

Safeguarding and Child Protection

APPENDIX G: COVID-19 Safeguarding Guidance

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Trust continues to have due regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) as per funding agreement requirements. The safeguarding of all pupils across the Trust - whether they are currently at home or at school - continues to be the priority. The fundamental principles of safeguarding remain in place:

- the best interests of children continue to come first
- if anyone in school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
- a designated safeguarding lead will be available at all times
- no unsuitable person will be allowed access to any pupil
- pupils should continue to be protected when they are online

The COVID-19 pandemic and partial school closure means that some aspects of safeguarding may operate differently and details of how Trust schools will adapt to these different circumstances is outlined in the sections below.

Where there is reference to school procedures in this appendix, all schools should ensure that staff have access to school information, whether they are working on site, or at home.

1.2 Definition of Vulnerable Learner

There is frequent use of the term “vulnerable” in safeguarding documents and the government’s definition of the term is produced below:

- Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- Other children who may not fall into one of the categories above, but are deemed by the school to be vulnerable (or potentially vulnerable)

All schools should have a “Welfare list” in place which identifies all vulnerable and potentially vulnerable pupils (and their needs) and records action and contact during the pandemic.

1.3 Safeguarding arrangements apply to **all** pupils during partial, or full, closure – those in the identified vulnerable groups as well as all those on roll. Schools will care for, and support, those coming to school as well as those at home or in other provisions.

1.4 Any safeguarding action or contact with vulnerable, or potentially vulnerable pupils must be recorded centrally and also placed on the individual child’s safeguarding file.

1.5 The Trust will provide support to schools in order to uphold safeguarding standards during the pandemic. The CEO and central team has direct contact with LA officers and with the Regional Schools Office.

2. Updated advice received from the local 3 safeguarding partners

The Local Authority has contact points for all schools and for the Trust and CEO. Any advice received will be circulated as soon as it becomes available. During a pandemic, this information is likely to be communicated by the Local Authority's "Headlines" publication which comes direct to schools. All headteachers should ensure that the school is receiving and responding to information in this publication.

3. Updated advice received from local authorities regarding children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need

All relevant departments at the Local Authority including the LADO and Social Care have contact numbers for each individual school and for the Trust and CEO. Any information received by schools in relation to revised reporting mechanisms should be published to staff, and particularly DSLs as soon as it becomes available.

4. Reporting safeguarding concerns

The procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns remain in place across all schools. In school, safeguarding forms should be completed and passed to the DSL on duty as soon as possible. Where a DSL is available by phone only (see section 4) a referral should still be made as soon as possible and details scanned using a secure school system. Any change to the reporting system to be used in schools will be published to staff in advance.

5. Timescales for safeguarding concerns

Any member of staff becoming aware of a safeguarding concern must report the incident in line with published guidance i.e. as soon as possible. It remains the case that all staff and volunteers must act immediately on any safeguarding concerns, whether these arise in school, or during times when pupils are continuing their education at home.

6. DSL (and deputy) arrangements

6.1 The optimal scenario for all schools is to have a trained DSL or deputy available on site during the pandemic and this is the recognised position of the Trust. All Head teachers are responsible for checking that each weekly rota has a DSL on the school site.

6.2 The DSL on duty for that particular week should be publicised in key areas of the school so that pupils are aware, and also made known to all staff, including reception staff who may take phone calls from the general public.

6.3 If, due to illness or self-isolation, this is not possible, the following process should be followed:

- a trained DSL or deputy from the school should be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home
- any trained DSLs or deputies with other schools across the trust can be contacted

- the CEO will fulfil the role giving immediate advice prior to contacting the most appropriate DSL available within the Trust

7. Looked – after Children and Previously Looked after Children

- 7.1** It remains important for all school and Trust staff to continue working with and supporting children’s social workers and the Local Authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

School contacts for looked-after children and previously looked-after children can be found in each school’s **Local Procedures**. They will also be published on the Trust’s website and can be included in school newsletters as well.

- 7.2** Each school will be guided by the Virtual School head as to whether that child would be best to remain in school or home, depending on the criteria set by that Local Authority’s Virtual School. In instances, where it has been deemed best for the child to remain at home, suitable work will be provided and regular contact will be made with the carers (The frequency of this will be set by a risk assessment in collaboration with the child’s social worker.)

8. Peer on Peer abuse

- 8.1** Any incident – reported or seen – involving pupils still in school can be dealt with using the procedures already in place.
- 8.2** Any incident or concern which arises as a result of monitoring activity online should be referred using the school procedure.
- 8.3** Any incident reported to the school via email or telephone call should follow the same school procedure.
- 8.4** Pupils who become concerned about anything that they see, or experience online, should be reminded of reporting procedures through school publications. Alternatively, pupils (and their families) can report the matter to the school and school procedures will be followed.

In all the instances above, all those reporting matters should receive sufficient feedback so they know their concerns have been acted upon.

9. Concerns relating to staff members of volunteers

If any member of staff or volunteer has a concern about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children, contact should be made with the Head teacher. If the headteacher is not available, either by telephone or email, then the matter should be reported to the DSL on site. If the concern relates to the head teacher, the Chair of Governors or the CEO of the Trust should be contacted as outlined in the school procedure.

10. Online Safety

- 10.1** Although all Trust schools will be acting continuously to raise pupils’ awareness of online safety, partial closure presents its own challenges. All pupils are likely to be using the internet and social media far more during a pandemic. The Trust has subscribed to a monthly online safety newsletter

which is age-appropriate and which is emailed out to all schools. Schools are responsible for ensuring that this newsletter reaches all parents/carers.

Where there is a secure tab for parents/carers on the school website, the newsletters can be published there. Schools can, and should, make reference to this in any school newsletter which is published.

- 10.2** Each school's website has advice regarding online safety, with links to CEOP. Home learning activities set may also include online Safety activities.
- 10.3** Any concern arising from interactive sites (such as google classroom) or identified from software monitored by DSLs (secondary only) should be progressed using school procedures.
- 10.4** All commercial online resources are checked prior to uploading onto school sites. During this period, no resources from unchecked companies can be uploaded to the school system or school website and no data information should be passed to any company without reference to the ICT Lead for the Trust and the Trust's DPO.
- 10.5** All schools should clarify with parents/carers on a regular basis, the online sites which are being used to support learning during the pandemic. This communication can be achieved through school newsletters.
- 10.6** In addition to the actions above, support for online safety is also available from a number of reputable providers and these are listed below:
- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
 - [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
 - [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

11. Children moving schools and colleges

- 11.1** Where pupils are attending another setting during the pandemic, all schools should do whatever they reasonably can to provide the receiving institution with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

Most arrangements of this nature will have been effected **prior** to the pandemic. **There should be no staff or pupil movement between schools during the pandemic unless this has been agreed by the head teacher in consultation with other agencies and the CEO.**

No school should accept pupils from other settings without prior agreement and the relevant information being secured. As a minimum, required information would be: an EHC Plan, child in need plan, child protection plan, or in the case of looked-after children, their personal education plan, the name of any social worker assigned to the child or family and, for looked-after children, the name of the VSH responsible for the child.

- 11.2** Individual schools will ensure that arrangements are in place at all times, including in a pandemic, to ensure that contact is maintained with those pupils attending other providers.

- 11.3** Where school closure interrupts the transition of pupils between nursery and Early Years, Key Stage 2 to 3 and Key Stage 4 to post-16, separate information and guidance will be published, both to safeguard pupils and to protect personal data.

12. Safer recruitment/ volunteers and movement of staff

- 12.1** All schools are in a position to operate effective rotas within their own schools and therefore additional recruitment and/or staff movement should not ordinarily apply to any school in the Trust as a result of the pandemic. Staff from other settings (ie from outside the Trust) must not be given access to any Trust school without prior permission and the relevant safeguarding checks/information being received.

- 12.2** However, In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking in order to minimise the need for face-to-face contact. Where schools and trusts are utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Please, under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Any Trust school considering recruiting volunteers to work in schools during this period must discuss the issue with the Trust's HR Manager prior to any placement in school.

- 12.3** Where staff have been assigned a revised role during the pandemic to enable the provision to operate effectively, the headteacher and senior DSL should ensure that all relevant checks and training have been undertaken to allow the staff member to work safely.
- 12.4** If school closures continue during a period when recruitment remains essential, contact should be made with the Trust's HR Manager as soon as possible. Although there have been changes to the DBS process to minimise the need for face-to-face contact, schools must ensure that the process reflects, and fulfils, the standards required by the Trust's Safer Recruitment Policy, including relevant checks and training **prior** to any contact with pupils.

13. Children with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Where pupils with EHC plans can safely remain at home, they should do so. Schools and Local Authorities need to consider the needs of all children and young people with an EHC plan, alongside the views of their parents, and make a risk assessment for each child or young person. All pupils with an EHC will be on a "Welfare List" which will operate for all schools and should receive regular contact from school staff. The frequency of contact will be determined by a risk assessment of the situation.

14. Special schools and specialist provision

Where a child or young person requires ongoing provision, this may continue to be provided at their current special school or specialist college, but not always. Local Authorities, schools and colleges, working together and taking into account parents' views, will need to make decisions regarding the provision required to meet the needs of children and young people in their area.

15. Alternative Provision

All Head teachers should identify any student attending an Alternative Provision provision during the pandemic and assure themselves that appropriate arrangements are in place. These arrangements should be recorded by the DSL and monitored on a weekly basis. Pupils in Alternative Provision should be added to the school's "Welfare List".

16. Other pupils in need

There may be pupils across all Trust schools who do not fall into any category stated above. However, schools may still regard particular pupils as "vulnerable" or potentially vulnerable for a range of reasons known to the school. These pupils, along with those in designated groups, should form part of the "Welfare List".

Head teachers should, in consultation with their DSL and SENDCo, ensure that a "Welfare List" is in place for each school and that there are robust arrangements for recording contact both with vulnerable, or potentially vulnerable learners.

17. Attendance

17.1 During a pandemic and partial school closure, attendance will only be recorded for those pupils attending school. However, all schools need to ensure that they know the names of all pupils on site at any time. The government has initiated its own recording system for pupil attendance and this must be completed daily. There is also a Trust spreadsheet which should be completed.

If a school is expecting a pupil to attend, but the pupil does not arrive, the standard attendance procedures must be followed and parents/carers contacted.

Where the school is unable to make contact with the parent, or emergency contact to ascertain the safety of the pupil, other appropriate agencies should be alerted.

17.2 Schools and social workers (as appropriate) will agree with parents/carers whether children in vulnerable groups should be attending school. Schools will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Schools will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.

17.3 During the pandemic, Local authorities and education settings will not be completing their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on the non-attendance of learners ie attendance warning letters.

17.4 Referral processes (such as MARF, for example) should be used where there are concerns relating to the non-attendance of any pupil during the pandemic.

18. Mental Health

18.1 Negative and distressing life events, such as a pandemic, can affect the mental health and well being of pupils and their families. Schools will be able to respond directly to those on-site, but can also offer advice and support over the phone to those at home.

18.2 Newsletters and websites can also be used to publicise strategies and to identify charities able to provide specialist support.

18.3 Any concerns relating to the mental health of individual pupils, or their families, should be reported to the DSL using school safeguarding procedures.

18.4 It is sadly the case that some families and staff may suffer bereavements during a pandemic and schools should be ready to contact specialist agencies, such as those used during, and after, a critical incident.

The government has published guidance on mental health and wellbeing here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing?utm_source=f4fe9d0e-2e25-4f75-acc1-64ceb6d0f3a4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

19. DfE coronavirus helpline: available to answer questions

Email DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Telephone 0800 046 8687

If you have a query about coronavirus (COVID-19), relating to schools and other educational establishments in England contact our helpline.

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm.

Teachers in a school will need to have the school's unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.