

Child protection and safeguarding: COVID-19 addendum

Rugby Free Primary School



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Primary School

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1. Scope and definitions

This addendum applies during the period of partial school closure due to COVID-19.

It sets out changes to our normal child protection policy in light of the Department for Education's guidance [Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools](#) and [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings \(excluding universities\)](#) and should be read in conjunction with this guidance. Unless covered here, our normal child protection policy continues to apply.

Vulnerable children

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

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people 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 and young people 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 pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself is not a determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

SLT know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

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 increased risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and/or school will explore and reasons for this directly with the parent and document the discussion.

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

If a vulnerable child with a social worker, who is attending school needs to self-isolate, we will agree with the social worker the best way to maintain contact and offer support to the child and family.

Critical workers

Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the DfE guidance [Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings](#).

2. Core safeguarding principles

We will still have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Although we are operating in a different way to normal, we are still following these important safeguarding principles:

- The best interests of children must come first
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act on it immediately
- A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy should be available at all times (see section 4 for details of our arrangements)
- It's essential that unsuitable people don't enter the school workforce or gain access to children
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online

3. Reporting concerns

All staff and volunteers must continue to act on any concerns they have about a child immediately. It is still vitally important to do this, both for children continuing to attend school and those at home.

All staff (whether working at home or in school) will use the C-Poms system to report concerns to the DSL team.

All staff will continue to work with and support children's social workers, where they have one, to help protect vulnerable children.

4. DSL (and deputy) arrangements

There will be a trained DSL or deputy DSL on site at all times. If other members of the safeguarding team are working from home and are needed, they can be contacted on the phone or using our internal Microsoft Teams platform.

We will ensure that DSLs (and deputies), wherever their location, know who the most vulnerable children in our school are.

All members of the safeguarding team will be able to:

- Identify the most vulnerable children in school
- Update and manage child protection files electronically and remotely, where necessary
- Liaise with children's social workers where they need access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments

5. 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 including that from the local authority about children with education, health and care plans (EHCPs), the local authority and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.

6. Monitoring attendance

We will take daily attendance registers for those children in school. We will continue to submit the Department for Education's daily online attendance form.

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 phoning.
- Notify their social worker, where they have one

Information from data collection forms was collated in September 2020 and we requested that parents update us of any changes to their contact details in January 2021.

7. Peer-on-peer abuse

We will continue to follow the principles set out in part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education when managing reports and supporting victims of peer-on-peer abuse.

Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately – about both children attending school and those at home.

8. Concerns about a staff member or volunteer

We will continue to follow the principles set out in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately by recording them on a yellow form and passing it to the Headteacher – whether those concerns are about staff/volunteers working on site or remotely.

If there is a requirement to make a notification to the Headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done verbally over the phone and followed up with an email to the head teacher to confirm the discussion.

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

9. Maintaining contact

We will continue to make verbal contact (by phone) with all families who are learning remotely at least once every two weeks. This will be more regular if we have concerns about a child, if children are submitting no work online or for those families who are particularly vulnerable.

We have contact plans in place for those children with a social worker or those who we have safeguarding concerns about, for circumstances where:

- They won't be attending school (for example where the school, parent/carer and social worker, if relevant, have decided together that this wouldn't be in the child's best interests); or
- They would usually attend but have to self-isolate

For all children:

- The school will phone parents once every two weeks.
- Phone calls will be made by the child's class teacher, the SENDCO or an adult who knows the family well
- Phone calls will be made fortnightly. If we are finding it difficult to contact parents, doorstep visits will be made by two members of staff (including a member of the SLT)

If we can't make contact, we will contact children's social care (MASH) and / or the police when appropriate.

10. Safeguarding all children

Staff and volunteers are aware that this difficult time potentially puts all children at greater risk.

Staff and volunteers will 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 in section 3 above.

Staff will try to speak directly to parents at home to help identify any concerns. They will use school phones and devices to make calls home. If necessary they will use personal phones but they will withhold their personal number.

Staff will look out for signs like:

- Not completing assigned work or logging on to school systems for two days
- No contact from children or families
- Concerning comments during phone conversations with parents
- A child seeming more withdrawn during any home-learning responses or video calls

11. Support for Children not in School

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our pupils.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. SLT will monitor the quality and delivery of remote education.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, they should ensure that a communication plan is in place for that child or young person. We will record any contact made with these families.

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

This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

12. Support for Children in School

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our pupils.

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

We will continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

We will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

13. Online safety

13.1 In school

We will continue to have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in school.

13.2 Outside school

Where staff are interacting with children online, they will continue to follow our existing staff behaviour policy. We will ensure that any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection /GDPR requirements.

The Seesaw platform is being used to set remote home learning tasks. This will include pre-recorded videos which will be monitored by SLT.

Live Zoom sessions will also be held daily with year groups. The following expectations will be made clear to parents:

- By accessing the zoom call parents are giving consent to the school to record the zoom session and agree not to make any personal recordings of this session. The recorded session can then be reviewed if any issues arise.
- Children and parents (if present during the zoom call) should be dressed appropriately and use appropriate language.
- There will be many pupils on the calls therefore it is important to have a suitable background where there is no inappropriate content, this includes what might be on the television.
- One parent may be present whilst the child is accessing the zoom call but other members of the family should not be visible or audible.
- Parents should not interact with the session but may contact the teacher after the session if there any questions or concerns.
- Appropriate language must be used at all times.
- A relatively quiet place in the home should be used (as much as possible)
- Microphones should be muted upon entering the chat.

Staff must only use platforms specified by senior leaders to communicate with parents.

Phone calls are being made to families where pupils are at home. When using personal phones, staff are withholding numbers.

Staff will continue to be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of harm online, and act on any concerns immediately, following our reporting procedures as set out in section 3 of this addendum.

We will make sure children know how to report any concerns they have back to our school, and signpost them to other sources of support too.

13.3 Working with parents and carers

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 websites 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

14. Mental health

14.1 Children attending school

Staff and volunteers will be aware of the possible negative effects that this period may be having on pupils' mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, to help identify where support may be needed.

14.2 Children at home

We will signpost all pupils, parents/carers and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time.

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.

15. Staff recruitment

Recruiting new staff and volunteers

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 will continue to follow our safer recruitment procedures, and part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

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 when they first attend work at our school.

Similarly, temporary measures allow right to work checks to be carried out by verifying scanned documents on a video call. If we need to take this approach, we will follow [Home Office and Immigration Enforcement guidance](#).

16. Safeguarding induction and training

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) and our current safeguarding policy. The DSL should communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child, including ensuring all staff have read this addendum.

16.1 New staff induction

New staff and volunteers will continue to receive:

- A safeguarding induction
- A copy of our children protection policy (and this addendum)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education part 1

16.2 DSL training

The DSL (and deputy) may not be able to take part in training during this period. If this is the case, the DSL (and deputy) will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

The DSL (and deputy) will do what they reasonably can to keep up to date with safeguarding developments, such as via safeguarding partners, newsletters and professional advice groups.

17. Keeping records of who's on site

We will keep a record of which staff and volunteers are on site each day, and that appropriate checks have been carried out for them.

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

18. Monitoring arrangements

This policy addendum will be reviewed monthly or as guidance is updated.

19. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Child protection policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Staff behavior policy
- IT acceptable use policy
- Health and safety policy