

St. Mary's RC Primary School Battersea

Arrangements for Child Protection and Safeguarding During Covid -19 school closures

This document forms an extraordinary amendment to the policy already in place

and is operational from 31st March 2020 for as long as required

Document may be subject to updates if situation changes

Introduction

From 20th March 2020 schools have been required to close to the majority of pupils and to remain open only for the children of identified essential workers (related to the COVID - 19 virus and emergency measures in place) and some groups of pupils identified as particularly vulnerable.

This document forms part of the school's Children Protection and Safeguarding policy and contains the adjustments the school is making to operational practice and safeguarding practice during the COVID -19 emergency measures. It is written in line with Government guidance **Coronavirus (COVID - 19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers - published 27th March 2020.**

This document will be kept under review and amended if necessary if further guidance is issued by the Government.

If the situation arises where the school either hosts as a cluster school, or where pupils from the school are educated at another local school as a result of local cluster arrangements all schools involved will uphold the principles in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2019 and this policy.

The way in which the school is currently operating in response to COVID-19 is fundamentally different to how we would normally operate, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- The welfare of children remains our key priority;
- The best interests of children will always continue to come first;
- If any staff member or volunteer has a safeguarding concern about any child, they will continue to respond appropriately, pass on concerns to the DSL and appropriate and timely action will be taken
- A DSL or deputy will be available, either onsite or remotely;
- Unsuitable people will not be allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children;
- Children will continue to be protected when they are online.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)

Names, staff emails and contact numbers are provided to all staff.

safeguarding@st-marys-pri.wandsworth.sch.uk

The above email is checked every day by the safeguarding lead and has been made available to all families, alongside the details for MASH.

We will endeavour to have a trained DSL available to staff at all times, wherever possible this person will be onsite, where this is not possible they will be available to be contacted via mobile or online video link. Staff have been provided with contact details for all key members of staff.

If a DSL is not available a nominated senior leader from the Federation will take responsibility for the co-ordinating of safeguarding onsite. Duties will include:

- Ensuring access to child protection files;
- Liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy);
- 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;
- Reporting any changes or concerns;
- Ensuring site safeguarding checks are carried out and recorded.

Advice can also be sought from Stella Macaulay, Safeguarding in Education Advisor, MASH or other key officers (for full details see App 1)

Pupils on site

Pupils with a parent or carer who is a critical worker should be offered a school place **if they cannot be cared for at home.**

Pupils who meet the vulnerable children definition, that is

- Those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
- Those who have a social worker include those who are subject to 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.

The school also has flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support or where there are other significant concerns about their wellbeing.

The DSL is aware of the most vulnerable children and has ensured that those pupils who meet the criteria have been offered places during this period.

School have made sure they have requested and recorded the most up to date contact details for all pupils to enable the most effective contact with pupils and families during this difficult time.

The school continues to work with and support children's social care to help protect vulnerable children. We expect those pupils identified as vulnerable children to attend school if they cannot be safely cared for at home, provided they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where the parent does not want to allow their child to attend school there will be regular welfare calls to the home and liaison with the allocated social worker.

Non-attendance will be followed up in accordance with usual procedures.

The school will notify the allocated social worker if any vulnerable child expected in school fails to attend.

The school has carried out risk assessments for each pupil with an EHCP (in consultation with Health, LA and parents) to decide whether they should be offered a school place during the COVID-19 crisis or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. These assessments will be revisited if individual circumstances change, or if Government guidance is updated.

While children are educated onsite the school has put appropriate safety and hygiene regulations in place in accordance with Government guidance.

The school has set up systems to ensure all vulnerable children and their families not in attendance are contacted on a regular basis, to monitor their wellbeing and provide an opportunity for any concerns the child or family have to be shared. The school has ensured that those staff members responsible for making contact with families have been provided with advice about how to conduct their contact with families and given key information about families and professional networks to facilitate any necessary contact. Guidance was provided to schools about keeping in touch with vulnerable pupils (app 3)

Eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is not a determining factor in assessing vulnerability in terms of COVID – 19 criteria. However, the school recognises that families whose children qualify for FSM may be experiencing particular challenges during this crisis, and have made arrangements to ensure that FSM children either have access to a meal or are provided with food vouchers.

Reporting concerns

If any member of staff or volunteer becomes aware of a safeguarding concern about a pupil or family, they will record it in the usual way according to school procedures (Cpoms) and pass it on to the DSL so that appropriate decisions and actions can be taken. Appendix 2 provides information about CSC services and access during the current situation

If there is a safeguarding concern or allegation about a member of staff or volunteer, the Headteacher or DSL will be informed immediately so that the matter can be investigated. The LADO will be consulted, or a referral made to LADO, as per usual guidance. The LADO service is contactable via telephone and email as usual.

The whistleblowing policy remains in place and can be followed by any staff member or volunteer if required.

Safeguarding all pupils

The school remains committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of **all** pupils and recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people. The current circumstances create some unusual challenges in ensuring children have access to safe adults outside their immediate family in whom they can confide any worries or fears. We also recognise that many families are under immense pressure in the current situation, both emotionally and financially, which will mean that not every home is a place of safety for children and young people. Some may be confined to small living spaces or may be witnessing or subjected to abusive situations.

The school has ensured that all families have been provided with information about how to contact staff members during the school closures and that contact details for key support services and helplines have been included in information sent out / provided on school websites.

Online safety and providing off site teaching

All staff who interact with children and young people, including online, will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk.

Online teaching should follow usual principles for safe and acceptable use of technology. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Acceptable use of technologies
- Staff pupil/student online relationships
- Communication, including the use of social media
- Minimum expectations
- Online safety
- Essential rules for remote teaching

The school has communicated basic information to parents where online learning platforms are being used which has included

- Confirmation of online tools and or sites that the school will be using/if using
- Confirmation of what the child may be asked to do online
- Confirmation as to who their child will be interacting with online
- Confirmation as to whether other pupils will be able to access their child via the online platform
- Allowing the parent or carer the opportunity to voice any concerns
- The importance of not leaving the child alone during screen time
- Monitoring the search history
- Maintaining open communication with the child about online safety
- How to report a concern

Parents and carers have also been provided with details / links to support services e.g. Internet Matters, LGFL, Net-aware, ThinkUKnow, Safer Internet Centre etc.

The school recognises that not all children will have access to a computer or internet facilities in the home, and has ensured that age appropriate resources have been provided for any child who needs them.

Safer recruitment / movement of staff and staff training

In response to the current situation the Government have issued guidance in relation to required checks that staff who are already working in regulated activity and have undergone appropriate checks do not need to be rechecked if required to work on a different site temporarily, provided the details required are confirmed by the current employer.

Any new staff or volunteers will be checked in line with relevant processes and details recorded on the Single Central Record in the usual way.

All existing staff have had safeguarding training and have read Part One of KCSiE. DSLs will ensure all staff are informed of any updates or variations due to the COVID – 19 pandemic.

Any new staff or volunteers will be provided with a safeguarding induction to ensure they are clear about expected processes.

DSL training is unlikely to take place at present. The Government have advised that any DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL even if they miss their refresher training.

If any staff member requires initial DSL training during this period, as they need to take on DSL responsibilities they have not previously had, the school will take advice from the Safeguarding in Education Advisor and an appropriate level of input will be provided.

Peer on peer abuse

The school recognises that during the closure / partial closure there is an increased opportunity for peer on peer abuse to take place. We will continue to remain vigilant to any signs of such abuse, listen to and work with any child who may have suffered abuse from a peer, their parents and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of the child or young person concerned.

Domestic abuse

Wandsworth's Project Tearose (sharing of police notifications relating to attendance at domestic Incidents with DSL in schools) continues to operate during the COVID 19 pandemic. Notifications are shared verbally with DSL by the Safeguarding In Education Advisor – this provides opportunity to agree any actions required in each individual circumstance.

Support services information

All support services have adapted their working protocols to provide best possible input for children, young people and families during the COVID -19 pandemic. The school will ensure they access any guidance and updates in relation to national and local services and circulate as appropriate to staff members.

Some useful links are:

ChildLine: 0800 1111 who are operating a 9am – Midnight service in response to COVID19..

UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/report/>

www.thesafeguardingalliance.org.uk

CEOP: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>

Young Minds Crisis Messenger: 85258 – free text service for 24/7 support

NSPCC Helpline:

Phone: 0808 800 5000

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Mind: www.mind.org.uk

The Department for Education COVID-19 helpline:

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Telephone: 0800 046 8687

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends