

Sheringham Woodfields School

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING INCORPORATING CHILD PROTECTION

Appendix 31 – Safeguarding arrangements in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Background

Due to the changes in provision and the emergent role of schools in the current climate, this appendix to our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy details our specific response to the challenges of keeping our students safe in this challenging time.

Policy Guidance

In developing this appendix, we have considered the guidance provided by The Department of Education (DfE) and Norfolk Local Authority (LA) who we continue to work closely with to maintain effective safeguarding and child protection services. We have also used our knowledge and understanding of the unique circumstances of the students in the Sheringham Woodfields School community to tailor our response and delivery.

Statutory Guidance

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' will continue to be the legislative framework that governs our responses. Although we are operating in circumstances where it is very definitely not 'business as usual', the following safeguarding principles remain unchanged:

- the best interests of children will always continue to come first
- if anyone in school has a safeguarding concern about any child they will continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy will always be available in person, by phone or email
- we will ensure that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online
- we will ensure that any new ways of working in response to COVID-19 do not weaken our approach to safeguarding or undermine our child protection policy.

Updates to safeguarding practice

These updates are based on advice from government, local authority, social workers and safeguarding partners and uses our local knowledge of needs to identify our most vulnerable students and those who we have specific statutory reporting obligations for (e.g. LAC, CIN).

The updates cover the following circumstances;

- **What staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child?**

We have shared with staff that the usual response to child welfare concerns remains in place i.e. they report their concern to a DSL either through the online pro-forma or by speaking directly with a DSL in person or by phone. Furthermore, we have reiterated the requirement to act on any concerns in a timely manner.

- **DSL arrangements**

We have arranged for the DSL's to maintain a responsive service. Where school is open and students are attending, there will be a DSL on site. Where school is closed (or open but no students are attending), a DSL will be available by phone or email during normal school hours.

Additionally, named DSL's will continue to monitor calls and emails during weekends and holidays for the duration of these Coronavirus (COVID-19) measures.

- **The continued importance for school to work with and support children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children**

Our lead DSL (Michael Smith) will liaise directly with social work teams and staff from the Virtual School. Social workers and the staff at the virtual school have the contact details to ensure this process works effectively.

- **Peer on peer abuse - given the very different circumstances schools and colleges are operating in a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims (the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE should continue to inform any revised approach)**

We will respond to any peer on peer safeguarding concerns situationally. We do not have any active cases or specific concerns at this time in relation to peer on peer abuse.

- **What staff and volunteers 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 will continue to support how a school responds to any such concerns)**

We have shared with all staff that the normal practices for reporting such concerns continues to apply i.e. report immediately to a DSL using the mechanisms already in place.

- **Any arrangements to support children the school are concerned about who do not meet the 'vulnerable' definition**

We have identified a number of students who are vulnerable but unknown to social work teams and we have shared this information with the Local Authority. We have taken precautions to ensure we have regular ongoing contact with these students and that any phone contacts or home visits are recorded and shared with the DSL's.

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

We have shared the details of these temporary arrangements and amendments to our normal safeguarding practices and mechanisms to all staff by email. We have highlighted this appendix on our school website.

Training for DSLs

During this time a trained DSL will continue to be available on site or, if working from home, can be contacted via phone and these contact details have been shared with all staff and parents via the school website.

External DSL training is very unlikely to take place at this time therefore for the period covering COVID-19 measures a DSL who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL even if they miss their refresher training.

Attendance

We do not need to complete our usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. However, where we have arranged with families or social workers for specific students to attend – and they subsequently do not attend we will follow this up in the usual way.

The DfE has introduced a daily online attendance form to keep a record of children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are attending school. This allows for a record of attendance for safeguarding purposes and allows schools to provide accurate, up-to-date data to the department on the number of children taking up places.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of KCSIE. The important thing for these staff will be awareness of any new local arrangements so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter the school, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. An up to date child protection policy and part 1 of KCSIE.

Children moving schools

If one of our current students moves to a new setting, we will do whatever we reasonably can to provide the new school, college or other setting with any relevant welfare and child protection information. Likewise, we will do as much as we reasonably can to ensure we arrange to receive safeguarding information from previous schools for any new students joining our school during this time.

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.

We have put a temporary halt to recruitment, if this changes we will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for our school, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of KCSIE. 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.

Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

We will continue to follow our legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. We must continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

Mental health & Wellbeing

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. We will aim to ensure that all teachers are aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work that is sent home.

When providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Support for students in the current circumstances will include existing provision in the school from specialist staff or support services. However, this may be delivered in different ways, for example over the phone as per our local arrangement with the Benjamin Foundation.

Online safety in schools

Parents have received periodic advice from us with regard to online safety in the form of direct support, newsletters or other written advice. For example, we have offered advice on how to talk to their child about online safety and how to report online concerns.

We have shared information signposting families to appropriate services such as;

- <https://www.childline.org.uk/> - for support
- <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/> - to report and remove harmful online content
- <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> - for advice on reporting online abuse
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> - National Crime Agency advice to stay safe online

We will remain in regular contact with parents and carers during this time and therefore can reinforce the importance of children being safe online as necessary.

We will continue to have access to our IT technician during these arrangements to maintain the safety of the school technology infrastructure.

Operation Encompass

This is a service that directly connects the police with schools to ensure better outcomes for children who are subject or witness to police-attended incidents of domestic abuse. Being made aware of these incidents in a timely manner allows us to provide support within the school environment

which means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

This service will continue to operate during these measures and the lead DSL will liaise with police on a planned response in all cases where this is appropriate and necessary.

If you are subject to domestic abuse you can contact the following;

- In an emergency phone 999
- If non-emergency contact your local neighbour policing teams
- visit <https://www.gov.uk/report-domestic-abuse>
- Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge 0808 200 0247
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327 www.mensadviceline.org.uk