



This policy was amended in consideration of the following UN Convention on the rights of the child articles; Article 1 (all articles)

## CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY COVID-19

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<b>Policy Number</b>	0021a	<b>Policy Author</b>	L Sherman
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## Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is an addition to our existing Child Protection Policy (0021) and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to Covid-19.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- the current Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- the school Behaviour policy;
- the school Staff Behaviour policy (sometimes called Staff Code of Conduct);
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE)

Whilst the way in which the school will be operating will be fundamentally different, important safeguarding principles remain the same.

- The best interests of the children must always continue to come first
- Anyone in the Academies who has a safeguarding concern about any child should act and act immediately.
- A DSL or deputy will be available.
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online.

## Current context / statutory framework

Schools have been instructed to close, although are required to offer a place to [vulnerable children](#) and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. [Vulnerable children](#) include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (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 provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and to agree an appropriate plan for that child.

We obviously want to support all our children during this time and will consider making a place available to other children with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.

## **Safeguarding procedures during the closure period**

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our pupils and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support pupils with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

### Supporting students who do not meet the vulnerable criteria

- The Academies will make a weekly pastoral welfare call to all students on roll with the academy regardless of their status and whether they are physically attending the school.
- Non-contact will be followed up with a welfare letter or text. Continued non-contact could result in a welfare visit or an agency referral.
- Online learning and Live lessons are monitored for concerns and any issues reported following normal safeguarding procedures.
- The attendance of students receiving remote learning will be monitored and recorded via the registration to live lessons procedures in place for each of the 3 learning sessions each day.
- All parents/ guardians will receive a safeguarding letter with key details about how to keep their child safe whilst they are home learning. The safeguarding email [safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk) will be highlighted as the main point of contact for families who have concerns to raise. Key agencies are also listed that can offer further support
- All children who are not physically attending the academies will receive safeguarding letters throughout the COVID 19 measures including guidance for parents on how to keep their child safe whilst remote learning and referral to the Academy website for further online safety information.
- Regular updates are placed on line and on social media platforms to support parents to keep their children safe whilst online.

## **Students with EHCPs**

Children with an EHC plan will be assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. If it is felt they should remain at home, a plan will be agreed and this could include carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. It is recognised that many children with EHC plans can safely remain at home. During the closure period we will work with the local authority and parents / carers to produce a personalised plan that includes:

- Short term interim targets that have been agreed with the child and parent / carers

- Any agreed support to be provided by the team supporting the child (school, LA Education or SEND staff, Social Worker, Health professional)
- Regular reviews with the child and parent / carers

## **Students identified as Vulnerable**

For vulnerable children, existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet need.

- Weekly contact will be made with Students who have been assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- Follow up contact will be made with Social Workers and other agencies where appropriate.
- Weekly contact for students with EHCPs
- Attendance to School and where applicable live lessons will be monitored and where there are absences daily check in calls will be made
- Risk assessment and appropriate plans will be put in place for students who may be deemed as vulnerable but not attending, this will be completed in conjunction with parents and or agencies.

The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care.

## **Actions for Key Worker and Vulnerable children accessing on site provisions**

- For the duration of COVID – 19 enforced closure Academy planning will ensure a DSL or DDSL are assigned to be on site and available emergency permitting.
- Staff will be notified of the DSL on site each week. If the DSL is not available then there will be a DDSL on site. In the event of safeguarding staff shortages, remote safeguarding advice will be provided.
- The DSL & DDSL is contactable via CPOMs or if access is not possible [safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk) . Safeguarding phone numbers stated in the key contacts section of the policy are also available.
- In the event of neither the DSL nor DDSL the Headteacher or Deputy Head will be available to receive safeguarding concern the staff in these positions are level 3 safeguarding trained. If this is not possible remote safeguarding advice will be provided.

## **Reporting Safeguarding Concerns.**

- All safeguarding concerns should be reported in the normal way as stated in this policy and in a timely manner
- Any member of staff receiving a disclosure or noticing signs or indicators of abuse should make an accurate record as soon as possible making a referral using the CPOMs platform or directly to the DDSL or DSL using [safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@basildonacademies.org.uk) if CPOMs is not available. This would include any signs or indicators picked up in welfare calls.
- In the event of the absence of the DSL or DDSL any member of staff receiving a disclosure or noticing signs or indicators of abuse the member of staff should make a referral using the CPOMs platform and ensure that they make the site Deputy Head or Headteacher aware.

- Concerns regarding staff should be reported in the normal way as stated in the policy to the DSL or DDSL

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- [Essex Effective Support](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the [Essex Effective Support](#) portal. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

## Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible using CPOMs, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have children from another school attending our

site, or where our pupils may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

## **Interagency working**

As before, it is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

## **Staff conduct**

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. Staff have been informed on how to safeguard themselves with regards to lines of communication when providing work to students. All communications should be made via school email and only to school email accounts. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

The mental health and wellbeing of all our pupils is always a priority and it is recognised that, without the protective factor of attending school, some of our children may be more vulnerable. This is a worrying and challenging time for everyone and we understand that families will be placed under additional pressures and may be coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home all the time and bereavement.

## **Online safety (for children away from school)**

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability. We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them in the form of written correspondence and use of the Safeguarding area of the Academies website.

Other particularly useful websites are:

- [CEOP](#) (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- [Childnet](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Net Aware](#)

- [NSPCC](#)
- [Parent Info](#)
- [Safer Internet](#)

Staff are aware that children are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.

It is important that parents make the school aware of any concerns they may have about the online activity of their child, or any particular vulnerability they may have in this respect.

### **Online Learning**

During unusual circumstances the school needs to ensure the ongoing education of students remotely/during home schooling. Safeguarding during these period continues to be a priority especially in relation to any form of remote learning or conference call contact. If teachers or staff are engaging in face to face learning sessions or group meetings via other media the same safeguarding procedures should take place. Any safeguarding concerns should be reported in line with normal safeguarding procedures.

When engaging in any form of remote contact with students and parents, staff should remember to:

- Only communicate during school working hours
- Only communicate using school platforms
- Make themselves familiar with guidelines in staff code of conduct.
- Report any safeguarding concerns using current procedures and CPOMs

Microsoft Teams and student emails only hubs for any remote learning interactions with students. Any interaction with students via email or Microsoft teams should be conducted in line with the Academies code of conduct and safeguarding policy.

Staff may record lessons for remote learning, where possible the recording of lessons should take place on the academy site, however this may not always be possible. All staff who are recording lessons or engaging in live online interaction should follow the below recommendations:

- Should be in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background.
- Students should be in a suitable public location, such as kitchen or living room and not in the bedroom.

- Staff should be appropriately dressed, smart business dress and no bare flesh or slogans.
- Must be reminded that photographs of individuals are personal data, therefore screenshots of other members of the online learning environment cannot be taken and cannot be used.
- Must use appropriate language – this includes others in their household.
- Should maintain the standard of behaviour expected in school.
- Use the necessary equipment and computer programs as intended.
- Always remain aware that they are visible.
- Any safeguarding concerns that may be raised during live lessons to be reported by staff in the normal way.

### Remote Staff Practices

Welfare calls conducted remotely should be completed in line with the academy code of conduct and professional boundaries maintained. A record of the call should be made and any safeguarding concerns reported to DSL/DDSL via CPOMs in the normal manner.

Zoom can be employed for staff meetings, meeting with parents and other agencies. Staff engaging in zoom meetings should consider the following recommendations:

- They should be in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background.
- Staff should be appropriately dressed, smart casual and no bare flesh.
- Must be reminded that photographs of individuals are personal data, therefore screenshots of other members of the online learning environment cannot be taken and cannot be used unless consent is given.
- Must use appropriate language – this includes others in their household.
- Should maintain the standard of behaviour expected in school.
- Always remain aware that they are visible.