



Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

Annex to Child Protection policy - version 1.0 (6 April, 2020)

Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. 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 our 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 here www.ryders-hayes.co.uk under COVID-19 tab - Safeguarding and is made available to staff by via email and on the shared drive.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff and volunteers in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff and volunteers 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.

Current school position

Our current position is that school will remain open for as long as possible for the children of key workers and anyone identified by the school as vulnerable (including EHCPs/children with attached social workers and the children identified by the school. Minimal staffing is maintained in accordance with DfE guidance.

There are no staff or volunteers currently attending on site from outside our school, but should this be the case, they will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns.

Safeguarding partners' advice

We continue to work closely with our three 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. New advice re Domestic violence is included below.

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership continue to provide in informed and effective leadership. As a reminder, they would like to reiterate the Government and NHS guidelines about maintaining good hygiene: only go outside for food, health reasons or essential work, and stay two metres away from other people outside of your household.

The legal framework in respect of supporting vulnerable children and adults remains broadly the same as does our collective responsibility in respect of safeguarding enquires for adults (under S42) and children (under s47).

As professionals in Walsall, now, more than ever, we need to:

- Do what we would ordinarily do (in relation to safeguarding)
- We are in unprecedented times and the pressures on parents and carers are extraordinary and, at this moment, without an end in sight. This will impact on all of us and some parents and carers have less emotional and physical resilience than others. They may need support and assistance.
- So, exercise professional curiosity; ask those additional questions



- All staff in all agencies need to be particularly alert to issues of self-neglect
- All staff in all agencies need to consider potential exploitation of both adults and children, and finally,
- If making a referral to Adult Social Care or Children's Services then, more than ever, referrals need to be comprehensive with the correct contact details.

There is up to date safeguarding and Covid 19 information being added to the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership website regularly. <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership/COVID-19>

Domestic abuse

By way of a reminder we need to be aware this will be a time of significant strain for families, and will lead to an increase in domestic abuse and violence incidents, and the seriousness and impact of incidents may be increased.

We know that schools are still receiving Operation Encompass notifications throughout the Easter break, and will make contact with families wherever possible. Power and relationships dynamics need to be considered when planning and undertaking safe and well checks, especially where children, young people and victims of abuse may experience coercion and control.

The council has compiled a directory of [Domestic Abuse Information, Guidance and Resources](#) that provides details of online resources, apps, helplines and chat forums available for families and professionals.

SafeLives have put together some information and resources for people living with domestic abuse, and the professionals supporting them during this difficult time. The [Staying safe during COVID-19: A guide for victims and survivors of domestic abuse leaflet](#) provides guidance around general points to consider during self-isolation and staying at home, as well as safety planning advice. For more information, please visit [SafeLives](#)

[This Coronavirus and Domestic Abuse Support leaflet](#) provides details of key contacts providing support across the West Midlands as well as some key regional and national helplines available during the coronavirus outbreak.

Please use the Walsall Right Help, Right Time to support professional decisions and contact MASH if you believe a child is at risk.

Remember, in an emergency always call 999.

It is important to note that some children that have not been 'at risk' previously become more at risk in this new COVID-19 context; the expected rise in DV has begun and we must respond by considering who should be offered places in our school provision and by keeping in contact with the child's home. Children potentially suffering from Domestic Violence, Neglect, Abuse, Child Criminal Exploitation or Child Sexual Exploitation will be elevated to the daily contact list to ensure that a referral can be made as soon as there is a concern raised. During the emergency Covid 19 measures the majority of our student population will not be seen by our school, therefore it is essential that everyone is observant and listening to the voice of the child during any contact.



Roles and responsibilities

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

If possible, one member of our Safeguarding Team will be available on site during the school day. Where this is not possible, we will:

- have a trained DSL or deputy DSL available by phone and/or online video; or
- ensure we have access to a trained DSL or deputy DSL from another school or college by phone and/or online video.

Where our DSL or a deputy DSL cannot be on site, then in addition to one of the above options we will also ensure a senior leader from the school takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for child protection is

Headteacher: Mrs Sally Miner

Contact email: s.miner@ryders-hayes.co.uk

Telephone: 01922 683008 or by mobile number available to all staff

The deputy designated lead(s) is/are

Head of School: Jasvinder Paul

Contact email: j.paul@ryders-hayes.co.uk

Telephone: 01922 683008 or mobile number available to all staff

Safeguarding and Pastoral Leader: Wayne McDonald

Contact Email: w.mcdonald@ryders-hayes.co.uk

01922 683008 / 07927 550794

Deputy Head Teacher: Alyson Church

Contact email: a.church@ryders-hayes.co.uk

01922 683008 or by mobile number available to all staff

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 our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.



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 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.

Our staff and volunteers will be aware of the mental health of children and their parents and carers and will contact the DSL or a deputy if they have any concerns.

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.

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

Reporting concerns about children or staff

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Child Protection procedures as set out in the Staff Handbook and Safeguarding Policy:

https://www.rydershayes.co.uk/images/Child_Protection_and_safeguarding_Policy_September_2019.pdf 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 or volunteers attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy [see Shared Drive /Safeguarding/Allegations Against Staff].

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in school, they should continue to refer their concern to the head. Concerns about the head should be directed to the Chair of Governors. If any of these people are unavailable due to the Covid-19 context then colleagues must refer the matter to Michelle Pinnock-Ouma (LADO). The matter will then follow usual safeguarding procedures.

We will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral.

During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

Staff training and induction

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



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 are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern
- there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
- the individual remains suitable to work with children.

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.

When recruiting new staff, we will continue to follow our Safer Recruitment policy [Shared Drive/Safeguarding]. A team have staff have received remote refresher training.

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 [protected file].

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 and will follow the process set out in our Child Protection Policy, which can be accessed via the website - see link above.

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 [see link above].

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. A master safe and well-being spreadsheet, accessible to all staff has been produced to log any concerns, which is being monitored daily.

New children at the school

At the present time school is only open to our own pupils. However, children may join our school from other settings in due course. When they do, we will seek from those settings the relevant welfare and child



protection information. This is relevant for all children that join us, but it will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

For vulnerable children we will ensure we understand the reasons for the vulnerability and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum we will seek access to that child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is).

Ideally this will happen before a child arrives but where that is not possible it will happen as soon as reasonably practicable.

Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs co-ordinators/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with EHC plans. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case our school senior leaders will take responsibility.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment based on the information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff needs to know the information.

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, they will ensure that 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.

Useful links:

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Michelle Pinnock-Ouma

Contact email: michelle.pinnock-ouma@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07432 422205

Local Authority Social (MASH):

Contact email: MASH@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 555 2866

0300 555 2836 (out of hours service)

Virtual Head: Lorraine Thompson

Contact email: Lorraine.thompson@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07825 860581

Helpline numbers

NSPCC Adults Helpline 0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk

Refuge 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

NSPCC Childline 0800 1111 <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Find your nearest foodbank [Trussell Trust](#)

Links to associated school policies and procedures



Links to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy• Staff Code of Conduct• Behaviour Policy• Safer Recruitment/DBS policy• E-safety Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND policy• Allegations Against Staff (Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures)• Anti-Bullying Policy• Acceptable Use Policy

Links to DfE guidance

[Covid 19 - Managing safeguarding in schools, colleges and other education providers](#)

[Corona Virus – Covid 19, Guidance on Vulnerable Children and Young People](#)

[Covid 19 – Guidance for Schools about Temporary Closing](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#)

[This note is about managing social isolation](#)