SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19) ADDENDUM

Issued March 2020

Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) states that schools and Trusts should continue to have regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) as per funding agreement requirements. The COVID-19 safeguarding guidance suggests where schools and Trusts might consider safeguarding policy and process differently during COVID-19 when compared to business as usual.

The key features of safeguarding remain the same:

- The best interests of children must always come first.
- If anyone in the academy has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should act and act immediately.
- A Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL 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 be protected when they are online.

This addendum sets out the differences which have been adopted during this period of significant change.

Any updated advice received from the local three safeguarding partners.	The Trust and academies are following Government COVID-19 guidance on school closures, maintaining education provision with local authorities and for education settings, all of which are frequently updated.
Any updated advice received from local authorities regarding children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the local authority designated officer and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.	The Trust and academies are following government COVID-19 guidance on vulnerable children and young people, which is frequently updated. Where a child with an EHCP can safely remain at home, they should do so.
What staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child.	Report concerns immediately.
The continued importance of all staff and volunteers acting and acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns.	Act immediately.
DSL (and Deputy DSL) arrangements.	See below.
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.	There is an expectation that children with a social worker will attend the academy, unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.

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).	Be aware that peer-on-peer abuse may occur and report concerns. Any decisions made in responding to reports of peer on peer abuse will be made by the academy on a case-by-case basis. The DSL (or a Deputy DSL) will take a leading role, using their professional judgement, and supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required. Any disclosures should be passed to the DSL (or a Deputy DSL) immediately who will risk assess the situation. The risk assessment should be recorded electronically and kept constantly under review in consideration of the measures required to keep all pupils safe. The DSL (or a Deputy DSL) will liaise with the parents of the children involved and engage with children's social care and the police where a crime has been committed. Immediate support will be given to the victim. Peer on peer abuse is not tolerated at the academy and the principal, with the DSL, will determine an appropriate response which may include support or sanction for the alleged perpetrator.
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).	Report concerns immediately to the DSL/Deputy DSL.
Any arrangements to support children the school or college are concerned about who do not meet the 'vulnerable' definition.	Senior leaders, especially the DSLs (and Deputy DSL) 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.

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	See below.

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 (DSLs)

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

1. A trained DSL or Deputy DSL from the school or college can be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home.
2. Sharing trained DSLs or Deputy DSLs with other schools or colleges (who should be available to be contacted via phone or online video).

Where a trained DSL or Deputy DSL is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, the department recommend 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 DSL) 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.

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with EHCPs. Read more in the guidance on vulnerable children and young people for further information.

Local authorities have the key day-to-day responsibility for delivery of children's social care. Social workers and VSHs will continue to work with vulnerable children in this difficult period and should support these children to access this provision. There is an expectation that children with a social worker will attend 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.

Senior leaders, especially DSLs (and Deputy DSLs) 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.

Academy staff will continue to work with and support children' social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This will be especially important during the COVID-19 period.

Attendance

Local authorities and schools do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

Academies and social workers should be agreeing with families whether children in need should be attending education provision – and the school will then follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend, who does not. The academy will follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their children and the children subsequently do not attend.

To support the above, schools should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the school should notify their social worker.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

All existing staff will already have had safeguarding training and have read Part 1 of KCSIE. The important thing for these staff will be awareness of 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 enter the school or college, they should continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. An up to date child protection policy will support this process as will Part 1 of KCSIE.

The existing workforce may move between schools and colleges on a temporary basis in response to COVID-19. The receiving academy should judge, on a case-by-case basis, the level of safeguarding induction required. In most cases, the existing workforce will already have received appropriate safeguarding training and all they will require is a copy of the receiving setting's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

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. If recruiting new staff, academies should continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in Part 3 of 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.

Where an academy is utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

For members of the workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school to support the care of children.

Mental health

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current COVID-19 outbreak, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Teachers should be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. The DfE is providing separate guidance on providing education remotely.

Where they are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, staff should ensure appropriate support is in place for them. The DfE guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools sets out how mental health issues can bring about changes in a young person's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, and that can be an indication of an underlying problem. Support for pupils and students in the current circumstances can include existing provision in the school (although this may be delivered in different ways, for example over the phone) or from specialist staff or support services. You can ready the guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools.

Online safety in schools and colleges

It is more important than ever that academies provide a safe environment, including online. Academies should continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems (read guidance on what "appropriate" looks like) are in place to protect children when they are online on the academy IT systems or recommended resources. Academy Leadership should consider who in their institution has the technical knowledge to maintain safe IT arrangements and should also consider their contingency arrangements are if their IT staff become unavailable.

The UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards and proprietors assure themselves that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face. Local authorities may also be able to provide support.

Children and online safety away from the academy

Academies should be doing what they reasonably can to keep all of their children safe. In most cases, most children will not be physically attending the school or academy. 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 DfE is providing separate guidance on providing education remotely. It will set out four key areas that leaders should consider as part of any remote learning strategy. This includes the use of technology. Recently published guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and from the London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming could help plan online lessons and/or activities and plan them safely.

Academies should consider the safety of their children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the academy 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. Staff should, as much as is reasonably possible, consider if their existing policies adequately reflect the new reality of so many children (and in some cases staff) working remotely online. As with the child protection policy, in some cases an annex/addendum summarising key COVID-19 related changes may be more effective than re-writing/re-issuing the whole policy.

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 an academy satisfy themselves that their staff behaviour policies are robust and effective. In some areas support may be available from the local authority when planning online lessons/activities and considering online safety.

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

An essential part of the online planning process will be ensuring children who are being asked to work online have very clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting routes back to the school or college, this should also signpost children to age appropriate practical support from the likes of:

- Childline - for support.
- UK Safer Internet Centre - to report and remove harmful online content.
- CEOP - for advice on making a report about online abuse.

Parents and Carers

Academies are expected to be in regular contact with parents and carers. Those communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will asked to access and be clear who from the academy (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Parents and carers may choose to supplement the academy online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their communications with parents and carers. Academies should emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children. Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online includes:

- Internet matters - support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online.
- London Grid for Learning - support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online.
- Net-aware - support for parents and careers from the NSPCC.
- Parent info - support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online.
- Thinkuknow - advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online.
- UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers.