Child protection during the COVID-19 measures (Annex to Policy v. 1.0)

**Context**

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different. Most children are no longer in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

Schools have been asked to provide care for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

This annex to our Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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**Version control and dissemination**

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by the Headteacher, designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy DSL on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the school website at www.sfs.hants.sch.uk and is made available to staff via a direct staff email.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff in attendance will be aware of whom the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff can to speak to them.

**Safeguarding priority**

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – whether they are currently at home or in attendance – continues to be our priority. The following fundamental safeguarding principles remain the same:

* The best interests of children continue to come first
* If anyone in our school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
* A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available
* No unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children
* Children should continue to be protected when they are online.

**Our current position** (06-04-2020)

The school is open throughout what would traditionally be the Easter break with no full school closure; this includes Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday. All families eligible for emergency childcare have access to it. All pupils and their parents/carers have been given a telephone number to call. All children and their parents/carers are receiving reach-out advice, support and guidance telephone calls. All children eligible for free school meals are receiving vouchers to spend locally. The DSL and DDSL are in contact with social workers where necessary. We have not recruited additional staff nor are we using agency or volunteer staff. All staff supporting children are directly employed by the school.

**Safeguarding partners’ advice**

We continue to work closely with our safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this annex is consistent with their advice. This will include expectations for supporting 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. The current advice is below.

**Roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Child Protection Policy.

Our DSL (or a DDSL) will be available on site during the school day every day that the school is open. Where this is not possible, we will have a trained DSL or DDSL available by phone

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Rosemary Scott who can be contact via r.scott@hants.sch.uk.

The DDSLs are Rachel Clapham r.clapham@sfs.hants.sch.uk, Bonnie Stokes b.stokes@sfs.hants.sch.uk and Amanda Edney a.edney@sfs.hants.sch.uk.

**Vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education or health 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 school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will discuss this with the social worker and explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they 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.

We will encourage eligible pupils to attend school. Senior leaders in our school, especially the DSL (and deputies) know who our most vulnerable children are, and they have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children’s social care support.

We will continue to work with children’s social workers, our and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

**Increased vulnerability or risk**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Staff will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils’ work where they are at home. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them. Any concerns will be communicated to the DSL or DDSL.

**Attendance**

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL or a deputy DSL will be informed.

The DSL or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents through various methods, such as telephone, FaceTime, Skype or by contact a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will undertake a home visit or ask an appropriate agency to do so. A risk assessment will be carried out before any such visit is made to ensure staff the family are not put at risk.

**Reporting concerns about children or staff**

The importance of all staff acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Child Protection procedures [insert link] and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff or volunteers. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff at our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy.

**Staff training and induction**

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLSs are unlikely to receive their refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

**Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff**

It is not anticipated that new staff will be joining the school during this period. However, it remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children’s workforce or gain access to children.

When recruiting new staff, we will continue to follow our Safer Recruitment policy.

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.

For volunteers we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in regulated activity.

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers are on our school site and that the appropriate checks have been carried out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain our single central record (SCR) during these measures to ensure we have this awareness.

**Peer on peer abuse**

We recognise that children can abuse their peers and our staff are clear about the school’s policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school site during these measures.

Our staff will remain vigilant to the [signs of peer-on-peer abuse](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChristine%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5C0CGV3O2R%5Csafeguarding.network%5Cpeer-on-peer) and will follow the process set out in our Child Protection Policy.

**Online safety**

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. Our staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and our filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children. Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Child Protection Policy.

Staff who interact with children online will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will follow the approach set out in this annex and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

**New children at the school**

We are not expecting new children to join the school at this time.

**Supporting children not in school**

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive additional pastoral support in school a communication plan is in place to support that child. Details of that plan will be recorded in the safeguarding file for that child. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.