



Penhill Playgroup  
Lockdown Update - January 2021



Dear Parent and carers

I know a lot of you are understandably concerned about sending your children to Playgroup at the moment, as we have entered another Lockdown, schools are closed and Covid rates are rising, so why have Early Years settings been asked to remain open?

The **Early Years Alliance**, a campaigning group for Early Years providers, contacted the Department for Education to find out the rationale behind this decision. For those of you that are interested, their reasoning is listed below:

***The Department for Education has provided the below response to queries on why early years providers have been asked to remain open while schools have been instructed to close, following our meeting with children and families minister Vicky Ford earlier today:***

- *The reason schools have been restricted is not that they are unsafe but because additional measures are needed to contain the spread of the virus. The wider restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of the virus in the community enable us to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.*
- *Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. 0-5 year olds continue to have the lowest confirmed rates of coronavirus of all age groups, and there is no evidence that the new variant of coronavirus disproportionately affects young children. Evidence shows that pre-school children are less susceptible to infection and are not playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence the new strain of the virus causes more serious illness in either children or adults and there continues to be strong evidence that children are much less susceptible to severe clinical disease than older people.*
- *PHE advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments.*
- *Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in virus cases within the community. Early evidence from SAGE showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate than primary schools, which in turn had a smaller relative impact than secondary schools.*
- *Early years childcare providers were one of the first sectors to have restrictions lifted last summer, in recognition of the key role they play in society. Childminders and nursery staff across the country have worked hard to keep settings open through the pandemic so that young children can be educated, and parents can work. The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early*

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Member of Early Years Alliance and Registered Charity Number: 1001217



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*education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.*

We find ourselves in a difficult position. If we choose to close voluntarily, we will not receive Government funding and therefore won't have money to pay staff wages, rent and bills. We also want to remain open for those families who want and need the childcare we offer, so for the time being Penhill Playgroup remains open to all children registered with us.

We want to continue to support all our children and families, whether the children are attending or you are keeping them at home. We plan to offer regular contact by phone/email or text, to ensure that you and your family are all ok; to answer any questions or talk through any concerns that you may have.

Staff have been putting together ideas for activities that can be done at home and these will be emailed individually to you as they will be specific to your child. We may be able to supply resources such as paper, card, scissors, games, books etc for you to have or borrow, whilst your child is not attending, please ask if there is anything you need.

We will also be posting weekly ideas on our Facebook page, linked to the themes we are looking at, at Playgroup, so if you are able to access Facebook, it may be worth joining the Penhill Playgroup group.

Our Facebook group will also be live once a week on a Tuesday afternoon, between 3.30pm and 4.30pm, so that you can pose any questions, share ideas or pictures of what you have been doing at home and have a chance to socialise remotely with other parents.

If you have any questions, queries or concerns, please feel free to email [supervisor@penhillplaygroup.org.uk](mailto:supervisor@penhillplaygroup.org.uk), text or What's App us on 07305 061428. If you want to speak to someone, it is best to use the landline number 01903 767513 (Monday to Friday 8am – 1pm). It may not be possible to respond to texts, What's App messages or email during our opening hours 9am – 12noon as staff are working directly with the children, but we will respond to you as soon as possible.

Currently almost two thirds of our parents have decided to keep their children at home, so our numbers attending are very low. The most children we have on one day is currently 8. Don't forget, if at any point you wish to change your mind and send your child back to Playgroup, they will be very welcome, but please let us know to expect them!

Please continue to keep safe and well.

Katie, Manager  
Penhill Playgroup

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