

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

Annex to Safeguarding policy – version 2.0

Document reviewed: 28th May 2020

Context

The way schools and colleges with England and Wales are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Since 20th March most children have not been accessing a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

From 1st June additional designated groups of pupils will begin to return to primary academies and at secondary and special academies from 15th June. This is in addition to those children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home who have been able to access academies throughout.

The academy will provide a summary of its safeguarding work since 20th March 2020 in the Annual Safeguarding Report to Governors to the Academy Board meeting to be held in June 2020.

This annex to our Safeguarding policy sets out details of our arrangements for:

1. Version control and dissemination
2. Safeguarding priority
3. Current school position
4. Safeguarding partners' advice
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Vulnerable children
7. Increased vulnerability or risk
8. Attendance
9. Reporting concerns about children and staff
10. Safeguarding training and induction
11. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff
12. Peer on peer abuse
13. Online safety
14. New children at the school
15. Supporting children not in school

Version control and dissemination

This is version 2.0 of this annex, taking account of updated guidance issued on 20th May 2020. It will be reviewed by the LAT Chief Operating Officer, in conjunction with academy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) regularly as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the academy website and is made available to staff through the LAT Coronavirus (COVID-19) portal at <https://covid19.helpdocs.com/>

We will ensure that all staff in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and Deputy DSLs are and how staff can speak to them.

Safeguarding priority

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our academy – 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 academy position

The academy is operating to provide provision for pupils on its roll. In line with government guidance this will provide education provision for designated year groups, as well as to allow vulnerable children and those of key workers to access appropriate educational settings.

The academy will be staffed by its own staff, supported where necessary by those from LAT central teams.

Everyone member of staff attending the academy will have undertaken appropriate safeguarding and child protection training to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns. They will have already read and understood Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2019, together with this addendum.

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.

Roles and responsibilities

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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and/ or Deputy DSL will be available on site during the academy day. If neither are on site a senior member of staff will be designated to undertake the role. In addition, the academy will also ensure all senior leader are available to support the DSL/Deputy DSL address any concern.

The academy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Miss Denise White

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mr Stefan Bishop

The Deputy Designated Lead is Mrs Tanya Shaw

Other direct contact details for the DSL and Deputy DSL will be provided by the academy leadership team

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 or health 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend the academy, 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 the academy, 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 Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place at the academy 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. The risk assessments will be regularly reviewed. As academy opens more widely, provided the conditions for a phased return are met, children and young people with EHC who have not been attending and are in eligible year groups will experience the same return to settings as their peers without EHC plans in the same year group.

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

Senior leaders in our academy, 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 continue to be 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 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. In particular, they will be aware that mental health issues can bring about changes in a child's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, all of which could be an indication of an underlying problem. This can include for example being fearful or withdrawn; aggressive or oppositional; or excessive clinginess. Support for pupils and students in the current circumstances will include existing provision available in the academy or from specialist staff or support services.

Academy leaders will ensure that all staff are aware that new safeguarding concerns about individual children may be evident as they see them in person following partial school closure.

Attendance

The academy will work with other relevant partners to support families to support vulnerable pupils to return to school, where attendance is appropriate. Where a child is expected, but does not arrive at the academy, 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 contacting a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a Deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will ask an appropriate agency to do so.

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

The academy will notify social workers where children with a social worker do not attend.

Reporting concerns about children or staff

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

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 other adult. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or other adults attending our academy are dealt with quickly, thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy, also found on the academy website.

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 academy staff have received safeguarding training and have read and understood Part One and Annex A of KCSIE 2019. When new staff are recruited join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, prior to starting to work with our 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 the LAT 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 KCSIE 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in any 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 academy'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 partial closure of the academy and between those children who do attend the academy 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 and Child Protection Policy.

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.

The academy will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and 'Guidance for using video in teaching at the Leigh Academies Trust'.

There is no expectation that teachers should live stream or provide pre-recorded videos. This approach will be used if it best suits the needs of their children and staff.

Live teaching sessions may only be undertaken from an appropriate and approved educational setting (eg your classroom, during a school field trip etc). Under no circumstances will they be delivered from a home setting. The tool that should be used for any video conferencing with students is Google Meet. Students should not initiate Meet calls themselves.

In addition to the above the following must be met before proceeding:

- No 1:1 lessons or tuition, groups only.
- Where it is necessary to engage individual pupils, for pastoral reasons to check on safety and welfare, this can be done live but at least two members of staff must be on the same call.
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing;
- Any computers used should be in appropriate environment, with a wall, white board or similar being presented as a background;
- '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 that of any family members in the background;
- Staff must only use devices and platforms (i.e. Google Meet) provided by Leigh Academies Trust to communicate with pupils;
- When outside the regular academy day, joining the lesson should be optional. The lesson should also allow the child to opt out of being on video but to join the session via audio only;
- The lesson should be recorded by the teacher for safeguarding purposes, but will only be retained for no longer than 30 days;
- Staff should record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.
- Staff who interact with children online will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk.

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.

Pupils who are being asked to work online have very clear reporting routes to the academy in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting to the academy they will be aware of practical, external support from the likes of:

- Child Line – for support
- UK Safer Internet Centre – to report and remove harmful online content

New children at the school

Children may join our academy 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 Virtual School Head [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 (SENCO)/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with an EHCP. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case our academy 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 needs to know the information.

Supporting children not in school

The academy will do all that it reasonably can to keep all of its pupils safe. Whilst more pupils may return to the academy, others will continue to stay at home and, in many cases, will be continuing to engage with their academy online.

All staff who interact with children, including online, will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns will be dealt with 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.

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.