



Barrowby Church of England Primary School

Pandemic Contingency Plan

This document provides guidance in proactive and reactive actions and considerations in order to prepare for and deal with high staff absenteeism as a result of a flu pandemic. This plan should be used in conjunction with the schools' critical incident plan.

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1. Background flu pandemic information

Influenza pandemics have swept the world causing widespread illness, large numbers of deaths and significant social and economic disruption. They can occur at any time of the year. No country is exempt from the risk and an initial outbreak elsewhere is likely to affect the UK in less than three months due to movement of people.

Conditions in which a new virus might emerge and spread continue to exist. The recent emergence of highly pathogenic animal viruses – such as avian influenza (bird flu) outbreaks and associated infections in some people in several countries in Asia – emphasises the threat of animal viruses evolving into strains with pandemic potential. Although timing is unpredictable, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and most national and international experts believe the risk of an influenza pandemic has recently increased.

Pandemic likely to occur in two waves, about 3-9 months apart. Each wave likely to last 12 weeks. A quarter of the population could be affected. High number of cases and consultations (greater than 500 GP consultations per 100,000 population per week at peak) overwhelming health and other services. Clinical attack rate 25% with mortality assumption of 0.37 - 2.5% of those affected. Age range vulnerability - all ages, including children, likely to be affected.

-Lincolnshire Community Risk Register 2007

Influenza spread will be accelerated in schools and other closed communities leading to a potential need to close schools. This will exacerbate absenteeism, as workers need to provide care for family members and others.

Movement restrictions, constraints on public gatherings, distribution difficulties, increased deaths, anxiety and bereavement are all likely to add pressure and disruption.

A pandemic – or potential pandemic – would also result in a high level of public, political and media concern.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The CIMT consists of the headteacher, deputy headteacher, chair of governors, as well as key staff with knowledge of the following areas; assets and facilities, ICT, human resources, communications.

Responsibilities of the CIMT during a severe staff shortage.

- Maintain log of all decisions relating to the incident and the subsequent recovery;
- Evaluating the extent of the situation and the potential consequences for the school;
- Prioritising support to all departments and age groups;
- Deployment of existing resources;
- Hiring/acquiring additional support staff;
- Implementing measures to protect property, resources, reputation and ensuring all sites remain secure and safe;
- Authorising continuity measures in order to provide an operational service to employees and clients;

- Corporate communication with media, employees, elected members and the public;
- Keeping records of decision making and expenditure arising out of recovery operations;
- Organising the return to normality once the emergency period has passed;
- Contacting parents and stakeholders connected with the school (advise of any disruption as appropriate).

Responsibilities of individual teachers/dept heads

- Maintain log of all decisions relating to the incident in their own area and the continuity of their functions;
- Keep accurate record of pupil attendance figures;
- Follow instructions and guidance from CIMT;

3. School Actions

A flu pandemic will cause disruption to a variety of areas including pupil attendance levels, staffing levels, supply chains and service delivery. The actions taken by the school to deal with these disruptions must be done in a timely and effective way. The actions are split into stages of 'before pandemic' (proactive measures), 'during pandemic' (reactive measures) and 'after pandemic' (recovery measures).

The reactive measures are broken down into various levels of alert. When certain criteria are met (either within the school or externally) this will trigger an appropriate level of alert and in turn the response actions required.

The various triggers and respective response actions are detailed in section 3.2.

UK flu pandemic alert levels

It is important to note that the alert levels detailed in this plan are specific to the school. Within the national flu contingency planning arrangements there are also UK alerts levels and triggers. The system is based on a 4 point alert mechanism and has been developed consistent with other UK infectious disease response plans:

UK Alert level 1 – Cases only outside the UK (in a country with no extensive UK trade or travel links).

UK Alert level 2 – New virus isolated in the UK

UK Alert level 3 – Outbreak(s) in the UK

UK Alert level 4 – Widespread activities across the UK

It is important not to confuse the different alert levels and triggers when reacting to a flu pandemic.

3.1 Pro active measures

Devise an effective cleaning programme for all equipment which has a large amount of human contact e.g. telephones, computer keyboards, door handles, desks.
(Assets and Facilities)

Skills audit to determine specialist skills within School staff including

- Specialist vehicle licences
- Language skills
- IT competencies.
- Administrative skills.
- HR

Review current home learning capabilities and room for short notice expansion. (**IT support**)

Review salaries budget to cost in excessive absence/support staff payments. (**Finance**).

Pre determine an interim policy for the following

- Sick certification
- Overtime payments.

(**HR & Finance**)

Pre determine guidance to be given to staff, children and parents at each alert level.

Identify sources of hand washing, hygiene guidance e.g. Health protection agency, world health organisation.

3.2 Reactive measures

School Alert level 1

Trigger points – Declared by the headteacher under guidance from administrative personnel. When sickness levels for flu related reasons noticeably rise above normal seasonal sickness patterns

OR

A flu pandemic is declared anywhere in the world.

Actions

- Sickness reporting frequency increased to daily reports if not already at this level.
- Initial flu meeting of the CIMT.
- All staff alerted to the increased levels of flu risk.
- Specific instructions to all department heads.
- Promotion of Health Protection Agency hand washing advice e.g. posters in all toilets and communal areas.
- Inform the County Council of potential staffing level problems.
- Maximise stocks of soaps and cleansing equipment.
- Review and test any existing pupil home working capabilities. Including home email and internet access. This will include ensuring that up to date information is held for pupils regarding electronic means of contact i.e. e-mail addresses.
- Review and update contact details for parents.
- Consider additional methods of providing home learning.
- Review, maintain and update all teachers notes (where the class is currently at with their learning) (**see section 5**)
- Review and update all staff home contact details and ensure all staff are aware of the location of the sickness procedures.
- Ensure that sickness reporting systems are robust.
- Initiate cleaning regime of all high contact equipment.
- Inform local trade union representatives.
- Inform school governors.
- Inform key stakeholders/contractors of any changes to normal service delivery.
- Identify which core subjects must be continued and which can/have to be put on hold.
- Contact supply teacher agencies to assess availability of temp support staff.

- Are any year groups more important i.e. SATs years - could other children be sent home in order to maximise the use of remaining teachers?
- Can classes be merged (what is maximum class size)(teacher pupil ratio)

School Alert level 2

Trigger points - Declared by the Headteacher under guidance from administrative support when sickness levels amongst school teaching staff reach peak levels of minimum teacher / pupil ratio.

OR

Government encourages a blanket closure of schools nationally or locally.

Actions

Everything within alert level 1 plus;

- Second meeting of the CIMT.
- Issue letter to parents forewarning of the potential for the school to close for a period of weeks include advise to parents regarding actions which can be taken at home to reduce the spread of virus.
- Communication with all staff about the increased level of risk, health advice and contingency arrangements within school.
- Cancellation of all unnecessary meetings or large staff/pupil gatherings.
- Inform all suppliers, contractors and council related agencies of any contingency arrangements which may affect them.
- Revise staff and pupil sick certification arrangements.
- Redeploy staff if appropriate.
- Stop any teacher/parent contact activities.
- Review sickness policy for absence consequences.
- Review salaries budget to cost in absence cover payments.
- Inform public of any disruptions to normal service delivery.

School Alert level 3

Trigger points – First flu pandemic related fatality within the UK.

Actions

Third meeting of the CIMT

Everything within level 2 plus;

- Keep staff well informed to alleviate fear & fear related absenteeism.

School Alert level 4

Trigger points – school pupil or staff member flu related fatality

Actions

- Fourth CIMT meeting
- Follow guidance details in schools critical incident guidance / plan.
- Appropriately inform all staff and pupils of the death.
- Keep staff well informed to alleviate fear & fear related absenteeism.

3.3 Recovery Measures

School Alert level 5 – (Return to normality)

Triggers – Sickness levels amongst school teaching staff return to a safe teacher / pupil ratio level.

And/or

Any government decision to close schools is reversed.

Actions

Meeting of the CIMT

- Managed redeployment of staff to normal teaching areas.
- Continue increased levels of hygiene (hand washing guidance etc)
- Sickness reporting frequency decreased to normal levels.
- Review any interim overtime arrangements which have been established to help cope with the pandemic.
- Inform parents of reinstated school services.
- Review the well being of those who have not taken sick leave throughout the pandemic. Consider an appropriate support scheme with emphasis on reducing any exhaustion or excess stress.
- Reinstate meetings and school gatherings
- Reinstate parent/staff face to face contact functions.
- Reinstate normal sickness absence arrangements (if changed).
- Review salaries budget.
- Keep staff informed of all changes.
- Review success of all home learning carried out throughout the pandemic.
- Hold a response debrief with opportunity for all staff to express their opinions.
- Action all lessons learned and necessary changes following debrief.
- Memorial service for any staff members or pupils who have died as a result of the flu.
- Consider solutions to allow pupils to catch up with the curriculum if they have fallen behind.

4. Predicted Absence figures

If possible, predicted absence figures, based on local and nationally available information, will be used to inform planning.

5. Continuation of teaching

All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the continuation of teaching. As it is impossible to predict which staff, and which year groups will be most affected at any one time, arrangements will be reviewed daily.

If it is necessary to close the school to pupils, it will remain open as a base for teachers, provided sufficient staff, and a keyholder, can attend (solitary working is not permitted, for Health and Safety reasons).

6. Decision to close the school

The school will close to pupils:

- On the instruction of national government (DCSF)
- On the instruction of, and through discussion with the LA
- By the decision of the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors (if practicable), if staff levels fall to unsafe levels.

7. Other useful information

School closures

The Government may advise schools and early years/childcare settings to close in order to reduce the spread of infection amongst children. This advice will be provided only if closure is anticipated to produce significant health benefits. Closures will be area specific (whilst the virus is circulating in the locality) and are likely to be for two to three weeks, although they may be extended if the pandemic remains in the area. A further 5–6% of staff could be absent as a result of school closures, though this is based on an analysis of informal childcare being available for parents.

Period of absence from flu

Up to 50% of the workforce may require time off at some stage over the entire period of the pandemic, with individuals likely to be absent for a period of seven to ten working days. Absence should follow the pandemic profile, with an expectation that it will build to a peak lasting for two to three weeks, when between 15% and 20% of staff from the **workforce** may be absent, and then decline.

Additional staff absences are likely to result from other illnesses, taking time off to provide care for dependants (eg children), family bereavement, other psychosocial impacts, or practical difficulties in getting to work.

8. Staff/pupils communications plan (reactive)

Methods of communication

Hand wash and virus spread posters in all offices, communal areas and toilets.

All staff/pupil email

Letter to parents

Intranet

Staff training sessions

Virus control lessons to pupils

Information needs to be given to all staff/pupils on the following areas.

Infection control;

- hand washing
- lack of contact (hand shakes etc)
- transmission routes (eyes, mouth, nose) 3 in 2 out
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate

Work space cleaning;

- virus survival times

Actions to take if infected;

- signs and symptoms
- flu line
- anti viral
- don't be a hero (stay at home)
- home advice

Workload continuity;

- job procedures sheets
- home working access

Communication with the local authority

Absence figures should be reported to the County Council. We will provide the details of the contact and the form in which we need this information should it prove necessary.

9. Schools Critical providers

Have good working relationships with all organisations who provide essential services to the school.

- Supply teachers
- Refuse collection

Additional information

When Level 1 alert is reached, all parents will be reminded of the need to collect children from school as quickly as possible if they come ill, and also that school may have to close at short notice.

Pupils who become ill during the school day will be quarantined in the Medical Room, which will be deep cleaned each day.

Annex - General infection control actions

- covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully – bagging and binning them
- washing hands frequently with soap and warm water, or using an alcohol hand rub, to reduce the spread of the virus from the hands to the face or to other people, particularly after blowing the nose or disposing of tissues
- minimising contact between hands and mouth/nose unless hands have just been washed
- making sure children follow this advice
- regularly cleaning frequently touched hard surfaces (eg kitchen worktops, door handles) using normal cleaning products
- avoiding crowded gatherings where possible, especially in enclosed spaces.

10. Pandemic Contingency Plan Review

This policy is reviewed by the Head teacher, staff and Governors in accordance with Barrowby School's Policy and Review Cycle for approval by the Full Governing Body, annually.

Last reviewed: September 2025

Next review: September 2026