

The Limes Primary Academy safeguarding and child protection policy
Annex 6 – COVID-19 school closure arrangements for safeguarding
31st March 2020; updated 1st May 2020



Key contacts

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Introduction

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked to keep their children at home, and schools were requested to offer childcare only for those children who are vulnerable, and for those who are offspring of critical workers who cannot otherwise be safely cared for at home. For the purposes of this policy, ‘vulnerable’ was defined by DfE as:

- those children who have a social worker, including children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority; it can also include those who have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans
- those children who have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children’s social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision – this might include children on the edge of receiving support from children’s social care services, adopted children, or those who are young carers, and others at the provider and local authority discretion.

From 1st June 2020, schools are expected to welcome back groups of children to school for the purposes of education; namely, those in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. REACH2 Academy Trust has implemented a rigorous and robust risk management process to ensure that our school is only open when it has been deemed safe to do so. **Consequently, this revision of the safeguarding policy annex will be implemented and becomes applicable at the point where our school is assessed to be safe to open beyond its current childcare provision.**

For children in the year groups who are returning to school, our main safeguarding and child protection policy applies, with which this policy annex is in full accord. Key areas have been summarised throughout this annex, but the school’s main policy should be referred to for further detail and guidance, if required.

Whilst the way in which our school is run from 1st June 2020 will be different to usual, the following principles remain central to the safeguarding of our pupils:

- the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in a school or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy should be available

- it is essential 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

Childcare provision

There is a continuing expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker but who are not in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 will attend the childcare provision in school, so long as they or a member of their household is not shielding or clinically vulnerable. Parents of vulnerable pupils will be encouraged by our leaders to send their children to school. In circumstances where a parent of a vulnerable child still does not want to bring their child to school, the social worker and the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will continue to explore the reasons for this directly with parents. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, these will be discussed with them following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Pupils with an EHC plan have been risk assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents to decide whether they needed to be offered a place in childcare in order to meet their needs, or whether they could safely have their needs met at home. As our school opens to welcome more children back, these risk assessments will now be reviewed, in line with the latest Government and DfE guidance, to ascertain whether any pupils currently staying at home can now come to school as their needs can be as safely or more safely met at school than at home.

It is recognised that many pupils not in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 are considered to be vulnerable for reasons that are not included in the criteria above. We will continue to put in place additional support for these pupils, as detailed below. The DfE has given schools the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support, which has been discussed and agreed with parents as required, and will continue to be offered to vulnerable pupils not in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 at the discretion of school leaders.

Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements

A minimum of one person from the safeguarding team, as listed above, will be designated to be responsible for safeguarding of pupils from our school, including those who are currently learning from home. They will typically be available face to face or, in exceptional circumstances, remotely. Staff working in the childcare provision and working with Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 pupils will be informed of the name and location of the designated safeguarding person on duty, and their contact details (phone and email) will be shared, as required.

In the event that DSL training expires for any of the above named staff members, the Trust safeguarding team will signpost an online DSL training course that can be used in lieu of face to face training during this period. The Deputy Director of Education (DDoE) and Trust safeguarding team will arrange for additional DSL capacity in the event that the DSL and Deputies named above are unable to provide adequate DSL cover.

The DSL and Deputy DSLs will continue to liaise closely with the Local Authority, Social Work teams and the Virtual School, as applicable, to support vulnerable pupils. Any professionals' meetings, i.e. core groups, child protection conferences, will be attended remotely where the facility from the Local Authority and school allows; in the event that this is not possible, a written report will be submitted. Where a vulnerable child who has a Social Worker does not attend childcare provision, the child's Social Worker will be informed.

Supporting pupils in school

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of our pupils. We will continue to be a safe space for all pupils to attend and flourish. Senior Leaders will ensure that appropriate staff are on site, both for the operation of childcare provision and for welcoming pupils in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 back to school. Our staff to pupil ratio numbers are in line with Government and DfE requirements, as well as being appropriate to the number, age and understanding of the pupils who are attending. This includes staff designated to undertake First Aid, and those supporting pupils with EHC plans.

To promote good physical health, we will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on maximum safe group size, how to implement social distancing, and continue to follow the advice from Public Page 3 of 6 Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID-19. The specific measures we are taking to promote good physical health, in line with DfE and Public Health England guidance, is detailed in our school risk assessment, completed as part of the REAch2 risk management process.

We recognise that the current circumstances may affect a child's mental health, and that this may be displayed in a number of different ways. We will be alert to any changes in a pupil's behaviour, presentation and mood, and will support them, in collaboration with their parents, to manage any worries or anxieties that they may have. Where necessary, bespoke additional input from school staff or from specialist staff/support services will be arranged.

Where a pupil is expected to attend childcare provision or is expected to return to class in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 and does not do so, appropriate enquiries will be made to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts, in line with the attendance policy. Parents are requested to inform the school as soon as possible if their child is not attending childcare provision or school on a day that had been previously agreed.

Safeguarding pupils who are not in school

To support and safeguard pupils known to be vulnerable whilst they are not attending school or childcare provision, the following procedures have been put in place, as a minimum:

- Review all pupils on vulnerable pupil list and identify those for whom school closure and a lack of contact with school staff would pose most risk, allocating each child to a member of the DSL team
- Ensure pupil contact details are up to date and are remotely accessible by all DSLs
- Ensure all DSLs have remote access to email and CPOMS.
- Issue letter/communication to parent and any allocated workers of each pupil at risk to explain DSL contact taking place during school closure
- Make phone contact with each pupil at risk regularly (no less than weekly) to check safety and wellbeing; where possible, speaking to the child not just the parent. N.B. the number of weekly contacts will be determined by the DSL based on a risk assessment of the pupil's current circumstances.
- Record a summary of conversation on CPOMS, which is then circulated to DSL team via email
- Monitor CPOMS and emails daily, and respond as required in line with main safeguarding policy and Local Authority thresholds

These procedures will continue throughout the period of childcare provision, including times designated as school holidays. During school holidays, communication to parents and pupils and record keeping will be undertaken by the DSL who is 'on call' for the school on the given day as detailed above, to allow adequate opportunity for other members of the DSL team to have time off of work.

Where contact with vulnerable pupils not attending childcare provision or returning to class in Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 has been difficult to achieve or maintain, every effort will be made to safely contact parents through all available means of school communication, i.e. phone, text, email. Staff are requested to not make home visits due to the risk of infection. If there are concerns about the welfare of a pupil where contact has not been established, we will follow our Local Authority Social Care referral processes.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for our pupils, and that the current circumstances surrounding restriction of movement may affect the mental health of pupils not attending school, as well as their parents. All staff will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work to be completed at home, and in any other communications with parents and pupils. Any concerns for either parents or pupils related to mental health will be recorded as per the guidance above and below.

These procedures will be reviewed by the DSL and Deputy DSLs regularly, and no less than fortnightly. Any substantial changes to processes will be updated in the monthly policy review (see below)

Reporting a concern

As more pupils return to school, either to childcare or to classes in eligible year groups, we recognise that new safeguarding concerns may arise that have previously been unknown due to the lack of contact between pupils and school staff. The DSL and Deputy DSLs are alert to this risk; they will provide suitable safeguarding update training to staff prior to pupils returning to ensure that any potential safeguarding concerns are recognised and reported, and they will support staff to 'check in' with pupils as they return to school and thereafter on a regular basis.

If staff have a safeguarding concern about a child, they should follow the usual process as per the main safeguarding and child protection policy. Any concern should be recorded on CPOMS, categorised as a 'concern' and the DSL team alerted. In the event that staff working remotely do not have access to the necessary device or systems for recording their concern, they must contact the named person responsible for safeguarding on the day in question via phone in order to make a verbal report. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay; where a concern is urgent and high risk, a verbal report must be made first, either in person or via phone, and followed up in writing as soon as possible thereafter. CPOMS and emails will be monitored by the DSL team regularly, no less than daily, and actions will be completed and recorded in line with the main safeguarding policy and Local Authority thresholds.

We recognise that incidents of peer on peer abuse can still occur during this time. Due to the need for smaller group sizes and social distancing, pupils may also need to interact with others with whom they are not familiar, and use different parts of the school building with which they are not accustomed. All staff will be alert to the potential risks of peer on peer abuse, and our school risk assessment for peer on peer abuse has been updated accordingly. In such an event, guidance contained within Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and from the main safeguarding and child protection policy will be followed, and staff will report any incidents in line with the school's reporting procedures, as outlined above.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, the guidance contained within Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and Annex 5 of our main safeguarding and child protection policy still applies. Any concern of this nature must be reported directly to the Headteacher; if he/she is away from school, this should be done verbally via phone and followed up in writing as per the Headteacher's direction. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, this should be reported to the school's Deputy Director of Education and to the Chair of Governors.

Online safety

We will continue to provide a safe environment for pupils, which includes any activities undertaken online. Our online filtering system restricts access to unsuitable material. When electronic devices are in use by pupils in the school building, this will take place under appropriate supervision from adults, in line with our Acceptable Use Agreements and online safety policy.

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 will be dealt with as per the main safeguarding and child protection policy, and where appropriate referrals will be made in line with Local Authority thresholds. Staff must only use approved methods or platforms to communicate with parents and pupils, and a record of all interactions must be kept, with a record of the date, time, length and purpose/nature of the interaction. Where this

communication was on the phone, the record is expected to be created in line with the school's processes for recording parental phone calls; in the event of an email communication, a retained copy of the email within the sender's email account is sufficient. If any communication with parents or pupils relates to or indicates a safeguarding concern, the usual safeguarding reporting procedures, as outlined above, must be followed.

Our school continues to offer home learning for pupils not currently at school via Tapestry. Any staff member who is communicating with parents and/or pupils on this platform has been issued with guidance regarding safe, acceptable and professional behaviour, in line with our school's code of conduct.

Advice for parents regarding keeping their child safe online while at home has been shared via our website and social media, which will be regularly updated to ensure it remains high profile for our parents.

Staff and volunteer recruitment

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable to work with children are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. Recruitment of staff and volunteers in our school is expected to remain at a minimum during this period; however, where recruitment is required and necessary, we will continue to follow the requirements set out within Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and our recruitment policy. Under no circumstances will a member of staff or volunteer upon whom the appropriate checks have not been completed be left to work unsupervised with a child or children.

Safeguarding induction and training

All current staff have received safeguarding induction and safeguarding training in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and our main safeguarding policy. Where new staff start work with us during the period of partial school closure, they will be provided with, as a minimum, the main safeguarding and child protection policy, a copy of this annex, and Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) In addition, they will be provided with an induction session arranged by the DSL. This includes the induction training provided by the School Business Manager (a trained ADSL) via a Zoom Call, additional training through Flick learning and a briefing by the headteacher (DSL). They will also be invited to weekly staff meetings via zoom, through which additional safeguarding updates are distributed.

Hub arrangements

As per previous REAch2 guidance, the principle of a 'school hub' would see a group of schools who are geographically close with a named school being allocated to house the provision of childcare for 'local children'. This would involve two or more schools working together to provide one childcare facility on one school site, thus reducing the immense demand on individual schools but still enabling the provision of a childcare facility within the local community. This may take place between schools from within REAch2, or it may involve joining with schools from outside of the Trust. In either case, the following principles, in addition to those already outlined in this annex, apply:

- each school within the hub will name a DSL or Deputy DSL to be responsible for safeguarding of their pupils on each day, which will be communicated with all staff at the beginning of each day
- staff working at the hub will be given sufficient access to each school's system for reporting safeguarding concerns, through the use of the written concern forms, available in the staffroom and reporting this to the DSL on site, who will contact the DSL from the other school if required.
- the responsible DSL from each school will monitor their safeguarding system i.e. CPOMS and email regularly, no less than daily
- Headteachers of staff attending the hub will confirm in writing that their staff have full safer recruitment checks completed; this may be achieved by sharing safer recruitment policies and receiving written confirmation that staff have had all required checks (non-REAch2 schools) or by sharing relevant information from the school's SCR (REAch2 schools)

- staff attending at the hub will show school-based photo ID on arrival, which will be cross referenced with the staff rota
- a daily register will be completed and the home school will be informed of their children's attendance
- social workers will be informed of children attending the hub by their own school

Local Authority arrangements

For more information regarding Suffolk's response to Covid-19, refer to <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Safeguarding support

The REAch2 safeguarding team will provide remote support to schools, DSLs and other school leaders to enable safeguarding to operate effectively. This may involve secure remote access to files and record keeping for the purposes of quality assurance, guidance and direction. Regular DSL forums will also take place with a member of the Trust safeguarding team to offer guidance and support, to which all DSLs and Deputy DSLs will be invited.

Review

This annex will be reviewed by REAch2's Head of Safeguarding, and then by the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, on the first of each month throughout the period of partial school closure, or more frequently if updates from the DfE require. This will include any information received from Suffolk Local Authority safeguarding children partnership, Social Care, Virtual School, and the Designated Officer.