**COVID-19 addendum to the school's Child Protection Policy**

**March 2020**

**Introduction: DfE guidance**

**Role of the local authority**

The department is working very closely with all local authorities to ensure that children of critical workers and vulnerable children can, where required, attend a school or college. The department will, via regional school commissioners, continue to support local authorities' crucial responsibilities in maintaining effective safeguarding and child protection services in this challenging time to ensure schools and colleges can access the support they need.

**Safeguarding and clusters**

Where schools and colleges collaborate and children and/or staff from multiple settings are clustered in one place, the principles in Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) and this guidance continue to apply. In particular, the school or college that is acting as the hub in the cluster should continue to provide a safe environment, keep children safe and ensure staff and volunteers have been appropriately checked and risk assessments carried out as required. Additional advice on clusters and safeguarding will be provided in due course.

**Keeping children safe in schools and colleges**

KCSIE is statutory safeguarding guidance that schools and colleges should continue to have regard to as per their legislative duty and/or funding agreement requirements.

Whilst acknowledging the pressure that schools and colleges are under, it remains essential that as far as possible they continue to be safe places for children. This guidance supports governing bodies, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep their children safe. It suggests where schools and colleges might consider safeguarding policy and process differently when compared to business as usual.

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- 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

Schools and colleges should, as far as is reasonably possible, take a whole institution approach to safeguarding. This will allow them to satisfy themselves that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 are not weakening their approach to safeguarding or undermining their child protection policy.

This addendum will consider any updated advice received from the local 3 safeguarding partners as it is published as well as 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.

**Brunswick House Primary School will ensure that:**

- All staff and volunteers know what to do if they have any concerns about a child and understand the continued importance of acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns
- They publish the contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies to all families, as well as the contact details for social services and the police
- DSLs Continue 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
- All staff remain vigilant for peer on peer abuse and know how to take the appropriate action
- All staff know what they should do if they have concerns about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children (the principles in part 4 of KCSIE will continue to support how we respond to any such concerns)
- Arrangements to support children they are concerned about who do not meet the 'vulnerable' definition are in place
- Approved Online Safety support networks are published to all families and staff
- All staff and volunteers are aware of this new addendum and are kept up to date as it is revised.
- The revised policy should continue to be made available publicly.

**Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs)**

The optimal scenario for our school is to have a trained DSL or deputy available on site. It is recognised this may not always be possible, and where this is the case, we will follow the following recommendations:

- a trained DSL or deputy from the school can be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home
- sharing trained DSLs or deputies from our Collaboration Schools (who should be available to be contacted via phone or online video)

Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, the school will recommend a senior leader takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This might include updating and managing access to child protection files, 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 school or college.

Any staff rotas will highlight who the DSLs are, so that all staff know who to make contact with, should the need arise.

It is acknowledged that DSL training is very unlikely to take place during this period (although the option of online training can be explored). 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.

As a school, we are facing unique challenges at this time. Where reasonably possible, the DSL (or deputy) should consider these in a child protection context and reflect them in the child protection policy as appropriate.

**Vulnerable children**

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for the school. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children 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.

Brunswick House DSLs know who their most vulnerable children are and can also offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children's social care support.

All Brunswick House staff will continue to work with and support children' social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This will be especially important during the COVID-19 period.

**Attendance**

Local authorities and schools do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. We have agreed with families whether children in need should be attending school. We then follow up on any child that we were expecting to attend, who does not.

We also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their children and the children subsequently do not attend. When communicating with parents and carers, we will also 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 with us, or discontinues, we will notify their social worker.

We complete a daily department for education online attendance form to enable the DfE to keep a record of children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are attending our school.

**Staff training and safeguarding induction**

All of our staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of KCSIE. The important thing for our staff will be awareness of 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 school, they will be provided with a safeguarding induction. An up to date child protection policy (as per this addendum) will support this process as will part 1 of KCSIE.

The existing school workforce may be directed to 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 safeguarding training and all they will require is a copy of the receiving setting's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

**Additional DfE guidance:**

**Children moving schools/pre-schools, nursery settings**

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. For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the VSH with responsibility for the child. The receiving school/unit should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum the receiving school/unit 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 inclusion leaders/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 will take responsibility.

Whilst schools 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. Further advice about information sharing can be found at paragraphs 76-83 of KCSIE.

**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. If schools are recruiting new staff, they 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.

Where schools are using volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

With regards to staff 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 school temporarily moves to another school to support the care of children. The type of setting on the DBS check, for example a specific category of school, is not a barrier. The same principle applies if childcare workers move to work temporarily in a school setting. The receiving setting should risk assess as they would for a volunteer (see above). Whilst the onus remains on schools to satisfy themselves that someone in their setting has had the required checks, including as required those set out in part 3 of KCSIE, in the above scenario this can be achieved, if the receiving school chooses to, via seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks.

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. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

Schools should continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 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. All referrals received by the TRA will continue to be considered. Where referrals on serious safeguarding matters are received and it is deemed that there is a public interest in doing so consideration will be given as to whether an interim prohibition order (IPO) should be put in place. The TRA will continue to progress all cases but will not schedule any hearings at the current time.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the setting, 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 as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE. The SCR can, if a school chooses, provide the means to log everyone that will be working or volunteering in a school or college on any given day, including any staff who may be on loan from other institutions. The SCR can also, if a school chooses, be used to log details of any risk assessments carried out on volunteers and staff on loan from elsewhere.

**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 they are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, schools should ensure appropriate support is in place for them. Our guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools sets out how mental health issues can bring about changes in a young person's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, and that can be an indication of an underlying problem.

**Online safety in schools**

It will be more important than ever that schools provide a safe environment, including online. Schools should continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect children when they are online on the school's system. Schools should be clear as to who has the technical knowledge to maintain safe IT arrangements. Schools should also consider what their contingency arrangements are if their IT staff become unavailable.

*Brunswick House employs Bode Communications to provide this service. Our IT lead and all his employees are working from home to prevent the likelihood of any of the team becoming unavailable to support the school's network.*

The UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help schools assure themselves that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face.

*The school also makes use of the local authority's online safety team for support.*

**Children and online safety away from school**

All schools should be doing what they reasonably can to keep all of their children safe. In most cases, the majority of children will not be physically attending the 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.

All schools should consider the safety of their children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the school's behaviour policy, the home/school agreement and the school's Acceptable Use policy. This includes acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil/parent relationships and communication including the use of social media. The policies apply equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which are introduced.

The principles set out in the guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings published by the Safer Recruitment Consortium may help schools satisfy themselves that their policies are robust and effective. In some areas schools may also be able to seek support from their local authority when planning online lessons/activities and considering online safety.

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

Any child who is being asked to work online should have very clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting routes back to the school, they should also be signposted to age appropriate practical support from the likes of:

• 	Childline - for support

• 	UK Safer Internet Centre - to report and remove harmful online content

• 	CEOP - for advice on making a report about online abuse

Schools are likely to be in regular contact with parents and carers. Those communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including any sites they might be asked to access and be clear who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Parents and carers may choose to supplement the school online recommendations 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. Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online includes:

• 	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 careers 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

*Brunswick House Primary School has shared all of this information with parents.*