

Safeguarding our children during COVID-19

This is an appendix to our current Safeguarding Policy <https://www.stcleerprimary.co.uk/View-Doc?url=Policies/Safeguarding/Safeguarding%20Policy%20Sept%202019%20-%20St%20Cleer.pdf>, to reflect the new circumstances during these unprecedented times of COVID-19, as much of our policy remains entirely relevant.

At Bridge Schools Trust we aim to keep pupils and staff safe on site. Schools have their own COVID-19 risk assessment, linked to Public Health England and the Department for Education (DfE) published guidance on implementing social distancing. Guidance has been given to schools if a child or member of staff starts to display symptoms. A non-essential visitor approach has been taken.

Fundamentally, we believe that it is in the best interests of pupils and staff to remain in small numbers in their schools, wherever this is possible, serving the need of key workers and vulnerable children including those on EHCPs.

Following the DfE published safeguarding guidance on 27 March 2020, school leaders have read and ensured the following topics have been reviewed:

Keeping Children Safe in our Schools

Bridge Schools Trust continues to follow KCSIE 2019 and the following principles remain:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in a school or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy should be available
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online

Child Protection Policy

Bridge Schools Trust continues to follow guidance from the OSCP and all relevant professions including:

- any updated advice received from the local safeguarding partners
- any updated advice received from local authorities regarding 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
- what staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child- report ASAP to a DSL/DDSL, record and follow up

- the continued importance of all staff acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns
- DSL (and deputy) arrangements (detailed below)
- the continued importance for school staff to work with and support children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- peer on peer abuse - given the very different circumstances schools are operating in a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims (the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE should continue to inform any revised approach)
- what staff should do if they have concerns about a staff member who may pose a safeguarding risk to children (the principles in part 4 of KCSIE will continue to support how a school or college responds to any such concerns). This is to liaise via the Head, Trust Safeguarding Lead and LADO
- any arrangements to support children the school are concerned about who do not meet the 'vulnerable' definition
- what arrangements are in place to keep children not physically attending the school safe, especially online and how concerns about these children should be progressed

Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs)

- Usually, all our schools have at least one qualified DSL or deputy available on site. If, due to staffing circumstances, this is not possible, schools have contact details (phone numbers and emails) for all of the DSLs and DDSLs in the Trust and also the Safeguarding Lead contact details. Staff will contact a trained DSL/DDSL to safeguard children on role at their school
- For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training

Vulnerable children

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for Bridge Schools Trust.

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with EHC plans. Local authorities have the key day-to-day responsibility for delivery of children's social care. Social workers and VSHs will continue to work with vulnerable children in this difficult period and should support these children to access this provision.

- There is an expectation that children with a social worker will attend provision unless, in consultation with the child's social worker and family, it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child

- Senior leaders, especially DSLs (and deputies), know who their most vulnerable children are and have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children's social care support
- School staff should continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This will be especially important during the COVID-19 period and includes maintaining our strong relationships with other local settings

Attendance

- Local authorities and schools do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance
- Schools and social workers should be agreeing with families whether children in need should be attending education provision
- The school should then follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend who does not. Schools should also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their children and the children who subsequently do not attend
- In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or college or discontinues, the school should notify the child's social worker
- The school completes a [daily online attendance form](#) to keep a record of children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are attending each setting

Staff training and safeguarding induction

- All existing school staff will already have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of KCSIE. The important thing for these staff will be awareness of any new local arrangements so they know what to do if they are worried about a child. Heads and DSLs are responsible for ensuring all staff on site know how to report concerns and who to
- Where new staff are recruited, they should continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. An up to date child protection policy (described above) will support this process as will part 1 of KCSIE.
- The existing school workforce may move between schools on a temporary basis in response to COVID-19. The receiving school should judge, on a case-by-case basis, the level of safeguarding induction required. In most cases, the existing workforce will already have received appropriate Trust safeguarding training and all they will require is the named contact/s in each school. Where staff are on site from a school outside of Bridge Schools Trust, a DBS check must be presented from their employer and recorded on the school SCR

Children moving schools and colleges

Many of our schools will combine to form 'hubs' and will also offer places (where appropriate) to children from schools outside of the Trust. When a child attends from a

school not in Bridge Schools Trust, we expect that a familiar member of staff from their setting accompanies them.

- It will be important for any school whose children are attending another setting to do whatever they reasonably can to provide the receiving institution with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable. This information is requested prior to any child joining from outside of Bridge Schools Trust
- For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the VSH with responsibility for the child. The receiving school should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum the receiving institution should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable 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). This should ideally happen before a child arrives and, where that is not possible 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 senior leaders should take responsibility.
- Whilst schools and colleges must continue to have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR they do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

Safer recruitment and volunteers

People who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children.

- If schools and colleges are recruiting new staff, they must contact HR and follow their guidance. Schools should continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of 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.
- During this period, our schools are not utilising volunteers
- Regarding members of the school workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school or college to support the care of children.
- Schools must continue to follow their legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult (via Bridge Schools Trust HR Team)
- All schools must be aware, on any given day, which staff will be in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, schools must continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to

date. The SCR can, if a school or college chooses, provide the means to log everyone that will be working in a school on any given day, including any staff who may be on loan from other institutions outside of Bridge Schools Trust

Mental Health

- Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Teachers should be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home
- Where schools are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, schools should ensure appropriate support is in place for them. Support for pupils in the current circumstances can include existing provision in the school ie TIS (although this may be delivered in different ways, for example over the phone) or from specialist staff or support services

Online safety

- It will be more important than ever that schools provide a safe environment, including online safety. Schools should continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect children when they are online on the school IT systems or recommended resources. Schools should continue to use the 'helpdesk' support for IT provision

Online safety away from school

All schools will be doing what they reasonably can to keep all their children safe.

- At present, schools are using existing mechanisms for teaching children- packs uploaded to school websites where children can access learning using reputable platforms or work created by staff/other professionals
- At present, our schools are not uploading videos of staff/online streaming and are not expecting children to do so. We are conscious of the potential implications this has for both school and home. We have consciously made this decision, to help stick to our main principle of keeping children safe at school and at home
- With all our teaching (on and offline), the same principles are followed as set out in our staff code of conduct
- Schools are likely to be in regular contact with parents and carers, mainly by email or phone. Those communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online
- Parents and carers may choose to supplement the school's or college's online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their communications with parents and carers, schools should emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children

- Should our schools move to a full online learning platform, we will follow the National guidance for keeping our children safe, The DfE is providing separate guidance on providing education remotely. It will set out 4 key areas that leaders should consider as part of any remote learning strategy. This includes the use of technology. Recently published [guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning](#) and from the [London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming](#) could help plan online lessons and/or activities and plan them safely

Support for parents/carers to keep their children safe online include:

- [Internet Matters](#)- for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers
- NSPCC- advice for parents and carers

At Bridge Schools Trust, we reiterate the following:

- With regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- If anyone in a school has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act and act immediately
- A DSL or deputy should be available in person, by phone or by email
- Staff must use school devices (work phone) and work email address (aspencer@primaryschool.co.uk) to contact parents/carers
- It is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online
- Schools should continue to report safeguarding concerns to local Children's Services in the normal way

