



Coronavirus (COVID-19) school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection for Richard Huish Trust “The Trust” Schools

On Monday 23rd March 2020, schools and Early Years providers closed to all children except vulnerable children and children of workers critical to the covid-19 response who cannot be safely cared for at home.

During this period all schools and colleges must continue to follow the statutory safeguarding guidance provided in **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 (KCSIE)**.

The way schools are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first,
- if anyone in school 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.

This addendum to the Trust’s Safeguarding and Child Protection policy provides details on how we can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep children safe and considers our safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

1. Vulnerable children
2. Attendance monitoring
3. Children moving schools
4. Designated Safeguarding Lead
5. Reporting a concern
6. Safeguarding training and induction
7. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff
8. Clusters / hubs
9. Online safety in schools
10. Children and online safety away from school
11. Supporting children not in school
12. Supporting children in school

1. Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and children 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 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend the setting, unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.

2. Attendance monitoring

From 23rd March 2020, Local Authorities and education settings no longer need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. The school and nursery (where relevant), alongside social workers where applicable, will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school. The school and nursery will follow up with any parent or carer who has is expected to attend and subsequently does not attend.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, or discontinues the place, the school should notify the child's social worker.

During this period, the Department for Education 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.

3. Children moving schools

It is important for any school whose children are attending another setting to do whatever they reasonably can to provide the receiving institution with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable. For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the Virtual School Head (VSH) with responsibility for the child. The receiving institution should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum the receiving institution should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is). This should ideally happen before a child arrives and, where that is not possible as soon as reasonably practicable. Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between SENDCos for children with EHC plans.

Whilst schools and colleges must continue to **have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR they do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.**

Where a child has applied for a place at the school in line with the usual admissions processes, regular communication will be maintained with the child's family regarding when school will reopen. Where the child who is joining the school is vulnerable, the guidance above applies and the school and nursery will communicate with the previous setting and social worker as appropriate.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The joint Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) for The Taunton Academy are Mrs Tamara Dixon & Mrs Jenny Webb.

Wherever possible, a trained DSL (or deputy) will be available on site. Where this is not possible 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 member of staff will be identified to assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This might include updating and managing child protection and safeguarding records, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaising with children's social workers.

In the event that neither DSL is available, for example due to illness, a trained DSL from another school within the Trust will be identified.

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

5. Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the processes outlined in the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, this includes making a written report and speaking to the DSL / Deputy DSL. Any concern must be reported immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should report this immediately to the Head teacher. If there is a requirement to make a notification to the Head teacher whilst away from school, this should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the Head teacher.

Concerns around the Head teacher should be directed to the **Chair of Governors**: Mr Chris Ormrod (email: Mrs R Dempsey, Clerk to Governors (RDempsey@thetauntonacademy.com))

6. Safeguarding Training and induction

All existing school staff have received safeguarding training and have read part 1 of **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019)**. The DSL will continue to 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 the setting, 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 .

For movement within the Trust, schools should seek assurance from the Trust HR Manager that the member of staff has received appropriate safeguarding training. Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of the school's safeguarding and child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

7. Clusters / Hubs

Where schools and colleges collaborate and children and/or staff from multiple settings are clustered in one place, the principles in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) continue to apply. In particular, the school or college

that is acting as the hub in the cluster should continue to provide a safe environment, keep children safe and ensure staff and volunteers have been appropriately checked and risk assessments carried out as required.

8. 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, the school will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for the setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) (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. [Guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking](#)

Where Trust schools and nurseries utilise volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in **paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE**. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Regarding members of the school or college workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school or college to support the care of children. The type of setting on the DBS check, for example a specific category of school, is not a barrier. The same principle applies if childcare workers move to work temporarily in a school setting. The receiving institution should risk assess as they would for a volunteer. Whilst the onus remains on schools and colleges to satisfy themselves that someone in their setting has had the required checks, including as required those set out in part 3 of KCSIE, in the above scenario this can be achieved, if the receiving institution chooses to, via seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks.

Trust schools 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 KCSIE**. We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per **paragraph 166 of KCSIE** 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

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, we will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in **paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE**.

9. Online safety in school

We will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

10. Children and online safety away from school

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 accordance 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.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the *Staff Code of Conduct*. Staff should not make any direct contact with pupils.

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

11. Supporting children not in school

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our children. Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they will make remote contact with the family and a record of contact will be made. Where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate. We recognise that school is a protective factor for children, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Our teachers need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

12. Supporting children in school

The Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children. Our schools will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Head teachers /Nursery Managers will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratios are appropriate, to maximise safety.

All Trust schools 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.

Our schools 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.

Where there are concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders, these will be discussed immediately with **the Trust CEO**.