Context

This additional guidance is based on DfE advice published in January 2021 please see
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf
(last updated 14th January 2021)

This appendix addresses how the school will apply the safeguarding and child protection policy in order to safeguard all children during COVID-19. It applies both to children who are attending school and the majority who will be staying at home, pending further government advice.

Vulnerable children

From 5th January 2021 the government asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Children who absolutely need to attend are those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response and children defined as vulnerable as follows:

Vulnerable children and young people include 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

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment in consultation with the Local Authority and parents/carers to determine whether children with an EHC plan 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.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Birchwood will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children's social workers and the Local Authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children. We will work with social workers to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Looked After Children are up to date with the current education offer that looked after children are accessing.

The DSL, Michelle Day, will continue to provide support to teachers and pastoral staff to ensure that contact is maintained with children (and families) who are not attending school.

Schools are expected to allow and strongly encourage vulnerable children and young people to attend. Parents/carers of vulnerable children and young people are strongly encouraged to take up the place. If vulnerable children and young people do not attend, Birchwood will:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance considering the child's circumstances and their best interests

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child or young person to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the child or young person's attendance would be appropriate

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should still speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person and on ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

In line with advice from Warwickshire County Council, the school will create and maintain an up-to-date register/database of all pupils/students who are considered vulnerable as above.

The register/database will contain the names and contact details of the child's parents/carers; other significant family members; social workers; family support workers; and any other key professionals including health professionals and youth justice workers. The register/database will be accessible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and all Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, including by secure access for DSLs who may need to self-isolate and/or work from home.

The school will assess the level of vulnerability of each pupil/student on the register/database using the RAG rating format as below. This will support the DSL to identify those children that need to be offered the opportunity to attend school (this must include all children with a social worker), those that can be supported by regular contact from a DSL and those whose attendance might be inconsistent and who may therefore need additional contact and support.

The RAG rating criteria are:

Red - most at risk of harm or neglect (will include all children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan).

Amber - a moderate risk of harm, but with some protective factors (will include those with a Child in Need plan and/or being supported by a family support worker) and all children who are looked after.

Green - some concerns or unmet needs; or have been red or amber and need monitoring.

Every child on the vulnerable children register/database will be allocated to a named DSL

who will be responsible for ensuring that the identified level of support and contact is provided.

DSLs will record all contacts and outcomes with vulnerable children and their families in the usual way so that those records are visible to colleague DSLs and can be reviewed in regular DSL meetings.

During these unprecedented times, we recognise that all of our pupils have some level of vulnerability. Class teachers monitor engagement and wellbeing of all pupils through daily live sessions and feedback on work submissions. Any concerns are followed up by class teachers either directly with parents or with SLT or the DSL as appropriate to ensure adequate support is in place for children and their families.

Attendance monitoring

All pupils who are not eligible to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice. As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). If the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent, the parent should let the school know. The DfE expects schools to grant applications for leave of absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, Birchwood will notify their social worker if they have one.

For any child eligible to attend school who does not attend, the school will follow the normal absence management procedure. As a minimum, a text message will be sent home in relation to each eligible child on each day of absence. If the DSL is concerned about the child's level of vulnerability, then further phone calls will be made to ensure the child is safe and well.

In relation to **all children subject of Child Protection Plans and who are looked after** who do not attend school, the DSL or designated teacher for children who are looked after will **liaise closely with Children's Social Care**. A shared decision may be made that as long as one practitioner has made a call to the child, that will suffice as a safe and well check, but the DSL will log any such decision and all calls and under exceptional circumstances, home visits undertaken.

In any event, **the social worker must be informed about any child who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or who is looked after who does not attend school on the first and (subject to the agreement reached with the social worker) each subsequent day of absence**.

For each child identified as vulnerable but who the DSL considers can be safely cared for at home (NB This will <u>not</u> include any child with a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or who is looked after without written agreement with the child's social worker), the DSL will identify the nature and frequency of contact the child will need to reassure the DSL of their safety and wellbeing. This might include phone calls, text contact, Skype or home visits.

Home visits

Any home visit must be risk assessed. If agreed that a home visit is necessary, it should be undertaken by two members of staff.

It is unlikely that home visits will be frequent. If they are undertaken, they will subject of a risk assessment based on the following guidelines:

(1) The DSL will speak to the child's parents/carers to establish whether any member of the household has symptoms of COVID-19; has been diagnosed; or is self-isolating.

(2) Home visits will be undertaken by two members of staff, one of whom will be a DSL. NB It would be expected that any member of staff who has an underlying health condition/ vulnerability would be at home self-isolating. For the absence of doubt, no such member of staff will therefore undertake home visits.

(3) The DSL will inform the parents/carers of the plan to undertake a home visit and that visiting staff will need to see and speak to the child through a window.

(4) Staff undertaking home visits are advised to wear gloves and avoid contacting metal surfaces with their bare skin. They should knock on the door of the house with covered hands. After knocking on the door, they must step back from the door by at least two metres.

(5) Visiting staff will ask to see and talk to the child through a window; and will aim to keep the conversation as upbeat and positive as possible.

(6) Staff are advised not to enter households but simply to check that the child is well by a conversation through a window, maintaining the recommended social distance of 2 metres.

(7) However, if undertaking a home visit, staff must actually **see** the child.

If a family is self-isolating and/or it is difficult/not appropriate to carry out a home visit subject to the risk assessment, the DSL will consider whether technology can be used to see the child, e.g. via Skype or other means of video chat. If carrying out Skype/video chat, this should be agreed with parents/carers prior to any call being made.

All school policies including the Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct and ICT Acceptable Use policies must be followed at all times both in face to face and electronic communication with pupils and parents/carers. No staff member should private message children or video conference with a child directly, other than via school-owned equipment and subject to parental agreement and the agreement of the Headteacher or the DSL.

Where concerns for a child at home reach the threshold for significant harm, a referral must be made to Children's Social Care/Police as per normal safeguarding procedures. For that reason, all DSLs must have access to MASH and other key agency phone numbers and children's details, even when working from home.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL and Deputy DSLs are as named in the main policy.

The DSL or a Deputy DSL will be available either on site or by phone at all times when the school is open. In the event that this is not possible, the DSL or a Deputy DSL will be readily accessible via email and will respond rapidly to concerns. All staff members have been provided with contact details in order to be able to contact a member of the DSL team without any difficulty. Should the DSL become unwell, all staff will be informed and key responsibility will pass from Michelle Day to Neil Coleman or Ella Webb, under those circumstances.

The DSL (or Deputy DSL) will always be available on site. If health reasons or self isolation means this is not possible, a senior leader will always be present and will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site, always with ready telephone/ online access to the DSL as above.

All DSLs will have remote access to the register/database of all vulnerable children and other safeguarding records when working off site.

The DSL team will liaise with MASH, Social Care, family support workers and other key safeguarding partners as normal, whether working in school or working remotely. When working from home, DSLs will be accessible via access to their school email account and

should have use of their personal mobile telephone, the numbers of which should be shared with colleague DSLs, partners and the Education Safeguarding Service.

The DSL team will continue to attend – either in person or virtually – Child Protection Conferences; core group meetings; strategy meetings; Child in Need meetings; Children who are Looked After reviews; and Early Help meetings.

Reporting a concern

All staff and volunteers continue to have a responsibility for safeguarding children and will report any safeguarding concerns about children to a DSL in the normal way as set out in the main policy.

Staff should have access to the normal safeguarding recording format (green forms) when working off site, including when working from home.

Staff and volunteers are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the normal safeguarding recording format (green forms) remotely, they will contact the DSL via email and cc at least one other DSL in, to inform them that they need to share a concern. This will ensure that the concern is received. The receiving DSL with then confirm receipt by replying to all parties so that everyone knows the concern is being actioned.

Where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about the behaviour of an adult working with children in the school, they should inform the headteacher as normal, using a yellow form. If the notification needs to be made when the reporting individual is off-site, this should be done via an electronic yellow form or verbally and followed up with an email to the Headteacher on the same working day.

Any concerns about the Headteacher should be reported to the Local Governing Body.

Safeguarding training and induction

The DfE recognises that DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst the threat of the COVID-19 virus remains and government guidance in relation to large gatherings and social distancing is relaxed.

DfE guidance states that 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. Where ever possible however, training will be accessed via online methods to ensure all training is up to date.

The DSL will communicate any new or revised safeguarding advice, guidance, requirements, arrangements or information in writing to all staff and volunteers.

Where new staff or volunteers are recruited, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If adults from another school or setting are redeployed to work at the school during the COVID-19 virus, the school will take into account DfE supplementary guidance and will accept portability of pre-employment checks as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's Barred List check; and
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children; and
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

Upon arrival, all such redeployed staff will be given a copy of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Behaviour Policy, Social Networking Policy, the Online Safety Policy, the school's safeguarding recording and reporting procedures and confirmation of DSL details and arrangements.

Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

The school will maintain its commitment to ensuring that only suitable people are given opportunities to work with children at the school. Any recruitment during COVID-19 will therefore be undertaken following the normal safer recruitment processes, subject to the school's policy, local authority guidance and advice and Part 3 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2019) [KCSiE]*.

Safer recruitment principles also apply to the recruitment of volunteers, subject to *KCSiE*.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current national emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that the school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers are in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in Regulated Activity. As such, the school will continue to maintain the single central record as outlined in *KCSiE*.

Online safety

The school is committed as always to providing children with a safe environment in which to learn. That includes online learning. The online filtering (in relation to school-owned devices) and monitoring systems will be in operation as normal. The school is unable to filter activity on devices not owned by the school. Parents may find it useful to refer to https://www.internetmatters.org/blog/parental-controls/broadband-mobile/ for guidance on putting some restrictions in place to keep children safe.

Where children are using ICT equipment in school, appropriate supervision will be in place as normal.

Children and online safety away from school and college

As above, all online lessons should be delivered by school staff in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use of ICT, Social Networking and Online Safety policies.

The school will take account of guidance from DfE in relation to the planning and delivery of online learning when it is issued; as well as nationally recognised guidance including *guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning*.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs that a child may be at risk, distressed for some reason or vulnerable in some other way; and report and record that following normal safeguarding procedures. All such concerns must be brought to the attention of a DSL and dealt with by a DSL as per the main policy in the normal way.

The school will ensure that online learning tools and systems are used in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

The school recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people and that the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 virus may well affect the mental health of some students and/or their parents/carers.

All staff will maintain an awareness of those issues in communications with children and their parents/carers including when setting expectations of pupils' work when they are at home.

Guidance is shared and reinforced with all staff, pupils and parents for any online sessions of expectations of conduct and behaviour for those both on camera directly and family members who may be in the background.

Supporting children not in school

Any child on the school's register/database of vulnerable children who it has been decided does not need to attend school; cannot attend school due to a risk to their own health or the health of another member of their household; or whose parents/carers are unwilling to send them to school will have an identified plan of support that will be overseen by a named DSL and recorded on the child's safeguarding file.

The plan will include regular communication with the child's named social worker or family support worker where there is one. A record of all communications with the child, parents/carers and practitioners in partner agencies will be made on the child's safeguarding file, including telephone calls, emails, other online communication, video conversations and virtual meetings.

The school will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan in order to safeguard the child.

This plan will be reviewed regularly (at least once per week) by the allocated DSL in discussion with at least one other member of the DSL team, using regular/planned DSL team meetings, as appropriate.

The school will continue to share safeguarding messages on its website, social media pages and via newsletters.

Supporting children in school

The school will continue to be a safe space for all children who attend during the COVID-19 virus. Whenever the school is open and to maximise safety, the headteacher will ensure that appropriate numbers of staff are on site and that staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate.

The school will ensure that government guidance for education and childcare settings in respect of social distancing and advice from Public Health England in respect of handwashing and other protective measures to limit the risk of spreading COVID19 is followed regularly and robustly.

All children attending school will be provided with appropriate emotional support, bespoke to their needs, assessed vulnerability and circumstances.

Where the school has concerns about the availability of critical staff to work in school – particularly members of the DSL team, SENCO, Designated Teacher for Children who are Looked After and First Aiders – those concerns will be raised with the CEO of the Trust either via c.cotton@communityacademiestrust.org or directly without delay.

Peer on peer abuse

The school recognises that a revised process for managing any report of peer on peer abuse and supporting victims may be required during the COVID-19 virus when only a relatively small number of children will be attending school.

Where the school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, it will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSiE and as outlined in the main policy as closely as possible.

The school will listen and work with all children involved, their parents/carers and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of alleged victims, alleged perpetrators and all other children attending the school.

Concerns and actions must be recorded on the child's safeguarding file and appropriate referrals made by the DSL.

Support from the local authority

The Education Lead Officer for Safeguarding, Sue Hunt will be available as usual for advice on 01926 418608 or 07979 240536. She can also be contacted via email suehunt@warwickshire.gov.uk or masheducationlead@warwickshire.gov.uk . She will continue to provide any updates to schools as appropriate throughout lockdown.