

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – COVID-19 ADDENDUM**

**APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: September 2020**

**POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: when further guidance is received from DfE**

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<b>Please note:</b> The Designated Safeguarding Leads are available either on school site or remotely.	

As school is now fully reopening our usual Child Protection/Safeguarding policy applies. However, as a response to COVID-19 and to ensure we are compliant with government guidance and Health and Safety law, other arrangements are in place and we have communicated this to the members of the school community.

We have a robust risk assessment in place and will continue to regularly review this and update it as required. This review process will consider whether our current plans and protective measures are:

- Effective
- Working as planned
- Updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice

If, as a result of future lockdown arrangements, the school is subject to further closure, our previous arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils will be reinstated.

The interim safeguarding/child protection guidance is intended to supplement (and not replace) Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 (KCSIE) and to provide clarity on the processes to be followed whilst educational institutions are partially or fully closed and operating differently compared to their normal processes.

St Mary's School has therefore reviewed its policy following this additional guidance and this will form an addendum to the current policy. Please read and understand the changes the school has put in place during this time. This will continue to be reviewed and updated as further guidance is issued.

'the best interests of children must continue to come first.'

The welfare of the children in our care continues to be a priority but in the current situation we need to monitor the children in different ways. This could be by their engagement in lessons, through phone conversations with either the pupils or the parents or by the work or lack of work they are producing. Keep in touch with your pupils.

Any concerns, in line with the current school Safeguarding Policy should be handled in the normal way. Your concerns should be raised immediately by phone to a DSL/Deputy DSL.

### **Critical/Key worker children**

The school (currently Lower School) is open to support families of critical/key workers. We are not accepting any other children into the setting to care for them. Our decision is based on limiting numbers within the setting at any one time but also on ensuring our children are within an environment where they feel safe and secure, with adults they know around them.

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

- the current Child Protection Policy (with the schools Safeguarding Policy)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- Behaviour policy;
- 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

### **Current context / statutory framework**

Schools have been instructed to close, although 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, we 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.

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. Currently the school has no pupils who are deemed as vulnerable under the guidance definition. If this position changes, St Mary's school will follow the procedure which is noted in this policy.

For vulnerable children, existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet need. Vulnerable children will be risk assessed with other professionals to decide whether children will be safer at home or in school and decisions will be made on individual cases. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support children in care.

Children with an EHC plan will be assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. If it is felt they should remain at home, a plan will be agreed and this could include carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. It is recognised that many children with EHC plans can safely remain at home. During the closure period we will work with the local authority and parents / carers to produce a personalised plan that includes:

- Short term interim targets that have been agreed with the child and parent / carers
- Any agreed support to be provided by the team supporting the child (school, LA Education or SEND staff, Social Worker, Health professional)
- Regular reviews with the child and parent / carers

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. The school 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.

### **Concerned for Pupils**

These are pupils who are not deemed as 'vulnerable' but who we monitor regularly within the normal school environment. At this current time we need to ensure that there is still a higher level of engagement with those pupils. The Designated Safeguarding Lead's will be highlighting those pupils with you to ensure that contact is maintained with them throughout this difficult period of time.

### **Records and information sharing**

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. St Mary's school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school 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.

### **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 closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

### **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 school policies to reflect the current arrangements to ensure they cover online / remote learning. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

### **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. When setting work for pupils it is

important that considerations are given. For some pupils, who have less supportive home lives the structure and support of school has been taken away. They may feel isolated, alone and require further support.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils. We need to ensure that we are looking for signs when working with, and talking to the pupils to provide early help to families and pupils where necessary. Any concerns staff have should be reported in the usual manner. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

### **Online safety (for children away from school)**

At St Mary's school we recognise that the majority of pupils 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. We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them to do this. Particularly useful websites 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.

It is important that parents make the school aware of any concerns they may have about the online activity of their child, or any particular vulnerability they may have in this respect.