# Child protection during the COVID-19 measures : Cherry Orchard Primary Academy

Annex to Safeguarding policy – version 1.0

## Context

The way schools and colleges with England and Wales 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 Safeguarding policy sets out details of our arrangements for:

1. Version control and dissemination
2. Safeguarding priority
3. Current school position
4. Safeguarding partners' advice
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Vulnerable children
7. Increased vulnerability or risk
8. Attendance
9. Reporting concerns about children and staff
10. Safeguarding training and induction
11. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff
12. Peer on peer abuse
13. Online safety
14. New children at the school
15. Supporting children not in school

## Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by the LAT Chief Operating Officer, in conjunction with academy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the academy website and is made available to staff through the LAT Coronavirus (COVID-19) portal at: https://covid19.helpdocs.com/

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 academy position

The academy is currently operating within a hub arrangement with other LAT academies within the same geographic area. These hubs have been arranged to allow vulnerable children and those of key workers to access an appropriate educational setting as required. Pupils will be working and engaging with other children from other academies within the hub. The hub academy will be staffed by LAT staff drawn from local academies and there will be a leadership drawn from the Senior Leadership Teams of those same academies.

All LAT staff attending the hub academy will have undertaken appropriate safeguarding and child protection training to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns. They will have already read and understood Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2019.

## 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.

## Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our academy remain in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

If possible, our DSL and at least one Deputy DSL 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 academy or 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 those academies within the hub takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. The telephone number for the hub academy is 01322 242011

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**The academy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is** Julie Forsythe

**The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is** Sandra Foxwell

**The Deputy Designated Lead is** Sheena Williams, Nadine Bill, Rachel Pilcher

Other direct contact details for the DSL and Deputy DSL will be provided by the academy leadership team

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## 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 the academy, 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 the academy, 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 Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place at the academy 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. The risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.

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

Senior leaders in our academy, 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 the academy, 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 contacting a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will ask an appropriate agency to do so.

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 acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. **Staff and volunteers will** continue to follow our Safeguarding procedures which are found on the academy website 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 other adult. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or other adults attending our academy are dealt with quickly, thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy, also found on the academy website.

## 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 and understood Part One and Annex A of KCSIE 2019. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy, prior to starting to work with our children.

When staff from another LAT academy attend the academy site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the academy 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 the LAT 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 KCSIE 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in any 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 academy's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We will be particularly vigilant to prevent any incidents that might take place at a hub academy between children who come from different academies. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during an academy closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the academy 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 Safeguarding 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.

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

Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Safeguarding Policy.

If delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved, the following guidance should be followed:
- No 1:1 lessons, groups only. Virtual sessions should not be used to deliver individual pastoral support;
- 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 with a wall or similar area is presented as a background;

- '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 devices and platforms (i.e. Google Meet) provided by Leigh Academies Trust to communicate with pupils;
- Joining the lesson should be optional. The lesson should also allow the child to opt out of being on video but to join the session via audio only;
- The lesson should be recorded by the teacher for safeguarding purposes, but will only retained for 30 days;
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

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

Children may join our academy from other settings. 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 Virtual School Head [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 (SENCO)/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with an EHCP. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case our academy 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.