

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

1. Background

On March 8th 2021 our schools opened more widely for all students. It is important that we vigilantly monitor the safety and welfare of vulnerable students as they gradually acclimatise back into school life. Our child protection and safeguarding policy is the default policy to use when our schools are open as normal.

At various intervals during COVID-19 we published a temporary annex to the child protection and safeguarding policy (versions 1-4). This gave us clear procedures to keep vulnerable students safe if they were absent from school during the COVID-19 period. It also set out our approach to keeping students safe online.

This updated annex (version 5) sets out our arrangements for keeping vulnerable students safe in the event of any future absence as a result of COVID-19. This could include a vulnerable student self-isolating or not attending school during a school or local area restriction.

2. Keeping vulnerable students safe when they are self-isolating or when there is a school or local area restriction

In February 2021, the Department of Education released two revised documents – Schools COVID-19 Operational Guidance¹ and The Contingency Framework². The expectation is that full-time on-site provision continues for vulnerable students through restrictions and that schools ‘strongly encourage’ attendance. In a similar vein to previous arrangements we can ‘strongly encourage’ but not mandate attendance.

Ultimately, if a vulnerable student is not going to attend school for a period of time because they are either self-isolating, or there is a school or local area restriction, then we need to use this annex to guide the way we work. It will be important to use the risk assessment and where appropriate, monitor the well-being and safety of students who are most at risk of harm.

In all cases of vulnerable students’ non-attendance, it is vital to work in partnership with the local authority or social worker (where applicable). They have a critical and accountable role to play in keeping vulnerable students safe during COVID-19.

On page 2 of this annex you will find a table which sets out the actions to take if there is a school or local area restriction in place.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967139/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf

² https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-contingency-framework-for-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings-excluding-universities?utm_source=22%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

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School level restriction	1 Fully open with individuals self-isolating	2 Partially open with bubbles/ groups self-isolating	3 School lockdown
Safeguarding response for vulnerable students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this annex to risk assess and monitor the safety of vulnerable students who are self-isolating. Initiate this from day 1 of absence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this annex to risk assess and monitor the safety of vulnerable students who are part of a bubble/group self-isolating. Initiate this from day 1 of absence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be guided by local health protection team when making decision about provision continuing on-site for vulnerable students. If it does not, then use this annex to risk assess and monitor the safety of vulnerable students. Initiate this from day 1 of lockdown.

<p align="center">DfE Restriction – Locally or Regionally (Guidance says that vulnerable students are one of the priority groups to attend school)</p>	
Safeguarding response for vulnerable students in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use default child protection and safeguarding policy.
Safeguarding response for vulnerable students who are not in school because parents request a leave of absence during the restriction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this annex to risk assess and monitor vulnerable students' safety. Initiate this from day 1 of absence.

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3. Actions to keep vulnerable students safe

We have a duty of care to check vulnerable students' safety and wellbeing. We must make sure that our procedures are manageable and take into account both the wellbeing of staff and the safety of students.

Actions to take if vulnerable students do not attend school during a period of self-isolation, school level restriction or local level restriction:

1. If a student has a social worker, schools should make immediate contact with the social worker and agree how to work in partnership. Schools should also make direct contact with the parents/guardians to strongly encourage the student to attend school (if safe to do so) or to put in place arrangements to monitor the student's safety. Schools and social workers should work in partnership to explore reasons that parents/carers are not sending their child into school.
2. We can strongly encourage attendance for vulnerable students but we cannot insist upon it. Ultimately, be guided by the social worker where there are concerns about a particular student and they would be safer in school. If schools are not satisfied with a social worker's response, they should raise it directly and escalate it to a duty manager if required.
3. Risk assess vulnerable pupils (those with and without a social worker) to identify and prioritise students whose safety needs to be monitored (see risk assessment criteria below)
4. Put in place a manageable plan for identified staff (e.g. DSLs/SLT/pastoral team) to check the welfare of priority students through a phone call and/or home visit. Make sure that these identified staff have the contact details of students' social workers (where one is allocated)
5. Record checks on CPOMs in the normal way and if required, escalate concerns to the DSL or Headteacher. If you have a concern and cannot contact the DSL, Deputy DSLs or HT, then call your local authority MASH contact.
6. For strategic oversight, ensure that the DSL has regular communication with those staff allocated to self and wellbeing checks.
7. If CPP or CIN meetings are scheduled during a period of school closure, please ensure that a school representative either dials in via phone or sends in a report.
8. For our most vulnerable students this extended period of time at home may present a risk. It is important that we are at our most vigilant and proactive. **If in any doubt about a student's safety, then work with your DSL to make an immediate referral to the appropriate external agency.**

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Risk assessment criteria and suggested frequency of checks

	Red	Amber	Blue
Criteria	Most at risk of harm or neglect – e.g. child protection plan, social worker involvement	A moderate risk of harm – e.g. child in need, social worker involvement	Some concerns that need monitoring – e.g. LAC or early help
Frequency of a safe and wellbeing home visit or phone call	Minimum 2 per week*	Minimum 1 per week	Not essential but at school discretion

*One of these could be from the social worker

4. Home visits and phone calls

Students prioritised as red in their vulnerability are our priority. Where schools are extremely concerned about a student, then they should aim to do a home safe and wellbeing check.

However, we recognise in the current situation this may not be possible or safe for staff or students (e.g. staff and/or students self-isolating). We do not want staff put at any unnecessary risk.

It would be acceptable to speak to a student on the phone and see them through a house window to confirm their safety. Or, if a visit is not possible, then a phone call to speak to the student directly would be sufficient.

When making phone calls, please ensure that you withhold your number or ideally use a designated school mobile phone.

5. Working with local agencies and partners

Our WAT family of schools cover three local authorities so it is important to continue to consider any local contextual arrangements. Keep a close eye on any local updated advice received from your 3 safeguarding partners (clinical commissioning group, police and the local authority). In relation to the local authority this may include information relating to EHC plans, the LADO, children’s social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.

Good working relationships will need to be maintained with social workers and the local authority virtual school head for LAC and previously LAC.

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6. Raising a concern about a child

The actions set out above make it clear what to do if there is a concern about a vulnerable student.

However, it is possible during a period of restriction or self-isolation that a staff member may be concerned about other students who are not in school. For example, they may disclose something during an online interaction on Google Classroom or their absence from online learning may pose a welfare question. Where this occurs, staff should report their concern to a DSL or Deputy DSL immediately (phone call) and record it on CPOMS.

7. DSL and Deputy DSL arrangements

As more students return to school it is important that DSLs and Deputy DSLs have sufficient time to support students with any new safeguarding and welfare concerns that may have become prevalent during the most recent lockdown. DSLs and staff need to be vigilant to students' safety and make referrals to the local authority or other agencies where required.

Schools must continue to operate appropriate lines of communication into DSLs and Deputy DSLs during school or local area restrictions. Where schools are open to vulnerable students and/or critical workers, the DSL or a Deputy DSL must be in school or contactable by telephone. Where a DSL or Deputy DSL is not on site, a leader must take responsibility for coordinating safeguarding arrangements on site.

Staff must be made aware of how to contact the DSL or a Deputy DSL if they have a concern about any student during a time of school closure.

8. What should staff do if they have concerns about another staff member or volunteer posing a safeguarding risk to a student?

This should be managed according to school's usual procedures. Please see the WAT allegations of abuse against staff policy which is available on the WAT and school websites.

9. Online Safety

During this period of COVID-19, students are engaging with online learning more regularly. Some students are also likely to spend longer periods of time on social media. This could present other risks to be aware of such as peer on peer abuse or CSE.

If for any reason a staff member is concerned about a student's behaviour online or if a student discloses something that they are concerned about, then they must contact their DSL or Deputy DSL immediately and log their concerns on CPOMS.

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We have initiated the trust-wide use of E-Safe (a tool to monitor and detect inappropriate online activity) for all students which is active when they are signed into their school Google account. Remote learning is via Google Classrooms where students will need to be signed into the school Google account. Leaders in school receive an alert when concerns arise.

Schools should also continue to advise students and parents of how to stay safe online during this period of closure. Share useful links for parents (e.g. <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> or <https://www.internetmatters.org/>) and for students (e.g. <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>)

Schools should ensure that students and parents can report anything that they are concerned about online to a named contact in school.

10. Online Safety – Live Lessons

Part of our remote learning approach includes the use of live lessons for students across our schools. Staff and students will use their secure school login credentials to access the lessons via the Google Meet Video Platform.

The following documentation and processes are in place so that live lessons take place safely and in accordance with GDPR guidelines:

1. Parent/Carer Information Letter
2. Parent/Carer/Student Live Lessons Agreement
3. A Help Video for Students
4. Training for Staff
5. Live Lessons Key Guidance for Staff
6. Staff Live Lessons Agreement Form

If there are concerns about student safety during live lessons, these should be reported immediately and in the usual way. If parents have concerns, they should contact the school. Students should share concerns directly to their parents/carers and/or teacher. Staff should report concerns to their DSL or Deputy DSL.

If have any questions about this annex, then please do not hesitate to contact Barry Morley (WAT Lead DSL) or Matt Meckin (WAT Strategic Safeguarding Lead). If your question is regarding safer recruitment, then please contact Anila Patel (Head of HR).

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Record of annex changes	
Date	Change
05/06/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 2: Actions to take regarding vulnerable students' attendance at school. Actions 1 and 2 refined to take into account an increased focus on students with a social worker being encouraged to attend school. Reference added as a footnote to the update parent guidance from the DfE which highlights that ultimate accountability sits with the social worker (E.g. 'For children who have a social worker, attendance is expected unless their social worker decides that they are at less risk at home or in their placement')
05/06/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New section added (section 9) on live lessons.
21/09/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised background section added (page 1) Information and a table added to be clear about keeping vulnerable students safe during a school or local area restriction (page 1 and 2) Actions to take section revised to reflect future circumstances (page 3) Some irrelevant sections removed (e.g. hub model protocols and attendance section) Safer recruitment section removed – no longer reflective of current circumstances. Safer recruitment processes back to normal procedures.
11/01/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 1 updated with national lockdown DfE guidance information. Tables on page 2 (tier restrictions etc.) taken out because not relevant at the moment. Bullet added to the actions on page 2 to consider access to a device and WIFI where it is agreed a vulnerable child is to work at home. Sentence added in about increased vigilance required because of the impact of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable families. Sentence added in DSL section about ensuring DSLs and Deputy DSLs having sufficient capacity.
08/03/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 1 updated with new DfE guidance information and links. Page 2 tables adjusted to reflect safeguarding arrangements for school or local/regional restrictions. Stronger sentence added re DSL and Deputy DSL capacity on student return as per DfE guidance.