

# COVID-19 School closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection



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**‘Be the best that you can be!’**

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## Context

From 20th March 2020 parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response - who absolutely need to attend.

Schools and all childcare providers were asked to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

## Key contacts

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## Vulnerable children

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.

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 be offered a school or college place 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. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

**Hampton Primary Partnership (HPP)** will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children's social workers and the local authority Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) for children looked-after and previously looked-after. The lead person for this will be: **Claire Tester (HISN) and Jon James (HJS)**.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and **HPP** will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, **HPP** or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

**HPP** will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

## Attendance monitoring

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

**HPP** and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – **HPP** will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. **HPP** will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.

To support the above, **HPP** will, when communicating with parents/carers confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, **HPP** will notify their social worker.

**HPP** will complete the Government's [daily online attendance form](#) and supply any information regarding attendance requested by Achieving for Children.

## Designated Safeguarding Lead

HPP has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL on each site (HISN and HJS)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: **Claire Tester (HISN) and Jon James (HJS)**

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is: **Helen Lockey and Melissa Talbot**

The optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case a trained DSL (or deputy) will be available to be contacted via phone or online video - for example when working from home.

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume 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.

It is important that all school name staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day staff on site will be made aware of that person is and how to speak to them.

The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings, which can be done remotely.

## Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should report the concern to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). If there is a requirement to make a notification to the ELT whilst away from school, this should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the ELT.

Concerns regarding the Executive Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors: **Sej Bhabra**.

## Safeguarding training and induction

DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID19 virus.

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.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The DSL will communicate with staff 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 HPP, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of HPP's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

### 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, HPP will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes, including relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019).

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.

Where HPP are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as 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 work in regulated activity.

HPP will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019).

HPP will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral'. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk)

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current National emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, HPP will continue to ensure that all staff, volunteers and essential visitors sign in and out of the premises and will continue to keep the Single Central Record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019).

## Online safety

HPP's Online Safety Lead is: **Claire Tester (HISN) and Jon James (HJS)**. If the Online Safety Lead is unavailable, advice can be sought from Peter Cowley (AfC Adviser for Online Services and Safety).

HPP will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect pupils when they are online on the school's IT systems or recommended resources.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police.

HPP will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

## Supporting children not in school

HPP is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils.

Where the DSL has identified a pupil to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, we will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that pupil. All contacts with the pupil must be recorded.

The communication plans can include: remote contact; phone contact; door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded. HPP and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight) and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and any communications to families.

HPP recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers at HPP will take this into consideration when setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

## Supporting children in school

HPP is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils. HPP will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish.

The ELT will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

HPP will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

HPP will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each pupil.

Where HPP has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – we will discuss them immediately with our School Improvement Partner (SIP)/Link Adviser

## Children moving schools

If any pupils are temporarily attending other schools or transfer to another school, HPP will ensure that they provide the receiving school with all relevant welfare and child protection information.

Any change of school for children looked after will be led and managed by the Virtual School Headteacher with responsibility for the child.

HPP continues to have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR and are aware that they do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

## Mental health

HPP is aware that negative experiences and distressing life events such as the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents.

HPP ensure that appropriate support is in place for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children whilst on site.

HPP will continue to offer support to pupils who are not on site, this will be done remotely or by phone.

## Peer on peer abuse

HPP recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

HPP will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

Concerns and actions must be recorded using the school's procedure and appropriate referrals made.