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| newLDBS%20LOGO%20 | **COVID-19 SAFEGUARDING- ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS**London Diocesan Board for SchoolsMarch 2020 |

**Safeguarding update April 3rd 2020 for schools during the Covid-19 closure period**

The key document remains the DfE <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

Each LA will be also be providing schools with local safeguarding advice and contact details.

**NB** During this period the key safeguarding principles continue to apply: (DfE)

* the best interests of children must always continue to come first
* if anyone in a school has a safeguarding concern about a child, they should act as they ordinarily would, immediately if the child is in danger
* The DSL or deputy DSL should be available. If not in school they should be contactable at all times and their details need to be shared with those in school
* unsuitable people must not be allowed to enter the children’s workforce and/or gain access to children
* children should continue to be protected when they are online

# **There are 3 key points arising from the documentation- summarised further below**

1. Update your Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and ensure all staff and governors are aware of these changes
2. Write an on-line learning policy and share with staff and parents, including conduct
3. continue to work with and support children’s social workers to help protect vulnerable children

This document provides an overview of

* School clusters
* The Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
* Designated Safeguarding leads and training
* Rota staff and new staff and induction
* Attendance
* Mental health
* Online safety

(from the DfE document, Andrew Hall and info shared by schools)

**School clusters:**

Additional DfE advice on clusters and safeguarding will be provided for schools in due course. In the meantime, the DfE guidance relating to school clusters states that:

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)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2) and the DfE guidance continue to apply.

In particular, **the school 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**.

Advice is similar to current expectations in that the schools should share the following types of documents and details:

* EHC Plans
* Child-in-Need plans
* Name of social worker
* Details of Looked After Children
* Record the staff who are on-site every day (rota staff do not need a new DBS- however, schools are providing rota staff with a letter stating that they are employed by the school and have a DBS)

## 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, read more in the [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people) for further information. Ensuring the safety of these children is a key priority.

Please contact your LA with concerns you have, as you ordinarily would. Children with a social worker should attend school unless it has been agreed, in consultation with the child’s social worker and family, that this is not in the best interests of the child.

Senior leaders and/or DSLs have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children’s social care support.

**Child Protection and safeguarding policy**

It is likely that your current policy will not accurately reflect new arrangements in response to COVID-19. It is important schools (led by a DSL or Dep DSL) review and revise their child protection policy and keep it under review as circumstances continue to evolve.

Rather than re-write the policy, you may wish to add a COVID-19 annex that summaries any key COVID-19 related changes.

Include in this:

* any updated advice received from the local 3 safeguarding partners
* any updated advice received from your LA regarding children with EHC plans, the local authority designated officer and children’s social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need
* what staff (who may not be your staff if on a rota with other schools) and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child
* the continued importance of all staff and volunteers acting and acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns- how they have been made aware of any changes to arrangements, for example.
* who and where the DSL and DDSLs are/will be and how to contact them if not on the school premises
* what staff 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 remain and indicate how to respond to any such concerns)
* the importance of staff working with children’s social workers and the LA virtual head of school for looked-after and previously looked-after children
* the school’s arrangements for supporting pupils who do not meet the ‘vulnerable’ definition but who the school, through its own monitoring, deems vulnerable
* the school’s arrangements for keeping pupils not attending school safe and how they will monitor their safety and respond to concerns e.g. regular phone calls, meeting to receive food parcels
* how the school is supporting pupils to keep safe online and how it will respond to concerns.
* how the school will manage any report of peer on peer abuse (Part 5 KCSiE)

**It is important that all staff, governors and volunteers are aware of the new policy /changes to the policy and are kept up to date as it is revised. The revised policy should continue to be made available publicly.**

**Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)**

If at all possible it is best to have the DSL or DDSL on site. However, this may not be possible in COVID-19 circumstances. If not possible, consider the following and ensure this is clear in your updated annex to the CP and safeguarding policy:

* a trained DSL or deputy from the school to be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example working from home
* sharing trained DSLs or deputies with other schools (who should also be available to

 be contacted via phone or online video)

In addition to one of the above options, the DfE recommends 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.

**Whatever the scenario, it is important that all school and college staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL or deputy and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them.**

DSL training: 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. It is likely that online courses will become available over the coming months but they are not an immediate priority.

**Rota staff and new staff and induction**

* Any relocated staff will require training in order to comply to site specific arrangements including how to log a concern. (Some clusters have agreed a cluster concern form and arrangements for informing the pupils’ school DSL)
* Any new staff starting after Easter will require the usual full checks and induction. The SCR will need to be updated as usual.

# **Attendance** (you may wish to add some of this to your CP/sg policy annex)

* Schools need to complete the Key Worker and vulnerable attendance register and any additional info requested by the LA
* If possible please also email Leanne Gowar at the LDBS weekly with this information (Leanne.gowar@london.anglican.org)
* Regularly confirm emergency numbers (including staff) particularly if these have changed as a result of the crisis

# **Mental Health**

It is likely that following the sudden demands placed on schools in planning for COVID-19, schools will need to prioritise the mental well-being of all members of the school community on return to the normal day to day running of a school.

This is likely to include supporting the community in

* aspects of bereavement – the LDBS has updated their guidance on this which is available on the website)
* adjusting from long periods of isolation
* adjusting to normal life following a traumatic period

LA Educational Psychology departments and counselling services will be able to support schools in this. In addition, the bereavement guidance (LDBS) provides a range of excellent websites to support school leaders in moving forwards. The local clergy are also extremely skilled in supporting school leaders and community members in dealing with these aspects.

# **Online safety**

Children and staff will be spending more time than normal online. Schools need to be particularly aware of safeguarding concerns that may arise from online learning and behaviour and to alert pupils, parents and staff of what to look out for. Examples of inappropriate and criminal online behaviour have already increased and staff need to alert pupils and parents to these where possible.

Schools must continue to follow their current on-line safety procedures and not be tempted to use unsecured sites. School leaders need to carefully consider which apps they will use for face to face meetings, training and learning. Some apps (e.g. US based) do not meet GDPR requirements. Please contact your Grow DPO link and they can advise you.

If images of films are being shared, look beyond the child – does the home look safe, clean and does the child look happy? If you have a concern then report it to the DSL in the usual manner.

Similarly, you may wish to contact vulnerable families in this way (or by phone if not possible) to offer support and to speak to pupils themselves. This will help you to gauge pupils’ well-being and safety.

Online teaching should reflect ‘in-house’ teaching:

* Resources should be appropriate
* Relationship and conduct should be professional
* Communication should be through approved channels

Be aware that video call and phone calls are more intimate than discussions would be in school. With this is mind, it must be stressed to staff that they must

* maintain professional standards at all times and be even more aware of the possibility of allegations around grooming.
* communicate with pupils during approved working times only (i.e. the school day).

Schools may wish to clarify their expectations for online teaching and learning in a policy which can be shared with staff, parents and pupils. This policy can also outline the importance of only using reputable organisations and people who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted.