Oakdale Junior School

COVID-19 partial school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at schools within Coastal Learning Partnership

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1. Context

Since 5thJanuary, 2021, parents/carers have been asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children who are most vulnerable and those of workers critical to the COVID-19 response and who are unable to make alternative arrangements.

This document outlines ways in which schools may adjust their safeguarding practice in response to the COVID-19 situation and clarifies how schools' established procedures apply. It should be read alongside the school's existing Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Although the way schools are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:
- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in a school has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy DSL must be available
- 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

2. Vulnerable Children

Schools within Coastal Learning Partnership will encourage their vulnerable children to attend school during the current period of partial closure. Vulnerable children include those who:
- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
    - children on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
    - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
    - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
    - those living in temporary accommodation
    - those who are young carers
    - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
    - care leavers
    - others at the provider and local authority's discretion including children who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will continue to attend school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where a parent/carer does not want to bring their child to school, and their child is considered vulnerable, the school's DSL will contact the social worker so that the reasons can be explored directly with the parent/carer.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents/carers to decide whether they should 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 with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Schools may determine other children to be vulnerable. In making such a determination, eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability. Schools may consider other factors including CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) support, early help or Family Partnership Zone, medical needs or other pastoral needs. Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies), know who the most vulnerable children are, and they therefore have the flexibility to offer a school place to such children, especially those they consider to be on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

Schools within Coastal Learning Partnership will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Where parents/carers are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, schools or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

3. Attendance Monitoring

Schools should continue to record attendance in the register, using codes as required by the DfE. Schools do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance of most children who are required to stay at home during the lockdown. However, schools should follow up on absences of any children who are expected to be in school. Schools will complete the attendance returns to the DfE, Local Authority and Partnership as required of them. However, where vulnerable children or critical worker children have been identified and where it is expected that they will attend school, schools will then follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend but does not. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child who has a social worker and who does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the school will notify the social worker. To support this, schools will ensure that their emergency contact numbers for these families are correct and up to date.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The school's named DSLs and Deputy DSLs will not change as a result of COVID-19 and this information can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. In establishing staffing arrangements for partially closed schools, school leadership teams will seek to ensure that a trained DSL or Deputy DSL is available on site. Where this is not possible, a trained DSL (or deputy) will be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example when working from home. Staff at the school will liaise closely with this individual, remotely if necessary, in the management of any safeguarding situations which may arise. It is therefore important that all school staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day, staff on site must be made aware of who that person is and how to speak to them. The DSL will continue to engage with social workers and attend all multi-agency meetings which can be done remotely.

In any case where a school cannot make a DSL (or deputy) available to their staff either on site or remotely, they will notify the Partnership Central Team. The Partnership will then support that school in making alternative arrangements, such as the deployment of a DSL (or deputy) from another Partnership school to provide that support.

5.   Reporting a Concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. My Concern, which is used by all Partnership schools, can be accessed remotely.

Staff are reminded that, despite the unique COVID-19 situation, they _must_ report any concern immediately and without delay. Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should immediately report the concern to the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher. If such notification has to be made to the Headteacher remotely, it should be done verbally and then followed up with an email. If the Headteacher is unwell, the same process should be followed with the next most senior member of staff. Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the CEO or, in his or her absence, the Head of Learning and Achievement.

Coastal Learning Partnership will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

6.   Safeguarding Training and Induction

Face to face DSL training is unlikely to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID 19 virus although where it remains accessible through remote means, this should be engaged with as required.   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 part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020). The DSL will 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, or new volunteers join a school, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction, supplemented by online provision as necessary.

7.   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, schools will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) (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.   For volunteers, schools will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in KCSIE. _**Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.**_

If staff are redeployed from one CLP school to another, their DBS and other checks are considered portable. If staff are deployed from another educational setting outside of CLP, 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, using the template letter available, that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual
- the worker remains on the payroll of the employing school

For movement within CLP, schools can be assured that the staff member has the appropriate level of safeguarding training. Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of the school's Safeguarding and Child

Protection Policy and Procedures, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

Schools will continue to follow 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.

Schools 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 national emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that each school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, schools will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

8.   Supporting Children Who Are *Not* in School

CLP recognises that school is a protective factor for children and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of children and their parents/carers. Staff need to be aware of this in setting expectations of childrens' work where they are at home.

CLP schools are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children. Where the DSL has identified a child to be vulnerable but that child is not coming to school, they will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child using the following guidance:

a)   Children who are current Child Protection concerns:
   • Establish telephone contact with the family twice a week or more; during the call, speak directly with the child. Schools should identify a key person for each family and that person should have contact details, which they must keep safe. Whilst you might share this responsibility between colleagues, it is preferable that one person is assigned to a family as a key worker to ensure continuity
   • If invited to attend review meetings, agree on a remote basis
   • Continue to liaise with external professionals as normal, remotely
   • Continue to report concerns/make referrals in the usual way as outlined in the main safeguarding policy.

b)   Vulnerable families (but short of child protection):
   • Establish telephone contact with the family once a week. During the call, speak directly with the child. Schools should identify a key person for each family and that person should have contact details, which they must keep safe.
   • Escalate concerns with external professionals if required and as normal.

c)   Records:
   • Staff making these calls should keep written records: date, time, duration of call, name of person(s) spoken with and brief summary of content of discussion and, if there are concerns, the nature of the concern and action taken.

Where concerns arise, the staff member must liaise with the DSL verbally and follow up with an email and record on MyConcern. The DSL, in conjunction with the Headteacher, will consider any referrals as appropriate.

Where schools are confident that absent vulnerable children are engaging well in remote learning, <u>and</u> where this includes opportunities for staff to see these children directly through livestream, such events can reasonably form part of the communication plan: that is to say, other communication could be at a reduced frequency. However, it should be remembered that seeing a child engaging with a live lesson is not the same as the more nuanced conversation which can be held with the child and his/her parents/carers through an individual phone call.

9. Supporting Children Who *Are* in School

CLP schools' commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every child persists through this COVID-19 crisis. Schools will ensure that, where they care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, they will ensure appropriate support is in place for them as required. CLP schools will continue to be a safe space for those children who attend. The schools' senior teams will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff-to-pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety. They will also give due regard to other factors such as availability of first aid cover. Every day, there will be a designated staff member 'in charge'. Ideally, this will be an existing member of the school's senior leadership team but where this is not possible, the next most senior individual will be designated in charge and they will have ready telephone contact with a senior leader.

CLP schools will ensure that a COVID-19 risk assessment is in place, having due regard to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing. This risk assessment shall include following the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19. This will be sent to all staff and updated whenever new advice is available. The central team will continue to support schools as required and every time government advice is updated. Schools must adapt risk assessment to suit their local arrangements.

Where a school has concerns about the impact of staff absence (such as inability to maintain safe staff/child ratios, no DSL or deputy DSL, or no access to first aiders), they will contact the central team to discuss. CLP requires schools to submit child numbers twice a week along with schools' confidence in the stability of their current staffing arrangements. Schools are reminded that they can contact the central team at any other point where they are concerned.

For any school whose children are attending <u>another</u> setting, leaders should do whatever they reasonably can to provide the receiving institution with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable. For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the Virtual Schools Head with responsibility for the child. The receiving institution should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum, the receiving institution should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable 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 is (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is). This should ideally happen before a child arrives and, where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs and disability coordinators/named individuals with oversight of SEN provision for

children with EHC plans. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case, senior leaders should take responsibility.

10. Peer on Peer Abuse

CLP schools recognise that, during the partial 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 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. The school will listen and work with the child, parents/carers and any multi agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that child. Concerns and actions must be recorded in line with the school's usual requirements.

11. Online Safety in School and Remote Learning (including Staff Safe Working Practices)

CLP schools will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where children are using computers in school – even for 'leisurely' purposes - appropriate supervision will be in place.

Each school will identify a named senior leader who will have overarching responsibility for remote learning.

CLP schools will comply with the DfE's requirement to deliver high quality remote learning for those children who are not able to come to school. Schools will have due regard to the requirements as laid out in the latest DfE COVID guidance for schools, noting the 'minimum expectations' which are set out.

All schools will use Google Classroom as their primary platform for delivering remote learning (if a school wishes to use an alternative platform, it must have the explicit consent of CLP's Data Protection Officer). CLP schools are strongly encouraged to deliver remote 'live learning' as much as possible. This is because live interaction enables the strongest possible 'connection' between staff and children; it enables staff to more directly engage children, guide the learning process as well as offer the opportunity to check that children appear well.

CLP's arrangements for online remote learning (including relevant safer working practices for staff) can be found in the 'IT and Communications Systems Policy' on the CLP intranet here. Particular note should be made of Section F 'Video Conferencing and Live Stream' starting on page 24; the appendices provide further structures, guidance and advice on delivering remote live lessons safely.

12. Summary Checklist of Actions and Considerations:

Action:	Activity Completed (Yes/No)
Ensure Trustees and Local Governors are aware of the Government's interim safeguarding guidance.	Yes
Ensure that Local Governors are aware of the school's response to this interim government guidance (this COVID-19 addendum).	Yes
Ensure DSL is available, in-person, by phone or video link.	Yes
Understand what changes there may be for contacting the LADO.	Yes
Ensure staff know the new arrangements for DSLs and reporting concerns; ensure they know the DSL contact every day.	Yes
Understand what changes there may be for making referrals to Children's Social Care or other 'front door' services.	Yes
Understand what changes there may be for contacting social workers.	Yes
Know which children have social workers and how to contact them.	Yes
Know which children are LAC/PLAC, who their Virtual School Head is and how to contact them.	Yes
Know which children should be in school and respond as required to official requests for attendance figures.	Yes
Encourage all vulnerable children to attend school unless it is agreed that school is not the safest place for them. Where vulnerable children are expected to attend and they do not, ensure this is followed up rigorously and contact the social worker if applicable.	Yes
Ensure that emergency numbers and alternatives are kept up to date.	Yes
Ensure that there are safeguarding induction processes for any new staff, staff relocated to the school, and volunteers.	Yes
Ensure that staff of schools to which children are relocated know safeguarding and welfare concerns.	Yes
Ensure that new staff, staff relocated to the school, and volunteers understand the local safeguarding arrangements.	Yes
Ensure that any volunteers have been fully checked in the usual way.	Yes
Ensure that there is a record of which staff are onsite daily.	Yes
Ensure that the SCR is up to date with any relocated staff or volunteers and that the necessary checks that have been made.	Yes
Ensure that safer recruitment processes are adhered to. For example, be aware of anyone unknown to the school offering themselves as a volunteer.	Yes
Ensure that staff are aware that there may be an impact on the mental health of children, parents/carers and staff or volunteers; and what support may be available.	Yes
Consider what to do if there are no IT staff available	Yes