

Annex to Child Protection Policy – version 1.0

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

This Annex to our Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for the current situation of COVID-19 measures.

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Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Most children are no longer in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

Schools have been asked to provide care for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by our DSL or a deputy DSL on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the school website here [*insert link*] and is made available to staff on the Safeguarding section of the WBCA Staff Portal.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff and volunteers in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff and volunteers can to speak to them.

Safeguarding priority

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – whether they are currently at home or in attendance – 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.

Current school position

West Bromwich Collegiate Academy is currently closed to students. Any children who are classified as vulnerable or are the children of Key Workers who require supervision have been offered provision at Shireland Collegiate Academy which is serving as the Hub school in the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.

The West Bromwich Collegiate Academy site is open each Wednesday from 1-3pm for eligible families to collect food parcels. A small number of WBCA staff will be on site at this time to assist with this process.

All staff and volunteers attending on site from outside our school will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns.

Safeguarding partners' advice

We continue to work closely with our three safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this annex is consistent with their advice. This will include expectations for supporting 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. The current advice is below.

Sandwell Education Safeguarding Guidance for all Educational Settings

Coronavirus March 2020

Draft - Guidance for Education Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Young People

This guidance is issued to reflect the COVID 19 situation and the context of increased child absence and school closure **during term time**.

This guidance is draft and will be under regular review to reflect local, regional and national advice.

KSCIE September 2019 states (See KCSIE 2019 page 19 para 65:)

65. During term time, the designated safeguarding lead and/or a deputy should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding

concerns. It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

KCSIE 2019 Annex B (Role of the DSL) page 95

Availability during term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to define what “available” means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and/or Skype or other such media is acceptable. It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

As you are aware from Monday 23rd March the majority of schools will be closed until further notice. Sandwell Education Directorate will be liaising with some schools who will stay open. The MASH Education Safeguarding Team will continue to support all DSLs and senior leaders in schools during this time.

Staff Guidance: Preparation for School Closure actions in Relation to Safeguarding Children in Education

The Senior Leadership Team will need to complete a risk assessment for COVID-19 in relation to vulnerable children.

Vulnerable Children:

Review the Vulnerable Children’s list to identify:

- Children on a Section 47 Child Protection Plan
- Children on a Section 17 Child in Need Plan
- Children for whom an extended period of time at home will present an additional risk to the child
- Children open to Targeted Family Support /Early Help
- Children who are acting as Young Carers
- Children who are open to Youth Offending Service
- Children who are accessing Alternative Provision and children who have been Excluded
- Based on the level of need/concern, how often would a home visit be needed

There are a number of key aspects to consider when closing a school in term time. Example: child protection, food and any financial burdens.

Schools should identify their vulnerable students on the basis of risk. We suggest red, amber and green. These ‘grades’ mean:

Red – most risk of harm or neglect and fewest protective factors (would include those with a Child Protection Plan)

Amber – a moderate risk of harm, but with some protective factors (would include those identified as ‘Child in Need’; and those with a Social Worker)

Green – some concerns escalating or unmet needs; or have been red or amber and need monitoring

DSLs may need to contact the family by phone and/or home visits. How often will be depend on the risk assessment above and any agreement with partner agencies eg. Social workers, Family Support workers, YOS workers etc

1. This will vary from 1-3 days, but contact will be no longer than every 3 days. Record this risk assessment on the child’s file



2. Divide the children between the DSL team and ensure that each member of the team knows which child they are allocated to.
3. Where a school receives Operation Encompass/Domestic Violence notification emails, the inbox should be checked on a daily basis and appropriate actions taken. If school closes completely the process of sending out Encompass notifications will be the same as it is in school holidays where you will receive it on the first day of returning to school.
4. Record contact information on the child's file
5. Liaise with specialist health teams for any child with chronic long-term health needs to inform them of a school closure.
6. The DSL must ensure that remote access (working from home) to access the school IT system where possible and that a laptop/iPad is available for each member of the DSL team.
7. Establish where the children will be living in the event of a closure and discuss with parents the need to respond to calls.
8. Contact details of parents, social worker and any multi-agency professional working with the child are recorded on the child's file
9. Discuss with neighbouring schools about DSL cover in the case of sickness.

This support from schools is a really important service therefore, please consider the following measures for risk mitigation:

- Where possible, undertake as much work as possible via phone.
- If a visit is required, try and phone ahead to determine whether anyone is symptomatic in the household
- If this is not possible, try to ascertain whether someone is symptomatic in the household when you first arrive. If they are, get the information you need to be able to conduct the rest of the work via telephone.
- Ensure good handwashing etc before and after visits.
(Advice from Public Health March 2020)

Recording contact:

All contact or support with vulnerable children and families should be recorded. During school closures, products like CPOMS and MyConcern really do come into their own, as they can be securely accessed from anywhere. Remember though that if the screen is visible in non-secure areas, for example, at home, that there can be a data breach, if other members of your family can see it.

Record action taken:

- Spoken to parent
- Spoken to child
- Summary of Conversation
- Arising actions

CPOMS/MY CONCERN - Please ensure that all custom fields are added to appear under the '**COVID 19 – Closure**' category only.

The most vulnerable children will potentially need a home visit, so that they can be seen in person, this could be the role of the DSL (All usual measures around staff safety to be taken into account.) The frequency of any visit should be related to risk, but probably at least once or twice a week. In cases of self-isolation, aiming to view through a window may be appropriate. For any children with a Social Worker, other professionals should be kept informed. This is especially important, since for many children, school is a protective factor and when it is missing, the risk may increase, and



children's services may need to reassess the case. Staff should attend CP and CIN meetings wherever practical or possible.

Phone calls will also be important. Ideally these calls should be made using school phones, rather than personal devices.

For some families, Coronavirus may lead to other risk factors eg. financial hardship. Schools should be alert to the potential stress and loss of income. There may be ongoing issues with vulnerable families accessing food and SCT and the Council are working on this together. For these parents, it may be important to understand where to signpost them to get support, including from third-sector organisations. (Early Help Offer <https://sandwellfamilylife.info/>)

Schools will need to alert SCT if there are issues around accessing food for vulnerable families, so advice can be given.

If you think a child or young person would experience an unmanageable increased risk of harm without a more regularly visiting pattern you must discuss this with your manager and agree a safe visiting frequency

NB: IF A CHILD OR THEIR FAMILY MEMBER IS SELF ISOLATING OR DIAGANOSSED WITH CORONAVIRUS YOU MUST NOTIFY YOUR GROUP MANAGER IMMEDIATELY. A PLAN OF SAFEGUARDING WILL THEN BE AGREED FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CASE.

1. Partnership Working – Multi Agency Meetings

1.1 All multi- agency meeting may be undertaken via online / Skype facilities. This includes; Strategy Meetings / Mace / POT/ Core group / Case Conferences and Looked After Children Reviews. *This is not an exhaustive list!*

- QDU admin are responsible for re-arranging skype invites and instructions to the Conferences and Reviews
- BSO/Admin are responsible for arranging strategy meetings / core group / Mace etc

1.2 Social Workers are asked to bring only young people and families to the planned meeting venue and to support parents and young people through such meetings.

1.3 Where this is a Case Conference or Looked After Child review the IRO/Chair should be present with the SW and Parent/Child. *Partner agencies will be joining online.*

Government updates:

Government advice for schools can be found here: [COVID-19: guidance for educational settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>
<https://www.gov.uk/education/running-and-managing-a-school>

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Child Protection Policy.

If possible, our DSL and at least one deputy DSL will be available on site during the school day. Where this is not possible, we will:

- have a trained DSL or deputy DSL available by phone and/or online video; or
- ensure we have access to a trained DSL or deputy DSL from another school or college by phone and/or online video.

Where our DSL or a deputy DSL cannot be on site, then in addition to one of the above options we will also ensure a senior leader from the school takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for child protection is

George Faux email: gfaux@wbca.shirelandcat.org.uk tel: 0121 295 4850

The deputy designated lead(s) are

Mary Gardner email: mgardner@wbca.shirelandcat.org.uk tel: 0121 295 8555

Emma Jones email: ejones@wbca.shirelandcat.org.uk tel: 0121 295 8557

Caroline Martin email: cmartin@wbca.shirelandcat.org.uk tel: 0121 295 8548

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will discuss this with the social worker and explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they 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.

We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

Senior leaders in our school, especially the DSL (and deputies) 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.

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 will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

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

Attendance

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL or a deputy DSL will be informed.

The DSL or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents through various methods, such as telephone, FaceTime, Skype or by contact a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will undertake a home visit or ask an appropriate agency to do so. A risk assessment will be carried out before any such visit is made to ensure staff the family are not put at risk.

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

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 [Child Protection](#)



[Procedures](#) and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff or volunteers. 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](#).

Staff training and induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLs are unlikely to receive their refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern
- there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
- the individual remains suitable to work with children.

Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

It remains 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 our [Safer 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.

For volunteers we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in regulated activity.

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers 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.

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 Child Protection Policy, which can be accessed [here](#).

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 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 [Child Protection 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.

New children at the school

Children may join our school from other settings. When they do, we will seek from those settings the relevant welfare and child protection information. This is relevant for all children that join us, but it will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

For vulnerable children we will ensure we understand the reasons for the vulnerability and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum we will seek access to that child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is).

Ideally this will happen before a child arrives but where that is not possible it will happen as soon as reasonably practicable.



Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs co-ordinators/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with EHC plans. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case our school senior leaders will take responsibility.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment based on the information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know the information.

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 in the safeguarding file for that child. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.