

Appendix to The Governing Board for the Isle of Wight Education Federation Child Protection policy – version 1.1

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Although attendance at school is required, students and staff needing to isolate and the operational procedures with 'bubble's in schools has changed normal daily routines..

This Appendix to our Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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

Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this appendix. It will be reviewed by our DSL or a 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 shared with and is available to staff.

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 schools – 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 school position

All students from the Isle of Wight Education Federation, are taught n their home school site.

Students are in school unless they are displaying symptoms, of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, have been asked to self-isolate due to being a direct contact of a positive case, or are unwell with a non-COVID-19 related illness.

DSLs will monitor all vulnerable students who are absent from school. Children subject to Child Protection plans will get regular contact and all other vulnerable children will be contacted weekly via Google Classroom, telephone or email.

Safeguarding partners' advice

We continue to work closely with our three safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this appendix is consistent with their advice (Isle of Wight Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership of Clinical Commissioning Groups and Hampshire Constabulary). 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 current advice is below.

As part of our contingency planning we have developed a three-phased approach, with each phase based on having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen.

We are currently operating in phase one. To contextualise this, we are 'business as usual but doing it differently'. All of our statutory timescales for visits and meetings remain the same but we are using technology to ensure we see children and families through digital means – WhatsApp, Teams and a number of other similar approaches.

The service is fully operational, and we continue to operate as near to normal as we can.

A small number of face to face visits are being undertaken, where we know our staff can safely socially distance themselves. This is usually in relation to urgent child protection work.

We will continue to update our partners should the situation change and we are required to amend our delivery of services. I have set out below our current operational expectations.

Children's Reception team (CRT) and Multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH) continue to receive contacts and referrals in the usual way and to respond to these within statutory timescales.

The Out of Hours Service continues to operate in the usual way, picking up calls and referrals over weekends, at evenings and on bank holidays. As with daytime staff, out of hours staff are being advised not to visit families and children face to face unless necessary and to carry out assessments and visits remotely where possible.

Further information is available in a letter from Stuart Ashley, Assistant Director, Children and Families, Isle of Wight Council - 9 April 2020

Roles and responsibilities

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

If it is not possible to have one of the Federation DSLs on site due to staff needing to isolate, a trained DSL will be available.

The safeguarding mobiles held by the two main DSLs are below:

CC safeguarding mobile: 07760 666 305

MC and VI safeguarding mobile: 07712 306956

The DSL details are as in Child Protection Policy.

The Safeguarding Governor will still be fulfilling their role in a virtual capacity.

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with EHC plans.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan, those who are looked after by the local authority and those considered to be a 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. We are also including children who are open to Early Help and Young Carers as vulnerable children.

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.

A list of all vulnerable children is provided to the Local Authority.

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.

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 school, 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, a deputy or a senior leader will attempt to contact the parents by telephone in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL, a deputy DSL or senior leader 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 does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

Reporting concerns about children or staff

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Child Protection procedures and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school. MyConcerns should continue to be used as normal.

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 volunteers. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy.

Staff training and induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLs 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. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers#designated-safeguarding-leads-dsls>) .

In addition to this we have a nominated Safeguarding Governor who attends the same level safeguarding training as the DSLs.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

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 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 and 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 cyberbullying 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 and E-Safety 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 appendix and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

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 our 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 need 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.