



## **Safeguarding Children during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Appendix**

### **Context**

This appendix addresses how the school will apply the safeguarding and child protection policy in order to safeguard all pupils/students during COVID-19. It applies both to the children who are attending school and the majority who will be staying at home, pending further government advice.

### **Vulnerable children**

From 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the government asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Children who absolutely need to attend are those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response and children defined as vulnerable as follows:

Vulnerable children and young people include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
  - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
  - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
  - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
  - care leavers
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment in consultation with the Local Authority and parents/ carers to determine whether children with an EHC plan need to continue to be offered a school place in order to meet their needs or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting

the home to provide any essential services. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

It may also be necessary and appropriate to undertake a similar risk assessment in relation to children with social workers. However, the school will provide a place for any child with a social worker:

- if the social worker requires a place to be provided; and
- the child's parents/carers are willing to send the child to school; and
- the child does not have an underlying health condition that puts them at increased risk.

In circumstances where the school considers a child to be vulnerable and eligible to attend school, but a parent/carer does not want to bring their child to school, the DSL will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent/carer. If the child has a social worker, the DSL will liaise with the social worker and seek to involve them in the discussion with the child's parents/carers.

Where parents/carers are concerned about the risk of their child contracting COVID19, the DSL will discuss those anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England. If the child has a social worker, the DSL will liaise with the social worker and seek to involve them in the discussion with the child's parents/carers.

NB - Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself will not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability for these purposes.

In line with advice from Warwickshire County Council, the school will create and maintain an up-to-date register/database of all pupils/students who are considered vulnerable as above.

The register/database will contain the names and contact details of the child's parents/carers; other significant family members; social workers; family support workers; and any other key professionals including health professionals and youth justice workers. The register/database will be accessible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and all Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, including by secure access for DSLs who may need to self-isolate and/or work from home.

The school will assess the level of vulnerability of each pupil/student on the register/database using the RAG rating format as below. This will support the DSL to identify those children that need to be offered the opportunity to attend school (this must include all children with a social worker), those that can be supported by regular contact from a DSL and those whose attendance might be inconsistent and who may therefore need additional contact and support.

The RAG rating criteria are:

**Red** - most at risk of harm or neglect (will include all children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan); and all children who are looked after

**Amber** - a moderate risk of harm, but with some protective factors (will include those with a Child in Need plan and/or being supported by a family support worker)

**Green** - some concerns or unmet needs; or have been red or amber and need monitoring.

Every child on the vulnerable children register/database will be allocated to a named DSL who will be responsible for ensuring that the identified level of support and contact is provided.

DSLs will record all contacts and outcomes with vulnerable children and their families in the usual way so that those records are visible to colleague DSLs and can be reviewed in regular DSL meetings.

### **Attendance monitoring**

If the school has any eligible children in attendance, the daily attendance sheet will be submitted to the DfE by 12 .00pm.

If the school has closed, the return will be submitted once as required by the DfE.

For any child eligible to attend school who does not attend, the school will follow the normal absence management procedure. As a minimum, a text message will be sent home in relation to each eligible on each day of absence. If the DSL is concerned about the child's level of vulnerability, a decision will be made about whether a home visit is appropriate or if a phone call will suffice; and the necessary frequency of such contact for each day of absence

In relation to **all children subject of Child Protection Plans and who are looked after** who do not attend school, the DSL or designated teacher for children who are looked after will **liaise closely with Children's Social Care**. A shared decision may be made that as long as one practitioner has seen the child, that will suffice as a safe and well check, but the DSL will log any such decision and all home visits undertaken.

In any event, **the social worker must be informed about any child who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or who is looked after who does not attend school on the first and (subject to the agreement reached with the social worker) each subsequent day of absence.**

For each child identified as vulnerable but who the DSL considers can be safely cared for at home (NB This will not include any child with a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or who is looked after without agreement with the child's social worker), the DSL will identify the nature and frequency of contact the child will need to reassure the DSL of their safety and wellbeing. This might include phone calls, text contact, TEAMS meetings or home visits.

### **Home visits**

Any home visit must be risk assessed. If agreed that a home visit is necessary, it should be undertaken by two members of staff.

It is unlikely that home visits will be frequent. If they are undertaken, they will subject of a risk assessment based on the following guidelines:

- (1) The DSL will speak to the child's parents/carers to establish whether any member of the household has symptoms of COVID-19; has been diagnosed; or is self-isolating.

- (2) Home visits will be undertaken by two members of staff, one of whom will be a DSL. NB It would be expected that any member of staff who has an underlying health condition/ vulnerability would be at home self-isolating. For the absence of doubt, no such member of staff will therefore undertake home visits.
- (3) The DSL will inform the parents/carers of the plan to undertake a home visit and that visiting staff will need to see and speak to the child through a window.
- (4) Staff undertaking home visits are advised to wear gloves and avoid contacting metal surfaces with their bare skin. They should knock on the door of the house with covered hands. After knocking on the door, they must step back from the door by at least two metres.
- (5) Visiting staff will ask to see and talk to the child through a window; and will aim to keep the conversation as upbeat and positive as possible.
- (6) Staff are advised not to enter households but simply to check that the child is well by a conversation through a window, maintaining the recommended social distance of 2 metres.
- (7) However, if undertaking a home visit, staff must actually see the child.

If a family is self-isolating and/or it is difficult/not appropriate to carry out a home visit subject to the risk assessment, the DSL will consider whether technology can be used to see the child, e.g. via Skype or other means of video chat. If carrying out Skype/video chat, this should be agreed with parents/carers prior to any call being made.

All school policies including the Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct and ICT Acceptable Use policies must be followed at all times both in face to face and electronic communication with pupils and parents/carers. No staff member should private message children or video conference with a child directly, other than via school-owned equipment and subject to parental agreement and the agreement of the Headteacher or the DSL.

Where concerns for a child at home reach the threshold for significant harm, a referral must be made to Children's Social Care/Police as per normal safeguarding procedures. For that reason, all DSLs must have access to MASH and other key agency phone numbers and children's details, even when working from home.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The DSL and Deputy DSLs are as named in the main policy.

The DSL or a Deputy DSL will be available either on site or by phone at all times when the school is open. In the event that this is not possible, the DSL or a Deputy DSL will be readily accessible via email and will respond rapidly to concerns. All staff members have been provided with contact details in order to be able to contact a member of the DSL team without any difficulty. Should the DSL become unwell, all staff will be informed and key responsibility will pass from Andy Mitchell to Sian Stevens under those circumstances.

When the DSL (or Deputy DSL) is not on site, a senior leader will always be present and will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site, always with ready telephone/online access to the DSL as above.

All DSLs will have remote access to the register/database of all vulnerable children and other safeguarding records when working off site.

The DSL team will meet fortnightly to discuss the welfare and status of each child on the register/ database of vulnerable children.

The DSL team will liaise with MASH, Social Care, family support workers and other key safeguarding partners as normal, whether working in school or working remotely. If working from home, DSLs will be accessible via access to their school email account and should have use of a school-owned mobile telephone, the number of which should be shared with colleague DSLs, partners and the Education Safeguarding Service.

The DSL team will continue to attend - either in person or virtually - Child Protection Conferences; core group meetings; strategy meetings; Child in Need meetings; Children who are Looked After reviews; and Early Help meetings.

### **Reporting a concern**

All staff and volunteers continue to have a responsibility for safeguarding children and will report any safeguarding concerns about children to a DSL in the normal way as set out in the main policy.

Staff should have access to the normal safeguarding recording format (e.g. green forms, CPOMS) when working off site, including when working from home.

Staff and volunteers are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the normal safeguarding recording format (whether green forms or CPOMS) remotely, they will contact the DSL via email ( and cc at least one other DSL in) to inform them that they need to share a concern. This will ensure that the concern is received. The receiving DSL will then confirm receipt by replying to all parties so that everyone knows the concern is being actioned. Actions will then be recorded on CPOMS.

Where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about the behaviour of an adult working with children in the school, they should inform the headteacher as normal, using a yellow form. If the notification needs to be made when the reporting individual is off-site, this should be done via an electronic yellow form or verbally and followed up with an email to the headteacher on the same working day.

In the temporary absence of a Local Governing Body, any concerns about the headteacher should be reported to the CEO of the Trust.

### **Safeguarding training and induction**

The DfE recognises that DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst the threat of the COVID-19 virus remains and government guidance in relation to large gatherings and social distancing is relaxed.

DfE guidance states that for the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy)

who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

The DSL will communicate any new or revised safeguarding advice, guidance, requirements, arrangements or information in writing to all staff and volunteers.

Where new staff or volunteers are recruited, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If adults from another school or setting are redeployed to work at the school during the COVID-19 virus, the school will take into account DfE supplementary guidance and will accept portability of pre-employment checks as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's Barred List check; and
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children; and
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

Upon arrival, all such redeployed staff will be given a copy of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Behaviour Policy, Social Networking Policy, the Online Safety Policy, the school's safeguarding recording and reporting procedures and confirmation of DSL details and arrangements.

## Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

The school will maintain its commitment to ensuring that only suitable people are given opportunities to work with children at the school. Any recruitment during COVID-19 will therefore be undertaken following the normal safer recruitment processes, subject to the school's policy, local authority guidance and advice and Part 3 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2020)* [KCSiE].

Safer recruitment principles also apply to the recruitment of volunteers, subject to KCSiE.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current national emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that the school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers are in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in Regulated Activity. As such, the school will continue to maintain the single central record as outlined in KCSiE.

### Online safety

The school is committed as always to providing children with a safe environment in which to learn. That includes online learning. The online filtering (in relation to school-owned devices) and monitoring systems will be in operation as normal. The school is unable to filter activity on devices not owned by the school. Parents may find it useful to refer to the school's website for guidance on putting some restrictions in place to keep children safe.

Where pupils/students are using ICT equipment in school, appropriate supervision will be in place as normal.

## Children and online safety away from school and college

As above, all online lessons should be delivered by school staff in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use of ICT, Social Networking and Online Safety policies.

The school will take account of guidance from DfE in relation to the planning and delivery of online learning when it is issued; as well as nationally recognised guidance including [guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning](#) and [London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming](#).

Staff will always use school owned technology and accounts for the delivery of remote lessons/tutorials. Where possible, applications that facilitate the recording of lessons will be used. School leaders will randomly sample recorded lessons in order to safeguard pupils/students and staff and to ensure that policies are being followed.

If staff need to deliver lessons/tutorials on a one-to-one basis or communicate with vulnerable children who are not attending school via video chat, they will speak to parents/carers before lessons commence and at the end of lessons before logging off.

The school will request and obtain consent from parents/carers before staff communicate with children online.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs that a child may be at risk, distressed for some reason or vulnerable in some other way; and report and record that following normal safeguarding procedures. All such concerns must be brought to the attention of a DSL and dealt with by a DSL as per the main policy in the normal way.

The school will ensure that online learning tools and systems are used in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Below are other issues that staff need to take into account when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas and the background should be blurred or neutral.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including that used by any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms specified by senior managers for communication with pupils/students

The school recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people and that the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 virus may well affect the mental health of some students and/or their parents/carers.

All staff will maintain as awareness of those issues in communications with children and their parents/carers including when setting expectations of pupils' work when they are at home.

## **Supporting children not in school**

Any child on the school's register/database of vulnerable children who it has been decided does not need to attend school; cannot attend school due to a risk to their own health or the health of another member of their household; or whose parents/carers are unwilling to send them to school will have an identified plan of support that will be overseen by a named DSL and recorded on the child's safeguarding file.

The plan will include regular communication with the child's named social worker or family support worker where there is one. A record of all communications with the child, parents/carers and practitioners in partner agencies will be made on the child's safeguarding file, including telephone calls, emails, other online communication, video conversations and virtual meetings.

The school will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan in order to safeguard the child.

This plan will be reviewed regularly by the allocated DSL in discussion with at least one other member of the DSL team, using regular/planned DSL team meetings, as appropriate.

The school will continue to share safeguarding messages on its website and via weekly updates/ newsletters.

## **Supporting children in school**

The school will continue to be a safe space for all children who attend during the COVID-19 virus. Whenever the school is open and to maximise safety, the headteacher will ensure that appropriate numbers of staff are on site and that staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate.

The school will ensure that government guidance for education and childcare settings in respect of social distancing and advice from Public Health England in respect of handwashing and other protective measures to limit the risk of spreading COVID19 is followed regularly and robustly.

All children attending school will be provided with appropriate emotional support, bespoke to their needs, assessed vulnerability and circumstances.

Where the school has concerns about the availability of critical staff to work in school - particularly members of the DSL team, SENCO, Designated Teacher for Children who are Looked After and First Aiders - those concerns will be raised with the CEO of the Trust either via [c.cotton@communityacademiustrust.org](mailto:c.cotton@communityacademiustrust.org) or directly without delay.

## **Peer on peer abuse**

The school recognises that a revised process for managing any report of peer on peer abuse and supporting victims may be required during the COVID-19 virus when only a relatively small number of children will be attending school.

Where the school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, it will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSiE and as outlined in the main policy as closely as possible.

The school will listen and work with all children involved, their parents/carers and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of alleged victims, alleged perpetrators and all other children attending the school.

Concerns and actions must be recorded on the child's safeguarding file and appropriate referrals made by the DSL.

### **Support from the local authority**

The Education Safeguarding service will be available as usual for advice and support via 079 6622 4286 or 01926 742525 and will also provide further updates and information from Warwickshire Safeguarding and the local authority as necessary and appropriate.