# SHERBORNE AREA SCHOOLS’ TRUST



**Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy Addendum**

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**Covid-19 Pandemic - Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy Addendum**



**Context**

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Most children are no longer in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak. Schools have been asked to provide care for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

**Department for Education (DFE) Help and Support**

If you have any queries about managing the pandemic in schools please seek UK Government a[dvice for the education sector](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings) is being updated daily at the time of publishing of this document. The Department for Education COVID-19 helpline is also available to answer questions.

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm. If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.

Email [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

Telephone **0800 046 8687**

**Covid-19 Flu Pandemic Help and Support from SAST**

Please contact SAST Head Office at [office@sast.org.uk](mailto:office@sast.org.uk) or [steve.hillier@sast.org.uk](mailto:steve.hillier@sast.org.uk) (CEO) or [steve.smith@sast.org.uk](mailto:steve.smith@sast.org.uk) (Deputy CEO) or [nigel.rees@sast.org.uk](mailto:nigel.rees@sast.org.uk) (Chair of Trustees). Other contacts can be found on the trust website – [www.sast.org.uk](http://www.sast.org.uk).

**Version control and dissemination**

This is version 2.0 of this addendum. It will be reviewed by SAST on a regular basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated DFE advice or guidance. We will ensure that on any given day all staff and volunteers in attendance will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff and volunteers can to speak to them.

**Safeguarding Remains a Priority**

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – whether they are currently at home or in attendance – continues to be our priority. The following fundamental safeguarding principles remain the same:

* the best interests of children continue to come first
* if anyone in our school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
* a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available
* no unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children
* children should continue to be protected when they are online.

This Addendum to our Child Protection or Safeguarding policy sets out details of safeguarding arrangements for:

1. **Current school position**
2. **Safeguarding partners’ advice**
3. **Roles and responsibilities**
4. **Vulnerable children**
5. **Increased vulnerability or risk**
6. **Attendance**
7. **Reporting concerns about children and staff**
8. **Safeguarding training and induction**
9. **Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff**
10. **Peer on peer abuse**
11. **Online safety**
12. **New children at the school**
13. **Supporting children not in school**
14. **Current school position**

At present we are currently open to the children of key workers and vulnerable students (as defined on page 3 of this document). Children from these families will need to be booked in for school days through the school office at least 24hours in advance of the time for which the childcare is required. This will ensure that additional staffing or safety measures can be put in place as and if required. All staff and volunteers attending on site from outside our school will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns.

1. **Safeguarding partners’ advice**

We continue to work closely with our safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this addendum is consistent with their advice. This will include expectations for supporting children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, SAST, the local authority designated officer and children’s social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.

1. **Roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. If possible, our DSL and at least one deputy DSL will be available on site during the school day. Where this is not possible, we will:

* have a trained DSL or deputy DSL available by phone and/or online video; or
* ensure we have access to a trained DSL or deputy DSL from another school or college by phone and/or online video.

Where our DSL or a deputy DSL cannot be on site, then in addition to one of the above options we will also ensure a senior leader from the school takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. Please refer to the main school policy for DSL contact details or speak to the Headteacher. School Child Protection and Safeguarding policy is also available on the school website. Arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns to your DSL where a child is accessing a hub school site rather than their usual school are also available via the Headteacher or senior leader on site.

1. **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 and Health Care Plans (ECHPs). 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 school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will discuss this with the social worker and explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Those with an EHCP 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 EHCPs can safely remain at home. We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed. Senior leaders in our school, especially the DSL (and deputies) know who our most vulnerable children are, and they have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children’s social care support. We will continue to work with children’s social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

1. **Increased vulnerability or risk**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Staff will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils’ work where they are at home. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them. Our staff and volunteers will be aware of the mental health of children and their parents and carers and will contact the DSL or a deputy if they have any concerns.

1. **Attendance**

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL or a deputy DSL will be informed. The DSL or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents through various methods, such as telephone, electronic means (FaceTime, Skype, Class Dojo, etc.) or by contacting a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will undertake a home visit or ask an appropriate agency to do so. A risk assessment will be carried out before any such visit is made to ensure staff the family are not put at risk. Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

1. **Reporting concerns about children or staff**

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Child Protection procedures and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school. The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff or volunteers. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with the SAST Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

1. **Staff training and induction**

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLSs are unlikely to receive their refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training. All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Addendum A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join us, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff provide confirmation that:

* the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children’s barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern
* there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
* the individual remains suitable to work with children.

1. **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, we will continue to follow the SAST Safer Recruitment policy. 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. For volunteers we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process 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 engage in regulated activity. It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers are on our school site and that the appropriate checks have been carried out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain our single central record (SCR) during these measures to ensure we have this awareness.

1. **Peer on peer abuse**

We recognise that children can abuse their peers and our staff are clear about the school’s policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school site during these measures. Our staff will remain vigilant to the [signs of peer-on-peer abuse](about:blank) and will follow the process set out in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

1. **Online safety**

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time, including for online learning. Our staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and our filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children. Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the SAST ICT Acceptable Use Policies. Staff who interact with children online will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will follow the approach set out in this addendum and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

1. **New children at the school**

Children may join our school from other settings. When they do, we will seek from those settings the relevant welfare and child protection information. This is relevant for all children that join us, but it will be especially important where children are vulnerable. For vulnerable children we will ensure we understand the reasons for the vulnerability and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum we will seek access to that child’s EHCP, 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). Ideally this will happen before a child arrives but where that is not possible it will happen as soon as reasonably practicable. Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs co-ordinators/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with EHCPs. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case our school senior leaders will take responsibility. The DSL will undertake a risk assessment based on the information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know the information.

1. **Supporting children not in school**

When the school DSL, with support from outside agencies, has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive additional pastoral support in school, they will ensure that a communication plan is in place to support that child. Details of that plan will be recorded in the school information management system or on their safeguarding files. The communication plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.

**Further information**

If you would like further information about this policy please contact the school Headteacher, DSL or SAST Head Office at [office@sast.org.uk](mailto:office@sast.org.uk) or 01935 811066.