

Annex 1

COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection

School Name: Hopedale, Bluebell and Heather Field Schools

Policy owner: Amy Hopkin

Date: 30.03.20

Date shared with staff: 30.03.20

Context

From 20th March 2020 parents 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 asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Key contacts

Omitted from website version

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.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college 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.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders, especially the DSL (and deputy) know who our most vulnerable children are and have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

All schools 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. The lead person for this will be Amy Hopkin.

Critical workers

Although HM Government is clear that children should be at home wherever possible, schools and other educational settings have been asked to provide care for the child/ren of any critical workers who need this support. This may include days and times on which the school would not normally be open, including the school holidays. If our school cannot remain open, due to staff illness or self-isolation, we will notify our local authority and / or the relevant placing authority who are responsible for arranging for the child/ren to be cared for in an alternative setting that can meet their needs.

The HM Government guidance for educational settings regarding critical workers can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers#critical-workers>

Attendance monitoring

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

The school and social workers will agree with families whether children in need should be attending school – the school will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. The school will also follow up with any ‘critical worker’ parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) but the child(ren) subsequently do(es) not attend.

To support the above, the school will, when communicating with parents, carers and allocated social workers / placing authorities, confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

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

If the school has any children in attendance (e.g. because they are vulnerable, the children of critical workers or because they are residential pupils who were not able to return home) we will submit the daily attendance sheet to the DfE by 12 noon - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

If the school has closed, we will complete the return once as requested by the DfE.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a number of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads – these are named on the front sheet.

We will endeavour to have a trained DSL or deputy available on site at all times when pupils are present. Where this is not the case, a trained DSL or deputy will be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example, when working from home.

Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to the child protection online management system, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and, if 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 or college.

Whatever the scenario, it is important that all school staff have access to a trained DSL or deputy. On each day, staff on site will be made aware of who that person is and how to contact them.

Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school safeguarding policy. This may also include making a report which can be done remotely.

Staff must not just leave an answerphone message should they contact the DSL or Deputy DSL via the phone.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should report the concern to the Headteacher immediately. If there is cause to make a notification to the Headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done by telephone. Staff must not just leave an answerphone message. If the Headteacher is not contactable, the member of staff should contact either DSL.

Concerns about the Headteacher should be directed to the proprietorial group representative: Amy Hopkin.

Safeguarding Training and induction

DSL training is very unlikely to take place during this period.

For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read at least part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The Designated Safeguarding Lead should communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

The existing school workforce may move between schools on a temporary basis in response to COVID-19. Where the school receives staff from another school, we will judge, on a case-by-case basis, the level of safeguarding induction required.

Safer recruitment 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, the school will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of KCSIE.

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 – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines>

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept 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 (and / or adult barred list check where relevant)
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children (or adults at risk, where relevant)

- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

The school will continue to comply with 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 at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

The school will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 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 environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, of which staff will be in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, the school will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

Online safety

The school will continue to provide a safe environment, including online.

Where children are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will continue to be in place.

Children and online safety away from school

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care, and as required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the school's staff code of conduct.

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

Below are some simple things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- 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 or hidden.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms agreed with senior leaders and the IT / network manager to communicate with pupils.
- Staff should record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held, by completing the designated pupil report form.

Supporting children not in school

The school is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for each child, their parent(s) / carers and the allocated social worker or placing authority.

The communication plan may include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

The school and its Designated Safeguarding Leads will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the Designated Safeguarding Leads will consider any referrals as appropriate, taking into account the local criteria for action.

In addition, the school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages.

The school recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances have a significant potential to affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Teachers and pastoral staff at the school will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

The school will ensure that if we are unable to care for the child/ren of critical workers, residential pupils and vulnerable children on site, we will liaise with the placing local authority and the parent / carer to find a suitable alternative; e.g, at a 'hub' school or via a multi-disciplinary package of support. In that situation, the DSL will ensure that the DSL of the hub school / lead practitioner is made aware of any relevant safeguarding information relating to a child.

Supporting children in school

The school is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

The School will continue to be a safe space for relevant children to attend and flourish. The Headteacher and Proprietor will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, maximising safety.

The school 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 coronavirus.

Peer on Peer Abuse

The school recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where a school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within the school's safeguarding & child protection policy.

The school will listen carefully, and work with the young person, family and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

All concerns and actions taken must be recorded as detailed in the child protection and safeguarding policy and appropriate referrals made.