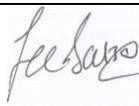




# Child Protection Policy during school closure due to Covid-19

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| This Policy was created on January 5 <sup>th</sup> 2021 by Jo Barclay, Safeguarding Manager for Schools and Early Years, Essex. |   |
| It was approved by the Chair of Trustees on behalf of the Board of Trustees on:   | January 5 <sup>th</sup> 2021  |
| Signed by the Chair of Trustees:  |  |



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|---|--|
| <p>Designated Safeguarding Lead:</p>        | <p>Alderton Infant School: Tara Bristow<br/>                 Alderton Junior School: Kirsty Johnson, Kate O’Riordan<br/>                 Buckhurst Hill Primary School: Alison Farquharson<br/>                 Chigwell Row Infant School: Amy Dowling<br/>                 Epping Upland Primary School: Sarah Hurwood<br/>                 Hereward Primary School: Renette Fourie<br/>                 High Beech Primary School: Sarah Roffey<br/>                 Hillhouse Primary School: Joanne Willcox<br/>                 Ivy Chimneys Primary School: Rebecca Sigston<br/>                 Lambourne Primary School: Sarah Noden<br/>                 Limes Farm Infant School: Sami Taylor<br/>                 Oak View School: Tina Kearney<br/>                 St John’s Primary School: Jonathan Furness<br/>                 Staples Road Primary School: Jane Harvey<br/>                 Theydon Bois Primary School: Andre Rall<br/>                 White Bridge Primary School: Ann Grisley</p>   |
| <p>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:</p> | <p>Alderton Infant School: Jane Carter, Kirsty Peach, Frankie Conway<br/>                 Alderton Junior School: Ciara Connolly, Matthew Harrison, Sarah Finn<br/>                 Buckhurst Hill Primary School: Gavin Flynn, Lisa Anstey, Sue Potter<br/>                 Chigwell Row Infant School: Joanne Hammond<br/>                 Epping Upland Primary School: Karen Smith<br/>                 Hereward Primary School: Caroline Hilton, Adam Allen<br/>                 High Beech Primary School: Sarah Nelmes<br/>                 Hillhouse Primary School: Julie Tollervey, Zoe Rodrigues<br/>                 Ivy Chimneys Primary School: Clare Cooper, Andy Jones<br/>                 Lambourne Primary School: Tina Carter<br/>                 Limes Farm Infant School: Alanna Stevens, Louise Walsh, Kerry Tutty-Lyons<br/>                 Oak View School: Graham Sandberg, Mark Terrell, Claire Moore, Julie McNally<br/>                 St John’s Primary School: Alison Tinker, Kate Mortimer<br/>                 Staples Road Primary School: Claire Dempsey<br/>                 Theydon Bois Primary School: Kim Williams<br/>                 White Bridge Primary School: Lesley Hester, Janine Mudd</p> |
| <p>Designated Safeguarding Trustee</p>      | <p>Lesley Duffin</p>   |

*During this period of closure, if it is not possible to always have a Designated Lead (or Deputy) on each of our school sites, there will always be access available to a Designated Lead or Deputy (Level 3 trained).*



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## 1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is an addition to the Trust's existing Child Protection Policy and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to Covid-19.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers, Trustees and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our Trust and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- the current Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- the school Behaviour policy;
- the school Staff Behaviour policy (sometimes called Staff Code of Conduct);
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

## 2. Current context / statutory framework

Schools have been instructed to close, although they are required to offer a place to vulnerable children and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. 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 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 provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, the school will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and to agree an appropriate plan for that child.

We obviously want to support all our children during this time and will consider making a place available to other children with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.



### 3. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our pupils and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support pupils with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

Each of our schools will have their own specific safeguarding arrangements during this period as detailed on their individual websites.

For vulnerable children (including those with a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan), existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet need. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care. Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be assessed in consultation with the local authority, other involved agencies and parents.

As always, all staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (or, in their absence, the deputy designated safeguarding lead).

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- [Essex Effective Support](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the [Essex Effective Support](#) portal. Our schools may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

### 4. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our Trust is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our Trust and when these records should be shared with other agencies.



Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have children from another school attending our site, or where our pupils may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

## 5. Interagency working

As before, it is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this period of partial closure, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

## 6. Staff conduct

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. We have adapted our policies to reflect the current arrangements to ensure they cover online and/or remote learning. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

## 7. Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of all our pupils is always a priority and it is recognised that, without the protective factor of attending school, some of our children may be more vulnerable. This is a worrying and challenging time for everyone and we understand that families will be placed under additional pressures and may be coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home all the time and bereavement.



We want to continue to do all we can to support our pupils and it is vital, therefore, that we work in partnership with parents/carers to do so. Parents/carers should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

## 8. Online safety (for children away from school)

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability. The breadth of issues within online safety is considerable. It can be categorised into three main areas of risk:

- **Content** - exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material. For example, pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **Contact** - subjection to harmful online interaction with other users. For example, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults;
- **Conduct** - personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. For example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

It is important for parents to be vigilant about their child's online activity and to inform the school of any concerns they may have about their child in this respect.

Particularly useful websites for parents on how to keep their children safe are:

- [CEOP](#) (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- [Childnet](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Net Aware](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Parent Info](#)
- [Safer Internet](#)

Staff are aware that children are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.