

HADLEIGH INFANT & NURSERY SCHOOL



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE 2020-2021

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Version History Log for this document

Version	Date Published	Details of key changes from previous version
2	January 2021	Changes made to reflect current lockdown restrictions / expectations
1	March 2020	New Policy created linked to school closure

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1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is an addition to our existing Child Protection Policy and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to COVID-19.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- HINS Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020);
- HINS Behaviour policy;
- HINS Staff Code of Conduct;
- HINS response to children missing from education;
- The role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE).

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

2. Current context / statutory framework

Schools have been instructed to close, although are required to offer a place to [vulnerable children](#) and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and to agree an appropriate plan for that child.

We obviously want to support all our children during this time and will consider making a place available to other children with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.

3. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our pupils and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support pupils with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

Whilst the school is closed, the safety of the children and families remains the school's highest priority. The Designated Safeguarding Leader (SP) and Deputy Safeguarding Leaders (KS/KR/PB) will be available throughout the day to listen to and provide guidance /support linked to any safeguarding concern or disclosure.

For the majority of the time one member from the school's safeguarding team will be in school during normal school hours. If this is not the case the team can be contacted on the numbers identified below:

- 07368938194
- 07393584126

The school's Safeguarding Team will continue to regularly review cases and concerns. These meetings may take place over the phone or via video link if any team members are unable to attend but are able to take part in these discussions.

During the closure, members of the Safeguarding Team will make regular calls to families who we consider may require additional support at this time to ensure the safety of their children and as a family unit. As ever with safeguarding arrangements, these decisions will be

continually reviewed and adapted as needed. Any calls, offers of support and actions support will be recorded on CPOMs and tagged with the code COVID 19 welfare call.

Risk assessments, for children and families at most significant risk, will be completed when needed. These assessments will be discussed by all members of the school's Safeguarding Team and will be implemented as soon as possible. Whenever appropriate, additional services and key workers will be part of any risk assessment and subsequent plan.

For vulnerable children, existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet need. Vulnerable children will be risk assessed with other professionals to decide whether children will be safer at home or in school and decisions will be made on individual cases. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care.

Children with an EHC plan will be assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. If it is felt they should remain at home, a plan will be agreed and this could include carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. It is recognised that many children with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

During the closure period we will work with the local authority and parents / carers to produce a personalised plan that includes:

- Short term interim targets that have been agreed with the child and parent / carers;
- Any agreed support to be provided by the team supporting the child (school, LA Education or SEND staff, Social Worker, Health professional);
- Regular reviews with the child and parent / carers.

As a school we recognise that the current situation may lead to difficult times at home. The level of stress, uncertainty and overall anxiety for households could trigger a safeguarding incident in any home. As a school, we have planned a series of interventions to support families. These include having wellbeing, financial and education support available on a daily basis for parents to access. The school will also run online drop-in sessions for parents which will be available three times a week. The school has also started to call all of our children regardless of their background and prior involvement with the school's support offer. These welfare calls are designed to offer support to the families and provide teachers with an opportunity to talk to the children. Any concerns raised from these calls by the family, child or teacher are logged on the school's safeguarding system CPOMS. The school will implement

further support when needed and if concerns meet the appropriate threshold we will refer to the appropriate bodies as we would have done if the school was open.

As always, all staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (or, in their absence, the deputy designated safeguarding lead).

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- [Essex Effective Support](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the [Essex Effective Support](#) portal. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents / carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

4. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies. As set out in Section 3 of this policy, during this time of closure the school will continue to use CPOMS to record any concerns, disclosures and actions.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing

information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records should be completed on CPOMs. This is then assigned to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly. If a member of staff is unable to access the internet at this time, they should immediately contact one of the members from the designated safeguarding team.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have children from another school attending our site, or where our pupils may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

5. Interagency working

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

6. Staff conduct

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. We

have adapted our policies to reflect the current arrangements to ensure they cover remote learning. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

7. Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of all our pupils is always a priority and it is recognised that, without the protective factor of attending school, some of our children may be more vulnerable. Understandably, this is a worrying and challenging time for everyone, and we understand that families may be placed under considerable additional pressures, potentially coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home fulltime and illness or bereavement.

We want to continue to do all we can to support our pupils and it is vital, therefore, that we work in partnership with parents / carers to do so. Parents / carers should share any concerns about the wellbeing of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

8. Online safety (for children away from school)

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability.

The breadth of issues within online safety is considerable. It can be categorised into three main areas of risk:

- **Content** - exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material. For example, pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **Contact** - subjection to harmful online interaction with other users. For example, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults;
- **Conduct** - personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. For example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

It is important for parents to be vigilant about their child's online activity and to inform the school of any concerns they may have about their child in this respect. We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them to do this.

Particularly useful websites are:

- [CEOP](#) (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- [Childnet](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Net Aware](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Parent Info](#)
- [Safer Internet](#)

Staff are aware that children are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.