

Child Protection

Annex to Child Protection policy Safeguarding procedures during the Covid-19 Pandemic (version 1.0)

Context

The way schools and colleges 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 the Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or the deputy DSL on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the school website and has been made available to staff by school email. A paper copy is also available in the school office as a reference point for staff working in school providing child care on a particular day.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff and volunteers in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSL are and how staff and volunteers can to speak to them. At St Mark's the DSL (June Grant) or the Deputy DSL (Peter Barfoot) are present in the building whenever childcare is provided. If this is not possible

due to self-isolation in the future alternative arrangements will be made at that time, and all staff made aware of them through the circulation of an updated version of this document with **changes highlighted**.

Safeguarding priority

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children– 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 has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
- the 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 School Position

At present all Kendal schools are providing childcare for those children on their own school roll who need it. There is a plan written ready to move to a hub school system if that situation arises, but this is not foreseen to be the case in at least the short to medium term. If this situation does arise in the future, then this annex will be updated accordingly.

At present all childcare provision at St Mark's is being provided by our own staff, (no external staff or volunteers,) in school (using the Year 6 classroom and toilets and the school hall).

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.

The mechanisms for doing this remain the same as those outlined in our current Child Protection Policy.

A REMINDER TO STAFF: THE FIRST ACTION IN RELATION TO ANY SAFEGUARDING CONCERN SHOULD BE TO CONTACT THE DSL OR DEPUTY DSL WHO IS ON SITE.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Child Protection Policy.

The DSL, or deputy DSL will be available on site during each day the school is open to provide childcare.

If, for any unforeseen circumstance, the DSL or deputy DSL is not on site please contact them via phone:

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for child protection is June Grant

Contact details: email: jgrant@st-marks.cumbria.sch.uk tel: 07840 765145

The deputy designated lead(s) is Peter Barfoot

Contact details: email: head@st-marks.cumbria.sch.uk tel: 07399 422133

Vulnerable children

The Government has defined vulnerable children as including 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. At St Mark's we have additional vulnerable children who fall outside of this bracket, and children who fall into this bracket who are not in any particularly vulnerable position, (in terms of safeguarding,) because of their settled home circumstances.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a Child Protection Plan or are designated Child in Need. 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 school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. (This may not necessarily be the case for 'settled' children who have a social worker.) Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, 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 EHC Plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school place 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.***

Senior leaders in our school, especially the DSL (and Deputy DSL) know who the 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. At St Mark's we are offering, and expect to continue to offer, care to children in this situation.

We will continue to work with social workers assigned to children and families connected to school.

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 home work for pupils while they are at home. Where we are providing for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, we will try to ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Our staff will be aware of the mental health of children and their parents and carers and will contact the DSL or deputy DSL if they have any concerns.

Attendance

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL or deputy DSL will be informed.

The DSL or deputy DSL will attempt to contact the parents by telephone, or by contacting a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will undertake a home visit or ask an appropriate agency to do so. A risk assessment will be carried out before any such visit is made to ensure staff the family are not put at risk.

Where a vulnerable child with a social worker 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 will continue to follow the procedures found in our Child Protection Policy and advise the DSL or deputy DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

REMINDER TO STAFF: THE FIRST ACTION IN RELATION TO ANY SAFEGUARDING CONCERN SHOULD BE TO CONTACT THE DSL OR DEPUTY DSL WHO IS ON SITE.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with the school Allegations Against Staff policy.

Staff training and induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 school closure period, our DSL and deputy DSL are unlikely to receive refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSL and deputy DSL will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training. Staff should be assured that both DSL and deputy DSL attended Level 3 training in the summer of 2019.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting 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

(We do not foresee using volunteers or staff from other schools at St Mark's. This section is included for reference in case this document needs to be updated to allow for this in the future.)

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 our 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 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in 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. Our staff are clear about the school's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school 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 Child Protection 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 cyber-bullying and other online risks and our filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children.

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

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 deputy DSL.

Online safety for those children in childcare at St Mark's

While children are at St Mark's all use of school computers will be supervised, children's personal mobile phones will be handed in when they arrive and returned to them as they leave, and staff will not use their own personal mobile phones while with the children unless in an exceptional circumstance or emergency situation.

New children at the school

Children may join our school 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 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/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, school 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, we will make every effort to have the child in school. If this is not possible the DSL 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.