

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy Addendum: COVID-School Closure Arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

This addendum of The Link Academy Trust Safeguarding, and Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

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Context

From 5th January 2021 parents and carers were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response - who absolutely need to attend.

Schools and all childcare providers are asked to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents or carers are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Please see latest guidance from 8th January 2021 (and keep an eye out for latest Government info which could be subject to change.)

What parents and carers need to know about early years' providers, schools and colleges:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951035/210108_Parents_Guidance_vF.pdf

Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings:

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

Providing school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

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, health and 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 be deemed vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in [section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#). The new guidance states that there is no requirement to risk assess children this time.

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

Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

Dudley Academies Trust 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)

Andrew.Wright@dudley.gov.uk for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they are not clinically, extremely vulnerable and have been advised to shield. In circumstances where a parent or carer does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and The Trusts academies will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent or carer.

Where parents or carers are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, the academy or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent or carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

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

Attendance Monitoring

Schools and academies will need to continue to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes and follow up on non-attendance of learners who are expected to be in attendance. They will follow up on any learner that they expect to attend and subsequently does not.

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). Schools should encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent or carer of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent or carer should let the academy know that the learner will not be attending. The Department for Education expects schools to grant such applications for leave 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.

As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let academies know if their child will not be attending and, if not, academies should grant a leave of absence (code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

All learners who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

To support the above, the academy will, when communicating with parents and carers and allocated social workers, etc., 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 academy will notify their allocated social worker.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The academy has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL.

The optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case, a trained DSL (or deputy) will be available to contact via phone or online video - for example when working from home.

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to child protection online management system, academy safeguarding systems / CPOMS and liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) 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 academy.

It is important that all staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day staff on site will be made aware of that person is and how to speak to them.

The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings, which can be remotely.

Reporting A Concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the academy Safeguarding Policy; this includes making a report via academy's safeguarding systems / CPOMS, which can be remotely.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access their academy's safeguarding systems / CPOMS from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Principal, etc. This will ensure that the concern is received.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately.

If there is a significant safeguarding concern and/or if any child, where staying at home for a prolonged period raises a concern for DSL, refer to MASH/Children's Social Services outlining the risks on a MARF and record safeguarding details on the academy's safeguarding systems/CPOMS.

MASH contact: - 0300 555 0050 or 0300 555 8574 after 5pm/weekends and Bank Holidays.
Email: MASH_Referrals@dudley.gov.uk

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the academy, they should report the concern to the Principal. If there is a requirement to make a notification to the Principal whilst away from school, this should be verbally, and then followed up with an email to the Principal. Managing allegations process should be followed in the usual way. Contact LADO, Yvonne Nelson-Brown Allegations@dudley.gov.uk

Concerns around the Principal should be directed to the academy's Chair of Governors.

Safeguarding Training and Induction

DSL training will continue to take place albeit virtually. Should you require DSL training, please book your place via Revolution for Schools website.

All existing academy staff have had safeguarding training and have read [part I of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2020\)](#). The DSL should communicate with staff 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 Trust they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our academy, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability 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
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual.

Upon arrival, they will be given 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. When recruiting new staff, the Trust will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in [part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2020\) \(KCSIE\)](#).

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 The Link Academy are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs [166 of KCSIE](#). Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

The Trust 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 in KCSIE or contact LADO, for advice and guidance.

The Trust will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph [173 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

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current National emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the academy, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, the academy will continue to keep their single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs [153 to 159 in KCSIE](#).

Online Safety in Schools

The Link Academy will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in the academy.

Where learners are using computers in the academy, appropriate supervision will be in place.

Children and Online Safety Away from School

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.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the The Link Academy Behaviour policy.

The Link Academy will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Virtual/Online & Remote Learning

Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms provided by Dudley Academies Trust to communicate with learners
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

Work with Parents and Carers

We will make sure parents and carers:

- Are aware of the potential risks to children online and the importance of staying safe online
- Know what our academy is asking children to do online, where relevant, including what sites they will be using and who they will be interacting with from our academy
- Know where else they can go for support to keep their children safe online.

Supporting Children Not in School

The Link Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its Children and Young people.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person.

Details of this plan must be recorded on academy safeguarding systems / CPOMS, as should a record of contact have made.

The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, doorstep visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

The Link Academy and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The academy will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages. The Link Academy recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of learners and their parents and carers.

Teachers at The Link Academy need to be aware of this in setting expectations of learners' work where they are at home.

The Link Academy will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded on Schools safeguarding systems / CPOMS.

Supporting Children in School

The Link Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its learners.

The Link Academy will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to learner ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

The Link Academy will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

The Link Academy will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded on the academy's safeguarding systems / CPOMS.

Where The Link Academy has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – academies will discuss them immediately with the trust.

Peer On Peer Abuse

The Link Academy recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where an academy receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in [part 5 of KCSIE](#) and of those outlined within of the Child Protection Policy.

The academy will listen and work with the young person, parents and carers and any multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

Concerns and actions must be recorded on academy's safeguarding systems / CPOMS and appropriate referrals made.

Support from Local Authority

Please refer to twice weekly updates from the Local Authority and continuous guidance from the DfE.

Links with Other Policies

- Child protection policy
- Behaviour policy
- IT acceptable use policy
- Health and safety policy
- E-safety policy