



Bright Futures

EDUCATIONAL TRUST

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COVID-19: Interim *additional* arrangements for Child Protection and Safeguarding: Policy, Procedures & Guidance

**In response to 8 March 2021 wider re-
opening of schools: this replaces earlier
interim additional arrangements**

This is policy and guidance that applies Trust-wide
and should inform the required school-specific
interim additional safeguarding procedures

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Owner of Policy: John Wm
Stephens, CEO

Authorised by: implementation
in response to
Government
guidance

Policy Review Date: In response to
updates

Distribution: **All staff,
workers,
governors and
trustees**

Website

Context

From 20th March 2020, parents/carers were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response - who absolutely need to attend. Schools and all childcare providers were also asked to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents/carers are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. In January 2021 similar 'lockdown' restrictions were introduced leading to further supplementary guidance. This latest supplement is issued in response to the return to school of all pupils announced on 22 February. We recognise that we are working in a changing situation and that the different contexts of each of our schools will mean some local variation in the specifics. This document sets out the overall expectations across the Trust. Each school will prepare their own, locally specific version that includes the key contacts etc.

Prolonged absence from onsite school potentially presents an increased risk to children and vulnerable adults. Organisations such as the NSPCC and The Children's Society have highlighted the potential risks for children whose homes are not safe places. Contacts to Childline have significantly increased during lockdown periods.

Incidents of **serious domestic violence and abuse** appear to be increasing. This is of particular concern as the usual means of detecting and escaping from domestic abuse are limited during the lockdown and households may be under increased pressure. The police and other partners are aware of the increased risk and have made more resources available to prevent and respond to this threat.

The arrangements set out here are *in addition* to the normal safeguarding and child protection policy. It is important that, as far as possible, we continue to adhere to the good practice set out in the full policy.

Key contacts

Every school should detail the key contacts for safeguarding. This may need to have some additions added to show deputies and also to include some out of hours or off-site phone numbers.

All DSLs and Principals/Heads of School have the contact phone numbers for the Trust Safeguarding Lead, John Stephens, CEO.

Local contacts (e.g. the LADO or social care 'front door') may have changed the direct numbers given that people are working from home – check this and make sure it is accurately recorded.

With the wider reopening of schools from 8 March schools should check what the contact arrangements are for partners, especially as some people in partner agencies will continue to work from home.

Vulnerable children

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.

We will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

It is possible that children deemed 'vulnerable' will face greater barriers to a full return to school. Monitoring their attendance and providing appropriate support to support their inclusion will mitigate this risk.

Attendance monitoring

From 8 March 2021 all pupils should begin their full return to school. There may need to be a phasing of the return in secondary and some specialist settings to allow for the implementation of lateral flow testing but the expectation is that all pupils will attend school.

The usual arrangements will apply for parents/carers to report absences and to make schools aware of the status of any COVID-19 tests and to update the school on the welfare of the pupil.

We will record attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) for all pupils.

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

The advice for pupils who have been formally confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally.

For children self-isolating or quarantining or shielding – we will use code X.

We will provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus (COVID-19).

Also, we will offer pastoral support to pupils who are:

- self-isolating
- shielding
- vulnerable (and off-school)

The Department for Education expects schools to grant applications for leave in exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

We will follow up on any pupil that we were expecting to attend who does not attend. In all circumstances where a child (and particularly those deemed 'vulnerable') does not return to school or discontinues (including electing to home educate) we will ensure that every effort is made to ensure the child is safe and will liaise with relevant partner agencies as appropriate.

We recognise that some parents/carers may be anxious about their children returning to school. Through the schools' well-established routines for controlling infection and risk assessments we will endeavour to reassure both parents/carers and children that school is a safe place for them. It is much better to work constructively with parents/carers to develop a strong relationship of trust that supports a decision for all children to return to school. However, warnings and penalties for non-attendance may be used as a last resort.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL and deputy will continue to maintain good contact with children's social care and other partner agencies. Using remote access where necessary they will contribute to relevant multi-agency discussions such as strategy meetings and reviews.

Personal Education Plans for children who are looked after will need to be considered and a discussion held with heads of the local virtual schools to see what would be most useful in supporting children and young people to be fully included and successful in their return to normal onsite school experiences.

Reporting a concern

The process of reporting concerns about a child or an adult are unchanged. Processes set out in the full policy apply. Where students are absent of having to shield/self-isolate **do not delay raising concerns. Access to normal systems should be possible from 8 March, but if you are unable to access normal online reporting systems whilst working remotely, make a careful, thorough, factual note of the concerns. There is a format for this in the main policy if needed.** Emergencies need to be reported to the police in the same way as normal.

Safeguarding training and induction for staff and those involved in governance

Safeguarding training may continue to be delivered in a COVID-19-secure way either virtually or – following a risk assessment – in person.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2020). The DSL should communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child. It is worth reminding staff of any additional risks associated with school closure.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction either virtually or in person as appropriate. If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept DBS portability 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
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual.

When new staff arrive, they will be given a copy of the receiving setting's safeguarding and child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements. Where reference is made to 'staff' this includes all trainees and temporary appointments working in the schools.

Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

During times of emergency measures there are people who seek to exploit any gaps or relaxation in procedures. **It is essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children.**

When recruiting new staff, we will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes set out in our policies including, as appropriate, relevant sections of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) (KCSIE). Our Safer and Fair recruitment policy can be found on the Trust's website; pages 7 and 8 detail the pre-employment screening which is still required: [Safer and Fair Recruitment policy](#).

In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking to minimise the need for face-to-face contact. Where we are deploying volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in KCSIE. **Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.** We will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found from paragraph 183 – 188 of KCSIE (2020). We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching

Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 150 of KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral'. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing: Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current restrictions, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, we will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 164 to 171 in KCSIE and in accordance with the process detailed on page 11 of the Bright Futures' 'Safer and Fair Recruitment' policy.

Online teaching and signposting to online materials/resources

Any teaching conducted virtually should adhere to the same high professional standards expected in all other contexts. We will need to ensure that any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Andrew Hall, safeguarding consultant, has offered the advice (below) for online lessons, especially if live webcams are used. As schools open more widely, the demand for online learning will reduce. However, as the need for some limited remote education continues, it may be necessary to review arrangements for making best use of technology to keep in touch with students and maintain a good link. Safe ways to do that include provision for students to access approved online resources or to have links to resources that the school has pre-recorded (e.g. book reading at South Shore and Rushbrook, the 'Big Draw' at Stanley Grove, assemblies at AGGS etc)

Specific considerations if online (live):

- No 1:1s, groups only
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- 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 any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use approved platforms to communicate with pupils, noting that Teams/Skype and Zoom in particular have improved their security and password access arrangements.
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

Any safeguarding concerns observed or highlighted during any communication with students must be recorded and reported following the usual systems.

Supporting children not in school

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our children and young people. We expect a full return to school for all pupils from 8 March with the exception of a very small number who need to shield or those required to self-isolate. (see section on attendance, above)

Supporting children in school

With most children expected to return to learning on site, there may be an initial increase in causes for concern or referrals. Some children may be worried about returning in uniform/shoes that have become ill-fitting. We will be sensitive to children's needs and concerns, balancing this with a desire to return to normal routines and expectations.

We will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19. Where a school has concerns about the impact of staff

absence – such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – they will discuss the risk this presents with the trust Executive Team so that appropriate mitigation can be put in place.

Support for mental health and well-being

The significant societal changes that we are experiencing may have a negative impact on some people's mental and physical health and well-being. The Trust has published regular advice and guidance on support for well-being and mental health developed by colleagues in the Greater Manchester Mentally Healthy Schools Team and our own educational psychologists. These materials are published on the Alliance for Learning website (link given below).

Lateral Flow Testing in Schools

Schools in the trust that deliver lateral flow tests will work within the guidance on administering tests, risk assessments and training issued by the DfE/DHSC. Any use of volunteers in respect of this programme will be subject to the same recruitment and oversight of all other volunteers. The scope of their roles must be clearly defined as must arrangements for their supervision and training.

Some children who have suffered particular forms of abuse may find the physically invasive nature of lateral flow testing difficult, even if they are self-administering. It's important that staff and/or volunteers working on the testing are aware of the possibility of trauma related to physically invasive procedures.

Useful links

Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>

Safeguarding network advice on COVID-19 implications: <https://safeguarding.network/covid-19/>

NSPCC Home Page: [HERE](#)

Children's Commissioner website including COVID-19 advice: [COMMISSIONER](#)

Alliance for Learning useful resources: [TEACHING SCHOOL](#)

Bright Futures' Safe and Fairer Recruitment policy

[Safe-and-Fair-recruitment policy](#)