

Addendum to Safeguarding Policy 10th March 2021

The current Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy does not accurately reflect all new arrangements in light of the response to Covid-19. This addendum intends to summarise any key changes to procedures, and supersedes all previous addendums. This may be subject to frequent review as circumstances continue to evolve and updated information and guidance is published by the Department for Education.

From 8th March 2021, the DfE is expecting a full return of all pupils to school. *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020* remains the statutory safeguarding guidance that schools are required to follow, and it is essential that our schools continue to be safe places for children to attend.

Availability of Designated Safeguarding Lead

DSL or DDSL must be on-site at all times when schools are open. If this is not possible, a senior leader who will coordinate safeguarding on-site, should be identified. In this case, DSL/DDSL must be available remotely to offer advice and support. The Trust Safeguarding Lead can also be contacted. All staff on-site should be aware to whom they should report.

Impact of lockdown

During the first lockdown, referrals to Children's Social Care reduced significantly, most likely due to lack of professional contact with children. Data is not yet available for the most recent lockdown, however, schools have had significantly more contact due to the provision of remote learning. This has hopefully meant that issues have been identified quickly and referrals made appropriately. Throughout lockdown, for families there has been increased pressure and stress, with the emotional, physical and financial implications of the lockdown, and an expectation of engagement with remote education. School staff will need to be prepared to address a likely increase in concerns for children as they return to school. Therefore:

- On-site DSL/DDSL to be allowed sufficient time to deal with a likely increase in workload as more concerns arise.
- Awareness-raising/training for on-site staff regarding the likely increase in safeguarding concerns as children return to school. Staff to be advised of the need to consider children who previously may not have been considered vulnerable, as well as those who were always 'on the radar'.
- All staff on-site to have appropriate access to IT equipment to access CPOMS to record concerns
- Where possible, dedicated space to be made available at school for 1-1 sessions with children, eg for therapeutic work, sessions with Early Help workers or Social Workers. Cleaning regimes for this space to be considered.
- Where possible, create opportunities for parents to meet with DSL/DDSL to raise/discuss concerns and seek support. Resources/signposting information to be available, eg re domestic abuse, substance/alcohol misuse, parenting support etc.

- Consideration of PSHE curriculum, to include topics regarding abuse, personal space, PANTS rule, online safety etc as appropriate to age-group.

Safeguarding children in school

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy remains unchanged with regard to general safeguarding duties for those children attending school. Staff should continue to report concerns to the DSL and record on CPOMS. However, these additional considerations will apply:

- promoting messages regarding social distancing and frequent, thorough hand-washing for children and staff
- promoting messages regarding social distancing for parents/carers when dropping off/collecting children from school
- children and staff to remain in allocated 'bubbles' to minimise contact with large groups, as per individual schools' planning documents and operations manuals
- risk assessments regarding children with an EHCP or those whose behaviour presents a challenge, to ensure their needs can be safely met within school
- visitors will only be allowed into school for educational purposes as authorised by the Headteacher/Head of School, or in other exceptional circumstances, eg a social worker completing a statutory visit to a child on a CP plan. In all circumstances visitors will be expected to follow the requirements of each school's risk assessments.

Safeguarding children who are absent from school

There is a very clear expectation that all children are expected to return to school. Guidance from DfE published February 2021 states:

'School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from 8 March.'

The usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- *parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)*
- *the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct'*

However, it is likely more children will be absent than usual, due to the pandemic. Parents may be extremely anxious and reluctant to send their children back to school. Children may have to remain at home to self-isolate if they, or members of their family, have symptoms or test positive for Covid-19. Children may struggle to cope with new rules and restrictions at school, and their behaviour may pose a risk to other children or staff – as a result, the school may have to consider flexible learning provision, with some of the school day spent learning at home, rather than in the classroom. Staff will need to explore the reasons for absence when considering an appropriate response, taking into account the school's Attendance Policy.

Where parental, or pupil, anxiety is preventing a return to school, efforts should be made to reassure the family about the steps taken to ensure pupil safety and prevent infection.

Flexible learning provision should be considered a short-term intervention, not a long-term solution, with reference to the school's Behaviour Policy.

School staff will continue to have a duty of care to those children who remain at home, however, monitoring children's welfare when they are not at school will be more challenging. If children are not attending school at all, the following is a minimum expectation:

- All children on CP or CiN plans to be called by DSL/DDSL *at least* twice per week to check on safety and wellbeing. DSL/DDSL to speak to parents and children. Record discussion on CPOMS and notify social worker.
- If no response to calls, Social Worker to be informed for further welfare checks to be made.
- Other absent children to be called *at least* once weekly (more often if you feel there is a more significant need). Speak to parents and children. Record discussion on CPOMS
- If no response to calls, and if there is a worker involved, eg Early Help or Key Worker, then inform the worker for further welfare checks to be made. If no worker involved, consider door knock for welfare check, police 101 for welfare check, or referral to Children's Services if threshold is met.