Covid-19 Safeguarding Policy Addendum

This addendum sets out additional safeguarding guidance and procedures during the time of partial school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It sets out changes to our normal child protection policy in light of the Department for Education's guidance [Coronavirus: safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](), and should be read in conjunction with that policy.

Unless covered here, our normal child protection policy continues to apply. The policy (and a full list of linked policies and guiding documents) can be found here: [Woodberry Down Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2020]()

This addendum to the policy continues to have reference to statutory safeguarding guidance, including [Keeping Children Safe in Education]() (2019).

1. Scope and definitions

This addendum applies during the period of partial school closure due to COVID-19, and reflects updated advice from our local safeguarding partners and Hackney local authority (LA).

The Department for Education's (DfE's) definition of 'vulnerable children' includes those who:

 Have a social worker, including children who:

- *Are subject to a Child Protection Plan*
- *Are assessed as being in need (Child in Need)*
- *Looked After by a Local Authority*
- *Have an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP)*

2. Core safeguarding principles

Although the schools are not open in the usual way, key safeguarding principles continue to be at the heart of everything we do. These principles include:

- *The best interests of children must always come first*
- *If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act on it immediately*
- *a DSL or deputy will be available at all times when children are on site*
- *it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children*
- *children should continue to be protected when they are online*

3. Key documents

[Coronavirus: Safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#)

[Actions for schools to prepare for wider opening](#)

[Opening Schools and education settings from 1st June](#)

[Preparing for the wider opening of Early Years Settings](#)

[Actions to Support Pupils with SEND as schools prepare for reopening](#)

4. Wider Opening of Schools

The Department of Education has confirmed that from 1st June 2020 it is expecting schools to move to the next phase of the plan to widen access to pupils. Pupils from Early Years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will be priority year groups for a phased return to attending school. Provision for Key Worker and Vulnerable pupils will continue as previously.

The schools will act in collaboration with local safeguarding partners, including the Local Authority to ensure the safest possible environment for all pupils, families and staff.

A detailed risk assessment will be completed for each whole school setting, additional risk assessments will take place for vulnerable pupils and those with an EHCP.

Contact plans and attendance procedures for every pupil not attending school will remain in place as outlined below.

Additional safeguarding and well-being concerns are likely to be raised as a result of the widening of access to school. This may be because a pupil has experienced a bereavement or traumatic experience, may have increased anxiety as a result of the pandemic or returning to school, or a child may have been exposed to harm or abuse during the period of lockdown. Seeing some pupils for the first time since 20th March may result in an increase in disclosures or safeguarding concerns. Staff, including DSLs, will need to allocate time to supporting pupils during the transition back to school after a period of absence.

Staff will receive additional support for their own mental health and to support them to support the mental health of pupils and families as outlined below.

5. Reporting concerns

The coronavirus outbreak may have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties for some children. Staff will need to be alert to harms that may have been hidden or missed while children have not been attending school. Staff must consider the mental health, pastoral or wider health and wellbeing support children may need, including with bereavement, and how to support them to transition into the setting after a long period of absence. All concerns should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Usual procedures regarding reporting safeguarding concerns remain in place and have not changed in the light of the pandemic, however, distance learning means that staff must have additional vigilance when safeguarding pupils.

As a reminder, all staff must report all concerns immediately. Working from home or a child learning at home must not be a barrier to the timely reporting of concerns.

We will continue to follow the principles set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and our safeguarding policy when managing and supporting pupils and families. This includes for specific safeguarding concerns such as Prevent or Peer-on-Peer abuse.

To support the proper fulfilment of the school's safeguarding responsibilities, a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy will be available at all times:

- *On site in each school there will be a DSL available at all times when there are pupils in school*
- *For those pupils not attending school, a DSL will be available on site or via CPOMs, email or telephone.*

Regardless of location, teaching staff will continue to report concerns via CPOMs. As this is a digital platform, the DSLs in each school will be immediately alerted. Support staff will use the Sharing a Concern Form which is part of the main Safeguarding Policy. Where support staff are working remotely and are unable to access a Sharing a Concern Form they may email the information to the DSL and complete the form at the earliest opportunity. In this case a copy of the original email must be attached to the Sharing a Concern Form.

6. DSL (and deputy) arrangements

A trained DSL or deputy DSL will always be on site during school hours. All staff will be notified of the DSL by posters around the school and when signing in.

Each school will also have DSLs available via email or phone to all staff, families and pupils who are working remotely. These DSLs have not changed from the individual schools' main Safeguarding Policy and are known to all staff. They are named on the schools' websites and in the safeguarding policies.

All DSLs (and deputies), wherever their location, will know the most vulnerable children in each school.

7. Working with other agencies

We will continue to work with children's social care, and with virtual school heads for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

We will continue to update this addendum where necessary, to reflect any updated guidance from:

- *The Department of Education or other government departments as relevant*
- *Our local safeguarding partners, including Hackney Learning Trust*
- *The LA about children with education, health and care (EHCP) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care (FAST).*

8. Monitoring attendance

As many children will not be attending school during this period of partial closure, attendance registers will be completed differently, however no parent will be penalised for non-attendance.

Where any child we expect to attend school doesn't attend, or stops attending. We will:

- *Follow up on their absence with their parents or carers, by telephone, speaking to the child wherever possible*

- *Notify their social worker, where they have one*

We are using the Department for Education's daily online attendance form to keep an accurate record of who is attending school.

9. Support for children who aren't defined as 'vulnerable'

Senior Leaders in each school have the option to offer places in school to children who don't meet the Department for Education's definition of 'vulnerable', but for whom we have safeguarding or other concerns. These may include children who have experienced bereavement or who have behavioural or special educational needs that are not supported by an EHCP. We will always work with parents/carers to do this.

10. Contact plans

10.1 All Pupils

We have contact plans for all children who are not attending school:

- *Each year group has a newly established email address which allows parents to quickly and easily contact their class teachers or those covering for them. There are also contact functions in Google Classroom (GC) and the Interactive Learning Diary (ILD)*
- *All families will be telephoned by a member of staff at least weekly*
- *Families are invited to attend school to collect home-learning, food parcels or access other forms of support, these visits will always adhere to social-distancing requirements*

10.2 'Vulnerable' Pupils

It is expected that vulnerable pupils and pupils with EHCPs will attend school where it is safe to do so. Pupils will not be encouraged to attend where they are medically critically vulnerable themselves/living with someone who is shielding or a risk assessment shows them to be safer at home. Where vulnerable pupils are not attending school the DSL must ensure the child(ren)'s social worker is informed.

In addition, where children have a social worker, an EHCP or we have safeguarding or other concerns and they are not attending school we will:

- *Make at least one additional welfare check weekly via telephone*
- *Keep in at least fortnightly contact with any allocated social worker to review the situation and contact plans*
- *For children with EHCPs, facilitate support (as far as is possible), from external agencies such as Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists*

For all pupils not in school, as far as is possible, contact will be made by staff who know the family well and wherever possible the child will be spoken to as part of the contact.

10.3 Lack of Contact

As with other aspects of safeguarding, any concerns about lack of contact must be reported to the school's DSL.

If we can't make contact, we will initially attempt other forms of contact for example email or texts to encourage the family to contact the school, we may also contact secondary and emergency contacts.

Where contact cannot be established within 48 hours, the school will conduct a home visit. This will always be undertaken by two members of staff and will adhere to social distancing guidelines.

If it is still not possible to make contact with a family and all alternative options have failed, the DSL (or Deputy) will then ensure a referral to children's social care (FAST) will be made. Where there is an immediate concern for a child's safety then the police may also be called.

11. Safeguarding all children

Staff are aware that this difficult time potentially puts all children at greater risk. They must continue to be alert to any signs of abuse, or effects on pupils' mental health that are also safeguarding concerns, and act on concerns immediately in line with the procedures set out above and contained within the school's main safeguarding policy.

Where children are learning at home, staff will look out for signs such as:

- *Not completing assigned work or logging on to Google Classroom*
- *No contact from children or families via other communication channels*
- *Seeming more withdrawn or out of character, during any class phone calls, check-ins or video calls*

Where pupils change schools during lockdown, timely transfer of pupil files is still expected as outlined in the main safeguarding policy. This information should reach the destination school prior to the pupil start date. Where a pupil has a safeguarding file the DSL is responsible for the transfer of files and key information. Where a pupil has an EHCP, the SENCO is responsible for the transfer of files and key information

12. Online safety

We recognise that whilst children are increasingly learning and socialising online there may be an increased risk to pupils.

12.1 On site

We will continue to have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in school. Access to technology will be closely monitored by staff in line with our e-safety policy.

12.2 Outside school

Where staff are interacting with children online, they will continue to follow our existing staff code of conduct and acceptable use policy. Additional guidance has been shared with staff who may be involved in phone calls or video calls with pupils or recording aspects of lessons remotely.

Staff will continue to be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of harm online and will act on any concerns immediately - following reporting procedures as set out in this addendum and the main safeguarding policy.

We will make sure children know how to report any concerns they have and signpost them to other sources of support too. These include:

- *Childline*
- *UK Safer Internet Centre*
- *CEOP*

The school will ensure that additional safeguards are in place on Google Classroom, this includes providing e-safety materials, turning off private chat functions between pupils and preventing pupils from accessing Google Hangouts unless a member of staff is present and facilitating.

Remote learning will only include the sharing of external websites that are known to be safe for children for example BBC Bitesize, LA planning resources or Oak Academy, references to YouTube will not be used as pupils may access unsuitable material.

12.3 Supporting parents and carers

In addition to support for families given throughout the academic year and available to parents via the school's website and Google Classroom, we will make sure parents and carers:

- *Are aware of the potential risks to children online and the importance of staying safe online*
- *Know 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*
- *Are aware that they should only use reputable online sources of support if they wish to supplement the remote teaching and resources our school provides*
- *Know where else they can go for support to keep their children safe online*

Further guidance can be found here: [Coronavirus - support for parents and carers to keep children safe online](#)

13. Mental health

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children's and adults' mental health in a time when there are many competing demands on families.

We will signpost all pupils, parents and staff to resources to support good mental health at this time. School staff will have additional support from trained WAHMS or A-Space practitioners. This will support them to look after their own mental health, prepare for opening to greater numbers of pupils and also to support the mental health of pupils. Guidance documents to support staff when dealing with pupils' mental health and well-being will also be circulated prior to greater numbers of pupils returning to school. Staff will be signposted to refer any concerns regarding pupils' mental health or well-being to their DSL.

Further support can be found here: [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#)

14. Staffing including recruitment, training and induction

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children.

14.1 Recruiting new staff and volunteers

Whilst we continue to recognise the importance of robust safer recruitment procedures, so that adults and volunteers who work in our school are safe to work with children, we recognise that lockdown presents additional considerations when recruiting staff and volunteers. We will continue to follow our safer recruitment procedures, and adhere to part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education as well as our safeguarding policy.

In urgent cases, when validating proof of identity documents to apply for a DBS check, we will initially accept 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 before they first attend work at school.

The schools will temporarily not be accepting volunteers.

We will continue to keep each single central record up to date.

14.2 Safeguarding induction and training

All staff have had access to online safeguarding training during lockdown. The expectation is that all staff complete training unless unable to do so due to ill health. Records and certificates of completion are kept.

We will also make sure staff are aware of changes to our procedures and local arrangements including this addendum to the safeguarding policy.

New staff will receive:

- *A safeguarding induction (this may initially be via video call but will be refreshed on commencement of active role)*
- *A copy of our Safeguarding policy*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education part 1 and Annexe A*

Concerns regarding members of staff will continue as outlined in the main safeguarding policy. During the coronavirus period all referrals will be made by informing the Teaching Regulation Agency.

15. Monitoring and update arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local safeguarding partners, the LA or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every four weeks by Jess Hutchison Federation Safeguarding Lead. At every review, it will be approved by the governing board.