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English Hubs

Guidance on handling books safely

It is really important that children are able to read regularly and continue to read books at school and home at this time. Our younger children need to apply their phonic skills to reading books to enable them to improve their reading. Furthermore, reading is essential for wider curriculum success. Developing a love of reading and supporting the habit of reading is key, both to lifelong learning and ultimately for children's life outcomes.

It is understandable that there is a concern about transmitting the Covid-19 virus by touching surfaces and the potential risk posed by materials moving between households and the classroom or library. However, steps can be taken to minimise the risk. As English Hubs, we want to support you to do this safely. This guidance provides schools with practical tips how to handle books so children can continue to read books in school and take reading books home.

The COVID-19 Guidance Cell of Public Health England's National Infection Service advised the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on 27 March 2020 that:

- The **risk from books** covered in a **plastic cover** handled by someone who is a possible COVID-19 case is **negligible after 72 hours**
- The **risk from books** with a **cardboard/paper cover** is negligible after **24 hours**

Suggested actions for handling reading books

- Children and adults to wash hands before and after handling books
- Wash hands before and after collecting book packs from shelves
- Pack of reading books to be taken from shelves by adults
- Limited number of adults collecting book packs from shelves
- Clean surfaces that children are touching more regularly

Considerations for returning reading scheme books / packs

- Storage space or box for reading scheme books/packs being returned
- Books with a plastic cover to be left in the classroom for quarantine period of 72 hours before being handled again
- Books with a cardboard/paper cover to be left for 24 hours before being reused
- Rotating boxes can be used to house books so that there is a distinction between books that are ready to use, those that need to be isolated for 72 hours and those for 24 hours

Suggested action for sending books home

- Implement quarantine period on the return of books
- Safely store the books and material while in quarantine
- Promote the use of e-books and audio books

Considerations when using class reading corners / school library

- Limit the number of books on the shelf (by regularly curating and refreshing the books from the class or library supply, it also encourages the children to take more notice of them)
- Children view books from selected shelves in library corner
- Operate low risk browsing utilising a digital library management system where possible to allow children to identify books they want to try
- Books taken from the shelf/table by adults
- Excess furniture i.e. chairs/boxes around shelves to be temporarily removed to reduce number of surfaces being touched
- Removal of soft seating/beanbags which may be difficult to clean
- Ensure no personal belongings are brought into the reading corner/library to limit contamination
- Ensure the reading corner is kept as clear as possible to eliminate possibility of falls/accidental contact
- Limit the number of children in the area at any one time

In addition for the use of school library

- Children and staff to wash hands before and after visiting library
- Children to be accompanied by staff to ensure social distancing on approach to library
- No more than a single group to be allowed into the space at once
- Ensure the room is adequately ventilated
- Provide line markings for social distancing
- Ensure the library computer keyboards and monitor switches are cleaned with wipes every day and between child/class use

Alternative library loan options

- Keep library temporarily closed and books chosen by staff taken to classroom to be used/borrowed
- Provide online access to e-book and e-audio loans