

Annex to Child Protection policy – Version 1.0

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Most children are no longer in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

As a schools across our PACE Academy Trust, we are providing care for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. This will remain the same during the Easter Holiday period.

This Annex within our existing PACE Early Help and Safeguarding policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by our trust DSLs on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on each of our school websites, My Concern and will be emailed to all staff to read.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff and volunteers in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff can to speak to them. Staff should continue to log concerns on MyConcern as usual.

Safeguarding priority

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

As a schools across our PACE Academy Trust, we are currently providing care for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 front line response and cannot be safely cared for at home. This involves a very small number of children each day and consequently the minimal amount of staff to safely supervise these children.

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. The current advice is below.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our PACE Early Help and Safeguarding Policy.

If possible, a DSL or DDSL will be available on site during the school day. Where this is not possible, we will:

- have a trained DSL or deputy DSL available by phone and email

Where our DSL or a deputy DSL cannot be on site, then in addition to one of the above options we will also ensure a senior leader from the school takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Sally Dubben (sally.dubben@newvalleyprimary.com)

The Deputy Designated Lead (DDSL):

Pete Steward (head@newvalleyprimary.com)

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with 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 school, 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 school, 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 EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school 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. A record must be kept to state what the educational offer is for each child with an EHCP who is considered low risk.

The safeguarding teams in our PACE schools 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. This will be managed through the Local Authority and may involve virtual core groups and conferences to allow meetings to ahead throughout this time.

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 are 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 and volunteers 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. Links will be put onto our PACE school's websites to signpost parents to further support during the pandemic.

Attendance

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL will be informed.

The DSL will attempt to contact the parents or by contact a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL deems necessary, we will inform the appropriate agencies to ensure the safe welfare of all.

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker to ensure they receive enhanced support during this stressful period.

Reporting concerns about children or staff

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our existing Early Help and Safeguarding Policy and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Whistle Blowing Policy.

Immediate Changes to Croydon SPOC Reporting Procedures for DSLs:

Single Point of Contact (SPOC) – CONSULTATION LINE

Due to the current situation with Covid 19 and government advice to move to remote working as far as is possible, Croydon's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) will no longer be able to base social workers in Bernard Weatherill House to answer phone calls to the **Consultation Line**.

With immediate effect our Croydon based trust DSLs should use the email address: childreferrals@croydon.gov.uk if contact is needed with a social worker at SPOC. The DSL should provide their contact details and a brief summary of the advice needed to allow a contact worker to remotely contact them.

If the DSL experiences any difficulties with this new service provision, they should contact **Jonathan Lung (Service Manager: Single Point of Contact - SPOC)** (Jonathan.Lung@croydon.gov.uk)

If a DSL has an **urgent safeguarding concern, please continue to call 0208 255 2888 between 09:00 – 17:00.**

If a DSL has an urgent safeguarding concern **outside of these hours, please contact our Emergency Duty Team on 0208 726 6400.**

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 school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern

- there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
- the individual remains suitable to work with 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 our 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 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in 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. Staff will be required to sign in when they attend school and a register will be kept of each children attending school daily. 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 school'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 a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school 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 Early Help and Safeguarding 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.

Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Early Help and Safeguarding Protection Policy as well as our Online Safety Policy.

If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will report their concerns onto MyConcern as usual.

Supporting children not in school

Where the safeguarding team has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive additional pastoral support in school, communication will continue with the family. Those children will receive a weekly phone call from their class teacher and/or one of the DSLs. A "Vulnerable Children Check In" record sheet has been created to record remotely when contact has been made with families and any concerns raised. This allows for a record of communication as well as communication between the safeguarding team.

The following information has been sent by email to parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

<http://croydonlcsb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Safeguarding-Information.pdf>

These links have been added to the safeguarding area of the school website to access at any time. Although the school is currently closed, we continue to monitor office emails (office@newvalleyprimary.com) and the safeguarding email (safeguarding@newvalleyprimary.com).