

Safeguarding Children during the COVID-19 measures

Annex to Safeguarding Children Policy

Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual: our schools are only open for EY, Year 1, Year 6, key worker and vulnerable children, a large proportion of our children are not in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

This annex to our Safeguarding Children Policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

1. Version control and dissemination
2. Safeguarding priority
3. Current school position
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Vulnerable children
6. EHCP children
7. Increased vulnerability or risk
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9. Reporting concerns about children and staff
10. Safeguarding training
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1. Version control and dissemination

This annex to our Safeguarding Children Policy will be reviewed by our designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) on a fortnightly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It has been made available to all staff via email.

2. Safeguarding priority

During these challenging times, the safeguarding of all children - whether they are currently at home or attending school - continues to be our priority. The following fundamental safeguarding principles remain the same:

- the best interests of children continue to come first
- if anyone in our school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately

- a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available
- no unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online.

3. Current school position

All four of our schools are open for EY, Year 1, Year 6, key worker and vulnerable children, a large proportion of our children are not in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Safeguarding Children Policy.

5. Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan, a child in need plan and those who are looked after by the local authority.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend school, unless they can be safely looked after at home.

Senior leaders in our Trust, especially the DSLs (and deputy DSLs) know who our most vulnerable children are, and they have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

We will continue to work with children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

6. EHCP children

Those children with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to be offered a school place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

7. Increased vulnerability or risk

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Staff are aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. Where we are providing school for children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Our staff are aware of the mental health of children and their parents and carers and will contact the DSL or a deputy DSL if they have any concerns.

8. Attendance

Where a vulnerable child, who has been offered a school place, does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

9. Reporting concerns about children or staff

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Safeguarding Policy procedures and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and what to do if they have a concern. This information has been organised into a flowchart which has been shared with all staff via email and which is displayed in the staffroom.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy.

10. Staff training

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

11. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workplace or gain access to children.

When recruiting new staff, we will continue to follow our Safer Recruitment policy.

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff are on our school site and that the appropriate checks have been carried out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain our single central record (SCR) during these measures to ensure we have this awareness.

12. Peer on peer abuse

We recognise that children can abuse their peers and our staff are clear about the school's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school site during these measures.

Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse and will follow the process set out in our Safeguarding Children Policy.

13. Online safety

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. Our staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and our school filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children.

Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Safeguarding Children Policy.

Staff who interact with children online will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will follow the approach set out in this annex and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

Teachers will follow agreed protocols when using online software to video call pupils.

14. Supporting children not in school

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive additional pastoral support in school, they will ensure that a communication plan is in place to support that child. Details of that plan will be recorded and reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.