

# South Downs Planetarium

## Working Safely with Schools

### Information for Schools V1.1

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#### **1. Introduction**

This document has been drafted by the Trustees of the South Downs Planetarium (Planetarium) to provide information to Schools - School Governors, Head Teachers, Teachers, Parents and children on how schools can visit the Planetarium safely whilst the country experiences the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information sources that contributed to this document were drawn from HM Government's suite of documents regarding working safely in a number of workplaces which were published from May 2020 and the suite of guidance documents produced by the Department for Education (DfE) published from July 2020 onwards. The DfE documents are referenced.

This document may need to be updated in due course in light of the progress of the UK's response to managing the pandemic and with any further advice and guidance from Public Health England (PHE), NHS England and the DfE.

#### **2. Impact of Coronavirus**

In March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the country went into lockdown and many business, leisure and educational facilities were forced to either close or dramatically alter the way they operated.

At that time school bookings were being cancelled and following advice then being issued from central government, the Planetarium was forced to temporary close.

### **3. Schoolchildren at the Planetarium**

The Planetarium is primarily an educational charity and has, for many years, been a successful and extremely popular choice for teachers to bring their class children to enhance that which is taught in the classroom. It also forms a unique 'big sky' experience for the children, one which cannot be replicated in the classroom.

The safety and security of children at the Planetarium has always been a high priority for the Trustees as well as staff working and volunteering at the Planetarium. The impact of Coronavirus places additional responsibilities on the Planetarium staff to maintain the environment as a safe place in which children can learn.

In July the DfE updated its guidance stating that ..... *'schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits'* and further adds that the visits should be .... *'done in line with protective measures such as keeping children within their consistent group'* .... and schools should ensure that ....*(Covid-19) secure measures are in place at the destination.*

The DfE advice is clear and advises a thorough risk assessment.<sup>(1)(2)</sup>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

There are wealth of documents supporting teachers who are planning outside of the classroom visits. A good source of national guidance is through the DfE, and outdoor education specific support can be found on the Outdoor Education Advisors' Panel website <https://oeapng.info/>

### **4. Coronavirus and Risk Management at the Planetarium**

During the closure, the Trustees, in line with their duty of care and with health and safety law, drew up additional Coronavirus risk assessments and risk management plans to enable an eventual safe reopening of the Planetarium. The reopening would only be possible following government guidance, and then only if the Trustees deemed it safe to do so. The Planetarium has now (as of August 2020) reopened.

Extensive physical alterations to the Planetarium have been made alongside many additional safety measures including new and revised cleaning regimes and new operating procedures. These can be all found in the Planetarium's Coronavirus Risk Management Plan.<sup>(3)</sup>

Many of the changes initially supported the opening of the Planetarium for public shows. Fortunately, those changes will also support visits by children whilst on specific school visits. The planetarium compared its own Coronavirus Risk Management Plan<sup>(3)</sup> with the DfE guidance on opening schools<sup>(1)</sup> and found considerable synergy.

Naturally there are some differences in respect to managing a group of schoolchildren; one example is for groups of children working within a social 'bubble' or classroom 'bubble'. However, this can be easily accommodated within the Planetarium as only one 'bubble' will be booked into the Planetarium at any one time.

The Planetarium will expect that each visiting school will have their own comprehensive Coronavirus measures in place and these are in accordance with DfE and NHS guidance.

## **5. Planetarium General Coronavirus Measures**

All physical alterations to the Planetarium and amendments to policy and procedures are based on the main tenets of planetarium Coronavirus containment measures. These include:

- A requirement that ill people, specifically anyone displaying symptoms of Coronavirus, stay away from the planetarium
- A requirement that those who are at high risk due to pre-existing health conditions stay away from the planetarium
- Enhanced cleaning procedures throughout the Planetarium
- Personal hygiene and use of PPE as necessary
- Social distancing (maintaining the 2 metre distance between 'bubbles')
- Improved air conditioning and enhanced air quality monitoring.
- Respiratory measures such as face masks or face coverings
- Staff working in groups
- Engagement with NHS Test and Trace

Within each of the above there is a plethora of actions; again these can be found in the Planetarium's Coronavirus Risk Action Plan.<sup>(3)</sup>

## **6. School Visits to the Planetarium - Specific Measures**

The planetarium acknowledges the DfE's *Guidance for School Reopening*<sup>(1)</sup> 'must do' actions (1-4 and 7-9) and 'circumstance specific' actions (5 & 6) for schools which describe:

### ***Prevention:***

*1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school*

*2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual*

*3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach*

*4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach*

*5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible*

*6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)*

***Response to any infection:***

*7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process*

*8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community*

*9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice*

The Planetarium believes there is significant synergy between actions they have put in place and the DfE's guidance for schools. <sup>(1)</sup> Additionally when reviewing the DfE's guidance document on safer working in education, <sup>(4)</sup> it is clear that there also significant alignment with that document and the Planetarium's Coronavirus Action Plan. <sup>(3)</sup> Therefore it is our belief that a school visit can be easily accommodated with only a few minor adjustments.

However, it is considered essential that both the Planetarium and the visiting school are aware of each other's concerns (if any), policies and expectations for the visit in regard to Coronavirus measures.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

## **7. Planetarium/Schools Points to Consider**

### 7.1 School Booking

When a school makes a booking to visit the Planetarium, in addition to the usual booking procedure and required information, the Planetarium shall additionally ascertain and confirm the following:

1. Only one school will be booked to attend at any one time (multiple schools or year groups within a single school will not currently be accommodated)
2. Maximum number of children – these numbers (to be agreed at time of booking) cannot be exceeded without prior discussion with Planetarium
3. Maximum number of adults - these numbers (to be agreed at time of booking) cannot be exceeded without prior discussion with Planetarium
4. Confirmation that the visiting children form part of a school defined 'bubble'
5. What documentation is required regarding risk assessment and Coronavirus risk assessment by the visiting school
6. Agreement to contact Planetarium/school if there is a reported Covid-19 positive test (within the last 72 hours) amongst anyone present at a recent visit and provide details of such if contacted by NHS Test and Trace

### 7.2 Arrival at/Departure from the Planetarium

1. School group will be met by Planetarium staff, but the responsible school teacher lead will organise and control the walk to and from the Planetarium in accordance with the visiting school's social distancing policy.
2. All school visitors will wash hands for 20 seconds or use hand gel upon arrival and prior to departure
3. All adults/teachers will wear face coverings as per the visiting school's policy
4. Use of toilets by children in the Planetarium will be in accordance with the visiting school's policy

### 7.3 Educational Components

1. There is reduced seating in the star dome – all pupils will face towards the centre of the star dome.
2. There is reduced seating in the Bunker room – all pupils will face forward
3. Some usually-included educational activities cannot be provided at present due to cross contamination risks – e.g. fun quiz based on Planetarium displays, handling of meteorites etc. (Such exclusions will be discussed at time of booking.)

### 7.4 Cleanliness

1. Packed lunches may be brought and eaten by children on site in the Bunker room by prior agreement on booking but high standards of hygiene are expected.
2. Visiting staff should remove any waste generated on site by the children– black rubbish bags can be provided by Planetarium staff if required
3. All areas of the Planetarium will be cleaned prior to the school visit. Many areas are being additionally professionally cleaned with specialist long acting anti-viral cleaning products
4. Any discarded PPE generated by school staff is removed by the school as per above bullet point above
5. Alcohol-based hand gel is available at the Planetarium. This may be harsh on young children's hands. If the school has an alternative that it normally uses and wishes to bring it along for use with the children, then the school is welcome to do so

### 7.5 Planetarium staff

1. All Planetarium staff will be expected to follow Planetarium guidelines and actions detailed in the Coronavirus Actions Plan <sup>(3)</sup>
2. All Planetarium staff will wear face coverings
3. All Planetarium staff will maintain 2 metre distance from children and adults in the visiting school party
4. All Planetarium staff will adhere to usual health and safety requirements concerning the planetarium and children on premises

A school visit may need to be cancelled at short notice if the Planetarium is advised by the local Health Protection Team to cancel such visits or close the Planetarium as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak. Similarly it is understood that a school may likewise be required to cancel a visit.

If the Government increases any lockdown measures in the future then this may also affect school visits to the Planetarium. This may happen at very short notice.

## **8. Conclusion**

The Trustees are very aware of the need to maintain a safe environment for both its volunteers and all visitors alike. The Planetarium has its Coronavirus Action Plan under constant review and it will be amended in the light of experience and implementation.

The Trustees and volunteers hope that school staff and children will feel confident in returning to the Planetarium for learning outside the classroom visits during these uncertain times.

We always welcome feedback of a school's experience with us and would especially welcome feedback on your planned visit to the Planetarium and your experience of our Coronavirus measures.

## **9. References:**

1. Guidance for full opening: schools: Government Publications: DfE: 7 Aug 2020
2. Guidance Health and safety on educational visits: Government Publications: DfE: 26 Nov 2018
3. South Downs Planetarium Action Plan Covid-19 V1.4: Aug 2020
4. Guidance Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE): Government Publications: DfE: July 2020

### Useful Webpages

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>