall Preparatory School

PANDEMIC POLICY

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO constantly monitors the various flu-type viruses which 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. At Phase 4, international air travel is likely to be compromised. In any boarding environment with overseas students, this would be a significant milestone. The Bursar will routinely monitor the WHO categorisation of virus developments and advise the SMT of unusual or worrying developments. 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 as well as for other possible disruption resulting from the pandemic's impact on other services. However, schools 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 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 covers both closure and the School remaining open.

The School's Response

Members of the Senior Management Team will be responsible to the Headmaster for co-ordinating the School's response which will be graduated according to what may be a quickly changing scenario. Unless directed to close, the aim will be to conduct business as normal within the following:

Staff feeling unwell or displaying symptoms such as a high temperature will be sent home immediately. In the first instance, pupils will be referred to Matron in the Surgery where they will remain until collected at the first opportunity by their parent(s) or guardian. The School has an up-to-date contact list for all parents / guardians to ensure prompt collection. Boarders whose parents reside abroad and who are unable to return home will be treated in isolation by Matron in a pre-determined area of the School.

Pupils and staff deemed to be at high risk due to pre-existing conditions will 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 School when day pupils. UK boarders and staff will be sent home. Overseas boarders who are unable to return home will remain at School and will be divided into small groups, each being cared for in different areas of the School by remaining residential staff to ensure cross-contamination is kept to a minimum. Members of staff in charge of each group will coordinate catering and cleaning of their various locations.

In the case of Central Government not directing an order to close, should local conditions, such as general shortages of food, the disruption of power supplies, or insufficient staff to ensure the proper supervision or first-aid medical care for pupils occur, the Headmaster will advise parents of the need to close the School and any remaining students will be cared for as shown above.

In the event that residential staff and / or matrons become incapacitated, reliance will be placed on other teaching staff to provide cover, if necessary remaining in the House overnight.

The continued running of the Surgery/Sanatorium will be a fundamental requirement for the School to remain open. Should the need arise, and staff be available, one or more rooms on the Girls' or Boys' Floor will be utilised as an extension to the Surgery/Sanatorium.

The Dining Hall will continue to be used by all pupils and staff and anti-bacterial hand gel will be used by all staff and children prior to eating. Catering staff will be extra vigilant in their normal hygiene routines. If the School is advised to close, essential catering staff may be asked by the Headmaster to consider living in the School to assist with the production of meals for any boarders unable to return home.

Should WHO Phase 4 be declared, with the probability of disruption to international air travel, pupils living overseas may be considered for return on a case-by-case basis depending on the wishes of their parents/guardian.

The Deputy Head will manage academic staff absences on a daily ad hoc basis making best use of available staff. In the event of school closure, in consultation with the Headmaster, she should consider what arrangements could be made to continue educating pupils by the use of e-mails / parentmail, work-setting. Within this, priority would be given to pupils approaching external examinations.

Infection Control

As a matter of course during the traditional "flu season" from Nov - Mar, pupils and staff should be actively encouraged by staff to minimise potential influenza transmission through good hygiene measures as follows:

By covering the nose and mouth with single-use disposable tissues when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing noses.

By disposing of used tissues in the nearest waste bin.

By keeping hands away from the mucous membranes of the eyes and nose.

Cleaning and Waste Disposal

Pandemic.

If and when instructed by the Bursar, all cleaning and catering staff are to be issued with medicated face-masks which are to be worn when employed on cleaning duties.

The Bursar will advise cleaning staff to treat areas of likely contamination with a Milton solution daily. These areas should include door handles, desks, toilets, showers and baths. The School Kitchen should also be sanitised daily in the same way.

The School will ensure that receptacles containing sealable plastic bags are deployed around the School 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.

Pre-stocking

The School is to hold stocks of latex gloves, medicated face masks 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 School in the event of a major pandemic. The School will continue to function unless instructed to close or in the event of local conditions making continuation impossible or unsafe. Flexibility will be required of all staff, with due emphasis at all levels being given to minimising the risk through good and responsible personal and general hygiene.