



## **Safeguarding at The Sacred Heart Language College**

### **Annex 1 to our Safeguarding policy in response to school closure re. Covid 19**

#### **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 our Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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## **Policy Updates**

This is version 1 of this annex. It will be reviewed by our designated safeguarding lead (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 our school website here and has been made available to staff by adding to our school SharePoint portal and via e mail.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff and volunteers can contact them.

## **Safeguarding priority**

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – 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**

The school is currently open to pupils from key worker families, those who are deemed to be vulnerable and have an allocated social worker and those who have an education and health care plan. Each day is staffed by a small number of staff on a rotating bases to allow for social distancing measures to be enforced.

All staff in attendance are existing members of staff at the school. They have all completed regular safeguarding training and are aware of the risks and know how to act if they have concerns.

## **Safeguarding partners' advice**

We continue to work closely with key 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.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

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

Our DSL and deputy DSL are available during the school day. If for any reason it was not possible for them to be contacted then the Director of Studies for each year group will act in association with their senior link and Deputy Headteacher.

**The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for child protection is Mrs R Sorohan**

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**The deputy designated lead is Ms D Capp**

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## **Vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those students with education or health 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.

Vulnerable children who have a social worker are encouraged to attend school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Each family has been contacted to ensure that they are aware that this is available to them. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will ensure that the social worker is aware. We will continue to fulfil our safeguarding responsibilities by regularly contacting those families and talking to parents and pupils.

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 come to school 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. Most of our pupils with EHC plans can safely remain at home to continue their learning. Staff will continue to be mindful of meeting their needs when setting the work for home learning. The SENCO will make regular contact with these families to ensure these pupils needs are being addressed at this time.

Senior leaders in our school, including the DSL, Deputy DSL, SENCO and Directors of Study know who our most vulnerable children are. In addition, they have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

We will continue to work with our pupils' social workers and the local authority to meet the needs of these pupils.

We will continue to encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a 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 pupils' work where they are at home. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Our staff will be aware of the mental health of children and their parents 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 deputy DSL will be informed.

The DSL, Deputy or Director of Studies will attempt to contact the parents.

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 acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff 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.

We are mindful that the varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not negate or reduce the risks that children may face. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our agreed protocols and the Local Authority Designated Officer is informed.

## **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. However, the opportunity to undertake online update training will be explored.

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 to join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

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 cause for concern
- there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
- the individual remains suitable to work with children.

## **Safer recruitment 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.

We are aware on any given day, which staff are on our school site and the appropriate checks have been carried out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain our single central record (SCR) during these measures.

### **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 and anti-bullying policy.

### **Online safety**

We are mindful that pupils 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 safeguard our pupils and staff whilst in school.

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 report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

### **New children at the school**

Our school is currently only open to pupils from our school. If pupils do join us from another setting then these guidelines will be reviewed. If this is the case 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. 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 needs to know the information.

### **Supporting children not in school**

Where the DSL has identified a pupil to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive additional pastoral support in school, they will ensure that the Director of Studies maintain an oversight of support for the pupil.

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