

St.James' CofE Primary School



Covid Policy Addendum to the Safeguarding policy 2020

Written by: S. Booth September 2020
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Scope and context

This addendum applies during the academic year 2020/21, following previous school closure due to COVID-19. It reflects updated advice from our 3 local safeguarding partners and Rochdale LA and should be read in conjunction with our school safeguarding policy.

Unless covered here, our normal school safeguarding and child protection policy continues to apply.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Throughout the period of pandemic, we continue to have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Although our school needs to operate in different ways in order to manage risks associated with Covid 19, we always follow these important safeguarding principles:

- The best interests of children must come first
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they must act on it immediately
- A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy should be available at all times during term
- School takes all reasonable precautions to prevent unsuitable people entering the school workforce or gaining access to children
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online

We will take a whole institution approach to safeguarding and will ensure that new policies and ways of working in response to COVID-19 do not weaken or undermine safeguarding, which remains at the heart of our school ethos.

Safeguarding all children

Staff and volunteers are aware that the period of lockdown and ongoing uncertainties attributed to the pandemic could put all children at greater risk. Staff and volunteers at our school will be alert to any signs of abuse, trauma or effects on pupils' mental health that are also safeguarding concerns, and will act on concerns immediately in line with the school procedure. This includes any concerns about peer on peer abuse, in which event school will continue to follow the principles set out in part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and our school procedures.

All staff and volunteers will refer safeguarding concerns about a child to the DSL to seek advice and share information. This will apply for children that are attending school and for any children that may be at home.

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy, which includes making a written record via **CPOMS** which can be done remotely. If a member of staff cannot access their school's recording mechanism, they should email the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher. This will ensure that the written record is received and can be actioned.

DSL/ DDSL arrangements

We aim to have a trained DSL or deputy DSL on site wherever possible. If our DSL (or deputy) can't be in school, they can be contacted remotely via phone on 07866 647576. Our DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings, which may take place remotely.

If there are occasions where there is no DSL or deputy DSL on site, a senior leader will take responsibility for coordinating safeguarding. This will be Claire Hilton.

The senior leader will be responsible for liaising with the off-site DSL (or DDSL) to make sure they (the senior leader) can:

- Identify the most vulnerable children in school and deal with any concerns and disclosures
- Update and manage access to child protection files, where necessary
- Liaise with children's social workers where they need access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments

In the event that we do not have DSL cover available due to staffing shortages, the school will notify Gillian Barratt, Head of Schools and Claire Heap, Education Safeguarding Officer, so that arrangements can be considered for sharing resource with another school.

We will keep all school staff and volunteers informed if there is any change to the DSL (or deputy) on any given day, and how to contact them.

Children's mental health

Staff and volunteers are aware of the possible effect that the pandemic and/or other events or circumstances that a child may experience, may have had on their mental health. School will continue to offer support in relation to the mental health of all pupils.

Staff will look out for behavioural indicators, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, and will share information with the DSL to help identify where support may be needed.

School will signpost pupils, parents/carers and staff to resources and services to support good mental health.

Online safety

We will continue to provide a safe environment for children, including online. Our school uses an online filtering system and the DSL has responsibility for monitoring any concerning usage and addressing this with individuals. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

There has been a sharp increase in the use of technology for remote learning since March 2020. When selecting a platform for online / virtual teaching, school will ensure the provider has an appropriate level of security. Wherever possible, staff will use school devices and contact pupils only via the pupil school email address / login so that the filtering and monitoring software is enabled.

In deciding whether to provide virtual or online learning for pupils, our school will take into account issues such as accessibility within the family home, the mental health and wellbeing of children, including screen time, the potential for appropriate behaviour by staff or pupils, staff access to the technology required, etc. Virtual lessons, if used, should be timetabled during the school day and senior staff, DSL and / or heads of department should be able to drop into any virtual lesson at any time – the online version of entering a classroom.

All staff who interact with children via school learning platforms or online learning will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns will be handled as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and where appropriate, referrals will be made to children's social care and as required, the police.

Online teaching and interactions between school staff and children will follow the same principles as set out in the Guidance for Safe Working Practice/ code of conduct. Our school will consider the following when delivering virtual lessons, especially those including the use of webcams;

- 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 where possible.
- 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.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Resources/videos must be age appropriate – the child may not have support immediately to hand if they feel distressed or anxious about content
- Staff must only use platforms specified by senior managers and approved by our IT network manager / provider to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to dynamically risk assessing safeguarding issues during online lessons, in exactly the same way as they would do in a classroom. Staff must raise any issues of suitability [of dress, setting, behaviour] with the child and/or parent immediately and end the online interaction if necessary.

Recording lessons does not prevent abuse. If staff are to record the lesson they are teaching, school needs to give consideration to data protection issues; e.g. whether parental/pupil consent is needed and retention/ storage. If a staff member believes that a child or parent is recording the interaction, the lesson should be brought to an end or that child should be logged out immediately and further advice sought from the DSL.

We will provide information for parents and carers to:

- Raise their awareness of the potential risks to children online and the importance of staying safe when online
- Inform them what our school is asking children to do online, including what sites they will be using and who they will be interacting with from our school
- Make them aware that they should only use reputable online companies or tutors if they wish to supplement the remote teaching and resources our school provides

- Signpost them to where else they can go for support and information to keep their children safe online

Monitoring attendance

From the start of the Autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

We will resume taking our register and ensure that we provide attendance information in an accurate and in a timely manner, in line with any DfE requirements.

Where any child that we expect to attend school does not arrive, we will:

- Follow our first day absence procedure
- Notify the social worker, if they have one

We will adhere to DfE school attendance guidance, including correctly coding any absences related to Covid 19 as per; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Our school has taken reasonable steps to obtain up-to-date emergency contact details from parents and carers and outlined the importance of us being able to make contact during the school day, in the event of a child needing to be collected if they become symptomatic or a bubble needs to isolate. We request more than one emergency contact for each child and regularly remind families to inform us if their contact information changes in our newsletters and on our school website.

Contact plans

We will continue to utilise our contact plan at Appendix A to retain regular contact with all children on the school roll during any circumstances where children are not attending school due to isolating, or in the event of any future partial/full lockdown that may occur. The contact arrangements will form part of our school contingency plan.

School will consider which tier each child sits within and will follow their contact plan to determine;

- How often the school will make contact – this will be at least once a week
- Which staff member(s) will make contact – as far as possible, this will be staff who know the family well

- How staff will make contact – this may be over the phone, doorstep visits, or a combination of both

When contacting families, staff and volunteers will look out for concerning signs like:

- Children not completing assigned work or logging on to school systems
- No contact established with children or families
- Children seeming distressed or withdrawn during any class check-ins or video calls

We will agree contact plans with children's social care where relevant, and will review them at regular intervals. Where there are concerns arising from contact or where school is unable to make contact with a family after utilising different attempts, we will seek advice from the allocated social worker if applicable, or EHASH, via telephone consultation.

If staff need to contact a pupil or parent by phone and do not have access to a work phone, they should discuss this with a senior member of staff and, if there is no alternative, always use 'caller withheld' to ensure the pupil/parent is not able to identify the staff member's personal contact details.

Recruiting new staff and volunteers

We recognise the importance of robust safe recruitment procedures and take all reasonable steps to ensure that adults and volunteers who work in our school are safe to work with children. We therefore continue to follow our safer recruitment procedure and part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education throughout the pandemic period.

In urgent cases, when validating proof of identity documents to apply for a DBS check, we may consider, after seeking HR Advice, initially accepting verification of scanned documents via online video link, rather than being in physical possession of the original documents. This approach is in line with revised guidance from the [DBS](#). New staff must still present the original documents when they first attend work at our school.

Similarly, temporary measures allow right to work checks to be carried out by verifying scanned documents on a video call. If we need to take this approach, we will take HR advice and follow [Home Office and Immigration Enforcement guidance](#).

We will continue to do all of our usual checks on new volunteers, and will do risk assessments to decide whether volunteers who aren't in regulated activity should have an enhanced DBS check, in accordance with paragraphs 167-172 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Staff 'on loan' from other schools

We will assess the risks of staff 'on loan' working in our school, and seek assurance from the 'loaning' school that staff have had the appropriate checks, as well as seeking advice from the Local Authority if this became necessary due to staffing shortages.

Keeping records of who's on site

We will use the single central record to log:

- Everyone working or volunteering in our school each day, including any staff 'on loan'
- Details of any risk assessments carried out on staff and volunteers on loan from elsewhere

Concerns about a staff member or volunteer

We will continue to follow the principles set out in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and our allegations management policy and will act on any concerns about professionals – whether those concerns are about staff/volunteers working on the school site or remotely.

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.

We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral. During the COVID-19 period all referrals will be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

Safeguarding induction and training

We will make sure staff and volunteers are aware of changes to our Covid 19 risk assessment and related changes to our procedures and arrangements.

All staff and volunteers will continue to receive;

- A safeguarding induction for new starters
- A copy of our safeguarding and children protection policy (along with this addendum)
- Part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Basic safeguarding training every 3 years, which may take place online
- Regular safeguarding updates provided by the DSL, at least on an annual basis

We will decide on a case-by-case basis what level of safeguarding induction any staff 'on loan' need. In most cases, this will be:

- A copy of our child protection policy and this addendum
- Confirmation of local processes
- Confirmation of DSL arrangements

DSL training

The DSL (and deputy) must do what they reasonably can to keep up to date with safeguarding developments, such as attend virtual network/ training facilitated by the LA and/or safeguarding partners, read newsletters and participate in professional advice groups.

Children attending other settings

Where children are temporarily required to attend another setting, we will make sure the receiving school is provided with any relevant safeguarding and child protection information.

Wherever possible, our DSL (or deputy) and/or special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) will share, as applicable:

- The reason(s) why the child is considered vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them
- The child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or personal education plan
- Details of the child's social worker
- Details of the virtual school head

Where the DSL, deputy or SENCO can't share this information, the senior leader(s) identified in section 4 will do this. We will share this information before the child arrives as far as is possible, and otherwise as soon as possible afterwards.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy addendum will be reviewed as guidance from the 3 local safeguarding partners, the LA or Department for Education is updated. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

Appendix A

Safeguarding contact with students during full/partial school closure or when children are isolating

This is a guide to help you consider the best way to support children and families. An assessment of your staff resources and the needs of your families will be required to consider the feasibility of the plan. There is also the understanding that this procedure may need to be reassessed regularly due to the rapidly changing situation.

Aim

- Ensure **all** pupils have contact from school, according to need
- Learning can continue at home through work provided, in line with school's contingency plan
- All vulnerable families have additional contact and support with any concerns reported and recorded, in coordination with children's social care.

In the first instance, school needs to assess which children would fall into the different tiers:

Current cases where there is CSC involvement: Tier 1

These are the children that meet the DfE definition of 'children with a social worker'

- If possible, speak to the child to gain their wishes and feelings regarding support needed.
- On the days that these children are attending school, no further action is required
- On the days that they are absent, usual absence procedures for these children should be followed – ie phone call home to ascertain their whereabouts and welfare and informing the social worker of the absence.
- Where the absence is repeated, consultation should be undertaken with children's social care (CSC) to assess and agree;
 - Who will see the child/ren and how often.
 - Regularity of telephone contact and by whom
- If school is unable to make contact with family or has any concerns arising from contact, CSC must be informed.
- School safeguarding team to continue to liaise with all necessary professionals via email/phone. If any information is received by school, eg domestic violence notification, this must be shared with the social worker.
- School to attend any virtual Child Protection conferences, review meetings etc unless advised otherwise
- Staff to use school safeguarding system eg CPOMS to record and report

Vulnerable families – this may include those on EHA or other families where school is aware of other vulnerabilities: Tier 2

- If possible, speak to the child to gain their wishes and feelings regarding support needed.
- For those children who are attending, no further action is required on the days that they are present
- For those who are not attending, agree and record a clear plan with any involved partner agencies for:
 - Regularity of contact and by whom– school to contact twice a week dependent upon needs of the child/family and capacity within school
- If school is unable to make contact with family or has any concerns arising from contact or other information received, eg domestic violence notification, EHASH should be consulted via telephone for advice.
- School safeguarding team to continue to liaise with all necessary professionals via email/phone.
- School to attend any planned meetings unless advised otherwise.
- Staff to use school safeguarding system eg CPOMS to record and report

Remaining pupils on roll: Tier 3

- For all children who are not attending school due to isolating or lockdown requirements, irrespective of whether they previously had known vulnerabilities, school has a responsibility to ensure they are safe. Therefore, school will need to maintain regular contact with children if they are unable to attend school due to Covid restrictions. This may include school conducting doorstep welfare checks where appropriate. If school is unable to make contact with a family, or has concerns arising from contact, EHASH is to be consulted for advice.
- Reiterate the same messages you would give to children about their safety during a school holiday, i.e places of safety, trusted adults and helpline numbers. These messages and contact numbers should be on your website for children to locate should they require them.
- If possible, ask children to speak to a member of staff if they are concerned for their safety or wellbeing in any way during this period.
- Ensure that the school website, twitter feed etc promotes services such as Childline, Kooth or any others that may be valuable to children out of contact with school.
- Any children who disclose information that identifies them as vulnerable should be moved into tier 2 category.
- Staff to use the school safeguarding system e.g. CPOMS to record and report any concerns.

Named contacts

- Pupils identified in tier 1 and 2 should be allocated a designated member of the safeguarding team, according to the agreed individual plan
- Other pupils should be allocated to a teaching or support member of staff for them to retain contact with. ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE REGULAR CONTACT WITH SCHOOL.
- All contact should be undertaken in line with Guidance for Safe Working Practise.

- No personal information for pupils to be taken from the premises (paper copies etc)
- Any cause for concern must be recorded and reported through the school safeguarding system unless there is an immediate danger/safety risk in which case staff must contact the named DSL and EHASH/ emergency services as appropriate.