

Appendix D – Temporary revised guidance on safeguarding in schools during COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The DfE has issued updated guidance on safeguarding in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance supports governing bodies, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep their children safe. It suggests where schools and colleges might consider safeguarding policy and process differently when compared to business as usual.

School policies and procedures must have regard to the updated guidance from the DfE during the COVID-19 period and ensure they are operating according to the most recent advice.

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, 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 or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy should 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

Schools and colleges should, as far as is reasonably possible, take a whole institution approach to safeguarding. This will allow them to satisfy themselves that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 are not weakening their approach to safeguarding or undermining their child protection policy.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Schools should ensure their individual Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy has an addendum reflecting the following during this period of temporary arrangements:

- any updated advice received from the local 3 safeguarding partners
- any updated advice received from local authorities regarding 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

- what staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child
- the continued importance of all staff and volunteers acting and acting immediately

on any safeguarding concerns

- DSL (and deputy) arrangements

Model Child Protection Policy – temporary guidance April 2020

31

- the continued importance for school and college staff to work with and support children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- peer on peer abuse - given the very different circumstances schools and colleges are operating in a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims (the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE should continue to inform any revised approach)
- what staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children (the principles in part 4 of KCSIE will continue to support how a school or college responds to any such concerns)
- any arrangements to support children the school or college are concerned about who do not meet the 'vulnerable' definition
- what arrangements are in place to keep children not physically attending the school or college safe, especially online and how concerns about these children should be progressed

It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware of the new policy and are kept up to date as it is revised. The revised policy should continue to be made available publicly.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)

The optimal scenario for any school or college providing care for children is to have a trained DSL or deputy available on site. It is recognised this may not be possible, and where this is the case there are 2 options to consider:

- a trained DSL or deputy from the school or college can be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home
- sharing trained DSLs or deputies with other schools or colleges (who should be available to be contacted via phone or online video)

Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, it is recommended a senior leader takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This might include updating and managing access to child protection files, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaising with children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school or college.

Whatever the scenario, it is important that all school and college staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL or deputy and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them.

It is acknowledged that DSL training is very unlikely to take place during this period. For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been

Model Child Protection Policy – temporary guidance April 2020

31

trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

Every school and college will face unique challenges at this time. Where reasonably possible, the DSL (or deputy) should consider these in a child protection context and reflect them in the child protection policy as appropriate.

Inter-agency working

Meetings to discuss children at risk of harm, such as CiC reviews, CiN and child protection conferences will still be taking place via Skype telephony. As such, DSLs, or senior leaders where a DSL is not available, will be expected to attend virtual meetings where at all possible.

Vulnerable children

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for the government at There is an expectation that children with a social worker will attend school provision, unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child and where the child is considered to be safer at home. Senior leaders, especially DSLs (and deputies) know who their most vulnerable children are and have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children's social care support.

It is especially important during this period of COVID-19 that school staff continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. Schools and social workers should be agreeing with families whether children in need should be attending education provision. Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or college, or discontinues the place, the school or

college should notify their social worker and discuss what other options may be put in place to seek reassurance the child is safe.

Attendance

Schools are asked by the DfE to complete a daily online attendance form to keep a record of children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are attending school.

The school should follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend, who does not.

Children attending a different school setting to usual

The LA has produced a protocol in collaboration with school leaders setting out processes and factors to consider when children are attending a different school provision to usual [which can be downloaded here](#).

Staff working at a different school setting to usual

The LA has produced a protocol in collaboration with school leaders setting out processes and factor to consider when staff are working in a different school to usual [which can be downloaded here](#). There is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school or college to support the care of children. Schools can satisfy themselves that all appropriate safer recruitment checks have been undertaken on staff temporarily working in their school by seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks. The LA has produced a template letter that schools can use for this purpose [which can be downloaded here](#).

Children and online safety away from school

All schools and colleges should be doing what they reasonably can to keep all of their children safe.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required the police.

The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the school's staff behaviour policy (sometimes known as a code of conduct). This policy should amongst other things include acceptable use of technologies, staff pupil/student relationships and communication including the use of social media. The policy should apply equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which are introduced.

The principles set out in the guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings published by the Safer

Recruitment Consortium may help schools satisfy themselves that their staff behaviour policies are robust and effective.

Schools should ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.