

COVID-19 Addendum to Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

Scope

As the pandemic continues into the winter months, all Trust schools will continue to comply with DfE statutory guidance as set out in **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020** and associated Trust policies. This Addendum applies for the continued period of the pandemic and will be reviewed in March 2021 or earlier if circumstances require. It reflects advice from our local safeguarding partners and local authorities (Birmingham and Dudley).

The Addendum sets out changes to the Trust's normal child protection policy in light of the Department for Education's latest guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Unless covered here, the Trust's normal child protection and safeguarding policy continues to apply.

Core Safeguarding Principles

The way our Trust schools are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children will always continue to come first
- if anyone in a Trust school has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or senior leader will be available in school at all times
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online

The Trust will, as far as is reasonably possible, take a whole organisational approach to safeguarding during the period of the pandemic. This will allow the Trust to satisfy itself that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 are not weakening its approach to safeguarding or undermining its child protection policy.

Safeguarding and bubbles

As schools are required to minimise contact between teachers, staff and classes, pupils are placed within class bubbles, the principles in [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\) 2020](#) are critically important to ensure effective vigilance and oversight of all pupils. In particular, all bubbles will be monitored to ensure a safe environment is maintained and that children are safe, staff have been appropriately checked and risk assessments carried out as required.

Revised Trust Child Protection arrangements

The Trust will continue to ensure that any revised child protection arrangements required to respond to the COVID-19 emergency will reflect:

- any updated advice received from the local safeguarding partners
- any updated advice received from Birmingham and/or Dudley 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
- what staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child
- the continued importance of all staff and volunteers acting and acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns
- DSL (and deputy) arrangements in all Trust schools
- the continued importance for school staff working with and supporting children's social workers and local authority virtual school heads (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- peer on peer abuse - given the very different circumstances schools are operating, processes will be reviewed for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims (the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE will continue to inform any revised approach)
- what staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children (the principles in part 4 of KCSIE will continue to support how Trust schools respond to any such concerns)
- any arrangements to support children schools are concerned about who may not immediately meet the *vulnerable* definition
- what arrangements are in place to keep children not physically attending school safe, especially online and how any concerns about these children should be progressed

The Trust will ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of this addendum to the Trust's main Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and Procedures. The Addendum will be updated as new guidance is available and will be made available on the Trust and individual school websites.

Local Health Protection Team advice is available to all schools in our Trust:

Birmingham Schools

PHE West Midlands East Health Protection Team,
5 St Philip's Place,
Birmingham, B3 2PW
Phone: [0344 225 3560](tel:0344 225 3560)

Out of hours for health professionals only: please phone 01384 679 031

Dudley Schools

PHE West Midlands West Health Protection Team,
2nd Floor, Kidderminster Library, Market Street,
Kidderminster, DY10 1AB
Phone: [0344 225 3560](tel:0344 225 3560)

Out of hours for health professionals only: please phone 01384 679 031

Designated Safeguarding Leads and deputy arrangements

All Trust schools will continue to ensure a trained DSL or deputy is available on site at all times. In the rare exception where staff absence due to the virus makes this not possible:

- a trained DSL or deputy from the school will be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home
- sharing trained DSLs or deputies with other schools will be considered

Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, a member of the senior leadership team will take responsibility for coordinating safeguarding. This might include updating and managing access to child protection files, identifying the most vulnerable children in school, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaising with children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school.

Whatever the situation, the Trust recognises that it is important that all school staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL or deputy and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them. Headteachers will be responsible for maintaining and keeping this under constant review.

Vulnerable children

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected remains a top priority for the Trust and its schools. The Trust will continue to follow the latest DfE guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

The Trust and its schools will continue to work closely with all external services and social workers to ensure the best interests of vulnerable children remain an absolute priority.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, attends sporadically or discontinues, the school will notify their social worker immediately.

Working with safeguarding partners

The Trust will continue to update this Addendum where necessary, to reflect any updated guidance from local partners:

- our local safeguarding partners
- our local authorities (Birmingham and Dudley) with regard to e.g. children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, local authority designated officers and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need
- whilst the Trust recognises the need to continue to have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR these will not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe as outlined in KCSIE 2020.

Monitoring attendance

Throughout the winter months Trust schools will be vigilant in monitoring and overseeing pupil attendance and absence. All the usual attendance registers will be completed and the usual procedures to follow up on non-attendance implemented.

Schools will follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Schools will also work with parents/carers to promote regular attendance.

Schools will take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

Attendance data across all Trust schools will be reported regularly to the Trust's leadership team and Trustees.

Peer-on peer abuse

Trust schools will continue to follow the principles set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 when managing reports and supporting victims of peer-on peer abuse. Staff will continue to act on any concerns they have immediately.

Concerns about a staff member or volunteer

The Trust will continue to follow the principles set out in Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately.

The Trust and its schools will refer and adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

The Trust and its schools will continue to refer potential cases of teacher misconduct to the Teaching Regulation Agency. The Trust will do this using the email address for the duration of the COVID-19 period in line with government guidance: Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

Support for children where the Trust has concerns

All Trust staff and volunteers are aware that this difficult time potentially puts all children at risk. Staff and volunteers will continue to be alert to any signs of abuse, or effects on pupils' mental health that are also safeguarding concerns, and act on concerns immediately.

As the pandemic progresses, children who have not previously been considered as *vulnerable* may become a concern. This could result from such situations as loss of parental employment, furlough arrangements, adult mental health concerns, eviction etc. Staff will be vigilant in monitoring children where there may be a concern and reporting this concern to senior staff without delay. The Trust will also monitor this information closely and act accordingly.

Safeguarding for children not attending school

Contact Plans – Trust schools will have contact plans for children who may be self-isolating or absent from school.

These plans set out:

- how often the school will make contact
- which staff member(s) will make contact
- how they will make contact
- expectations around home learning

The Trust will monitor these plans as part of its on-going Pandemic Risk Assessment process.

Online safety in Trust schools

The Trust recognises that it will be more important than ever that schools provide a safe environment, including online. Schools will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems (read [guidance on what “appropriate” looks like](#)) are in place to protect children when they are online on the schools IT systems or recommended resources. The Trust and its schools will consider who has the technical knowledge to maintain safe IT arrangements. The Trust will also monitor its contingency arrangements if IT staff become unavailable.

Children and online safety away from school

The Trust and its schools will continue to act reasonably to keep all children safe. Over the winter it is likely that children may have to self-isolate for periods of time. Therefore, it is important that all staff who interact with children online continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the Trust’s child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children’s social care and as required the police.

All Trust schools will consider the safety of their children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the Trust’s Staff Code of Conduct. This includes acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communication including the use of social media.

The Code will apply equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which are introduced.

Schools will also ensure any use of online learning tools and systems are in line with the Trust’s privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements. Any concerns should be passed to the Trust’s DPO.

An essential part of the online planning process will be ensuring children who are being asked to work online have very clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting routes back to school, schools will also signpost children to age appropriate practical support from the likes of:

- [Childline](#) - for support
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - to report and remove harmful online content
- [CEOP](#) - for advice on making a report about online abuse

As schools will be in regular contact with parents and carers, communications will be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. The Trust considers it to be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are doing online, including the sites they access.

Parents and carers may choose to supplement the school online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their communications with parents and carers, schools will emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children. Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online will include:

- [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 careers 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](#)

All Trust schools are advised to share this support with parents and carers.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

All existing school staff already have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of KCSIE 2020. The important thing for these staff will be awareness of any new local arrangements so they know what

to do if they are worried about a child. Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter Trust schools they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

Where existing school staff are required to move between schools on a temporary basis in response to COVID-19. The receiving school should judge, on a case-by-case basis, the level of safeguarding induction required. In most cases, staff will already have received appropriate safeguarding training and will be aware of the Trust's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

The Trust recognises that it remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. If Trust schools need to recruit new staff over the period of the pandemic, they will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of KCSIE 2020. The Trust notes the changes the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made to its [guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking](#) to minimise the need for face-to-face contact.

Where Trust schools are utilising volunteers, they will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in KCSIE 2020. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work with children.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that the Trust is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in its schools and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, the Trust will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in KCSIE 2020.

Staff on loan from other schools or nurseries

All Trust schools will assess the risks of staff 'on loan' working in their school and seek assurance from the loaning school that staff have the appropriate checks.

Mental health and wellbeing

The Trust is aware that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils, parents and staff. Teachers should be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work when they are at home. A designated Trust helpline has been set up to support teachers and provide advice on how best to support children.

The Trust and its schools will also signpost pupils, parents and staff to other resources to support good mental health and wellbeing throughout the period of the pandemic.

Monitoring and review

This Addendum will be reviewed as guidance from local safeguarding partners, LAs or DfE is updated, and in March 2021 by the Trust Safeguarding Lead. At every review it will be approved by the Chair of the Trust

Monitoring and review	Trust Board
------------------------------	--------------------

Links	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Anti-Bullying Policy Behaviour Policy + Covid-19 Addendum Staff Code of Conduct IT Acceptable Use Policy Online Safety Policy
Staff responsible	Headteachers
Committee responsible	Trust Board
Date approved	November 2020
Next Review	March 2021
Sign off by Chair of Trust:	 Date: November 2020

Change Management

Issue No:	Change date:	Change description:
1.0	March 2020	Initial release
2.0	April 2020	Updated
3.0	Sep 2020	Updated with Local Health Protection Information/KCSIE 20
4.0	Nov 2020	Review and update (Phase 3 Sustain Strategy)