

Safeguarding during COVID-19 pandemic

From 8th March 2021, schools are reopening following a second period of school closures. All pupils are returning to school full-time to minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development.

This annex of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust Safeguarding Policy contains details of our safeguarding arrangements in response to all related [Department for Education guidance](#) published during the coronavirus pandemic. We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our children and young people during this time.

Safeguarding Principles

We will continue to have regard to *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'* and any additional guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on safeguarding during school closures.

Although the way we are operating in response to COVID-19 is different, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- The best interests of the children must always continue to come first in regard to safeguarding
- All staff should continue to act immediately if they have a safeguarding concern about any child
- The DSL or a Deputy DSL should always be available, either on school site or remotely – all staff should have relevant contact details
- It is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to gain access to children, access to the school site or enter the school's workforce
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online

Lockdown and Vulnerable Children

In the event of a further lockdown, we may revert to remaining open only for vulnerable children and children of keyworkers and provide remote education for all other pupils.

Our vulnerable children list is RAG-rated according to the following criteria:

Red - children with a social worker (including all children on a CP plan or CiN plan and LACs) and children with an EHCP

Amber - children with other safeguarding-related external agency involvement (including all children with Early Help involvement) and other children who may be at additional risk during an extended period of time at home

Green - other children who need monitoring, e.g. Young Carers

During a lockdown, school would remain open to children who have a social worker (including all children on a Child Protection or a Child in Need Plan and all Looked After Children), children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and children of keyworkers, regardless of their year group.

We may offer school provision for additional children on the vulnerable list for whom the school has concerns about being at home for a sustained period of time. This may include children who are on the edge of receiving social care support.

There is an expectation that children with social workers will continue to attend provision, unless in consultation with the social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to school, and the child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and/or school will explore the reasons for this with the parent/carer, talking through any anxieties about the risk of contracting COVID-19 following the advice set out by Public Health England. We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend if possible.

Individual risk assessments have been completed for all children with an EHCP and will be reviewed in the event of a lockdown. The risk assessment will determine if a child's needs can be met at school more safely than at home.

We will liaise with social workers, family support workers and SEN caseworkers for children classified as 'red' on the vulnerable children list to ensure that relevant professionals are fully aware which children will continue to attend school and which children will remain at home. Contact arrangements will be agreed and will consist of the following action from school, unless otherwise agreed with the Local Authority:

Red/Amber – safe and well phone contact twice a week for children not attending school, being sure to seek both parent/carer and child's voice, where appropriate. Home visit to be undertaken if staff have concerns following the phone call, or if no contact is able to be made. If concerns persist, a referral will be made to Social Care and/or Police, as per usual procedures.

Green – as above, but safe and well phone contact to be made once a week.

The vulnerable list will be reviewed weekly as part of safeguarding team meetings and children may change category if there has been any change to their needs. The DSL will log the rationale for any change and ensure this is communicated with the social worker, family support worker and/or SEN caseworker where these are involved.

Wherever possible, phone calls to families should be made from school devices. Where this is not possible, staff must withhold their personal number.

The same process should be followed for any child on the vulnerable list who is complying with clinical and/or public health advice to remain at home.

The Trust Staff Home Visits policy must be followed when undertaking home visits.

During a lockdown, our safeguarding team will co-ordinate a weekly meeting to discuss concerns relating to pupils both on- and off-site, review the outcomes of safe and well checks and ensure recording and logging is consistent. Attendance at all multi-agency meetings should continue, where this can be done remotely.

Wherever possible, each of our schools will have a fully trained DSL or Deputy DSL onsite. Where this is not possible, a DSL will be contactable by phone and a senior leader should take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This may include managing files, liaising with the offsite DSL and liaising with social workers who may need access to children in need. **Staff must know on any given day who the on duty DSL/SLT is and how to contact them.** We will communicate this clearly to all staff, both onsite and offsite.

Safer Recruitment

We will continue to follow safer recruitment processes, including those outlined in Part 3 of *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'*. We will refer to the updated [DBS guidance](#) for enhanced DBS ID checking to minimise the need for face-to-face contact, as well as the updated guidance for undertaking [right to work checks](#) for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. From the start of the autumn 2020 term, all checks will revert to being carried out in person.

We will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process for any volunteers and under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or be allowed to work in regulated activity.

New staff or volunteers are recruited will be provided with a safeguarding induction and all relevant policies, including the safeguarding policy and this annex.

All newly recruited staff will be added to the Single Central Record (SCR), which will continue to be updated and maintained.

There is no requirement for schools to undertake a new DBS check for any staff who have not been in regulated activity during the period of school closures, although a new check may be obtained if the school has any concerns about an individual.

Reporting Concerns

It is important for all staff to be aware that new safeguarding concerns may be identified following the period of school closures.

Staff should continue to log safeguarding concerns about children on MyConcern as outlined in the Trust Safeguarding Policy, both for children where there are existing concerns and for all new concerns. The safeguarding team will continue to monitor MyConcern and will support staff and children regarding any new concerns. For all incidents where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger, the DSL or a Deputy DSL must be contacted immediately. Concerns relating to peer on peer abuse will continue to be reported and responded to according to the guidance outlined in our Trust Safeguarding Policy.

In the event that a member of staff cannot access MyConcern, they should contact the DSL or a Deputy DSL directly to ensure the concern is received.

If staff have a concern about another member of staff who may pose a safeguarding risk to children, they must continue to report this concern to the Principal/Head of School or, if the concern is about the Principal/Head of School, to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, as per the Abuse Allegations Procedure. In the event that contact with the Principal/Head of School or Chair of Governors is not possible, for example due to illness, the concern should be reported immediately to the Executive Principal, or the Executive Trust Lead for Safeguarding. If none of these are available, it should be reported to the school DSL.

We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), as appropriate, to Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk . We will also continue our legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child.

Children Attending Alternative Provision

Pupils will be returning full-time to Alternative Provision. In the event of a further lockdown we will liaise with all Alternative Providers to agree which party is making the safe and well phone calls and, where necessary, home visits. If the Alternative Provision is conducting these checks, they will update the school at least once a week with the outcomes of their contact. We will log this and undertake additional checks of our own if necessary.

It is possible for provision to be made across two settings if the needs of the child cannot be met without both settings. However, this is subject to a risk assessment and the ability of both settings to accommodate the child. Both settings will need to liaise to undertake a risk assessment together. It may be deemed best for the pupil to return to only one setting, or to return to one first before returning to both.

School Reopening

As schools welcome back more pupils and staff, safeguarding must remain a priority. Appropriate support will be in place for all children returning to school (see **Mental Health** below for further information).

DSLs should continue to do what they can to keep up to date with safeguarding developments and this will be supported through dissemination of information by the Executive Trust Lead for Safeguarding and the Trust Safeguarding Lead.

We will do all we reasonably can to ask parents/carers of any changes to the welfare, health and wellbeing of pupils to ensure that safeguarding information held on all children remains accurate and up to date.

We will maintain contact with the families of any children not yet returning to school, speaking to children where at all possible to help identify any concerns.

Those who have not been attending since schools closed are now expected to return, including all children who have a social worker or an EHCP. In the event of a lockdown, the attendance of vulnerable children will continue to be expected where it is appropriate, i.e. where they are not shielding or isolating and according to any risk assessment in place. We will continue to work with social workers, Virtual School Headteachers and all other relevant safeguarding partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our pupils.

SEND Pupils and Risk Assessments

All children will return to school from 8th March 2021, including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and those with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). This also includes any children who access the special units and resourced provision attached to our schools. SEND pupils will have full educational and care support.

Provision for children with SEND may have been disrupted during school closures and we acknowledge that this may impact their behaviour and/or wellbeing upon return to school. We will be mindful that considerations of additional support and early help, such as for mental health, anxiety and behaviour, may now apply to pupils not previously affected.

A risk assessment was put in place for all children with an EHCP during school closures and may be maintained for any child who is back in school full-time if the school judges this would be useful, otherwise individual schools and LAs can decide to close the risk assessment if no longer useful once the child has fully returned to school.

Any child not attending full-time due to clinical and/or public health advice to remain at home, will continue to engage in at-home learning and support as far as is possible and a focus will be placed on preparing them for a return to school at an appropriate time.

The SENCo team will lead on ensuring that all SEND pupils have access to appropriate materials for learning. Additional support will also be considered for children with an EHCP who are about to make a transition to another setting or onto adult life. We are aware that some SEND pupils, including those with an EHCP and those on SEN Support, may need careful preparation for their return to school, including specific help and preparation for any planned changes to their normal routines. We will consider each child's needs on an individual basis and this means that increased attendance for some may take place over a longer period of time.

It will not always be possible to minimise time spent within two metres of, or avoid close face to face contact with, a child with complex needs or who needs close contact care and these pupils' educational and care support should be provided as normal. PPE should only be needed if a child already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used.

On their return to school, secondary pupils will be required to wear masks in all indoor areas where two metre distancing cannot be maintained, including classrooms. Children who are exempt from wearing masks will be issued with a lanyard or badge so that the staff and the wider school community are aware of their exemption.

Attendance and in-school provision

Attendance by all pupils will be expected, unless they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, or in the event of a further lockdown.

We will follow up the absence of any child we were expecting to attend school on any given day.

We acknowledge that it is likely that adverse experiences and/or lack of routines may contribute to disengagement with education upon return to school and we will work with families of pupils who struggle to re-engage in school and are at risk of being absent by providing support for overcoming barriers to attendance and helping them to reintegrate back into school life. We will identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning to school, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic, and develop plans for re-engaging them.

We will undertake safe and well phone checks and home visits for vulnerable children who are not attending school, as described above. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not attend, we will notify their social worker.

We will ensure that school continues to be a safe space for children to attend. The Principal/Head of School will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and that staff to pupil ratios are appropriate. We will refer to government guidance on social distancing and follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Where a school has concerns about the impact of staff absence, they will discuss them immediately with the Trust.

Currently some staff within the Trust are working across school sites. Where this is the case, staff have had all relevant safeguarding and recruitment checks and this information is logged on their home school's SCR, which is also accessible to the Executive Trust Lead for Safeguarding and the Trust Safeguarding Lead.

For further information on attendance, please see the Trust attendance guidance and policy.

Online Safety

We will continue to provide a safe environment for children when online on the school's IT systems by ensuring appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place and that recommended online resources or learning tools, e.g. ShowMyHomework, are safe for children to use and compliant with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Where children are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

It is important that staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs that a child may be at risk. Any contact with parents/carers should be used to reinforce online safety messages, including the importance of parents/carers being aware what their children are accessing online.

Staff/children communication should only be made through formal channels such as ShowMyHomework and never through social media or personal messaging. The principles of the Staff Code of Conduct remain valid and all staff sign an Acceptable User Agreement, as outlined in the Trust e-safety policy, to ensure that there is no risk to the safety of themselves, of the school's ICT systems and of the children.

All pupils have been reminded of clear reporting routes for them to raise concerns whilst online and additional links to support parents/carers in keeping their children safe online have been shared with families.

Any concerns relating to online safety should be logged on MyConcern as per the usual procedure.

Please see related *TGAT Live Online Lesson Guidance* for more detailed information for staff involved in the delivery of online lessons for pupils still at home.

Mental Health

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of children and their parents/carers. We will be aware of this for those returning to school, and in setting expectations of children's work during any period at home, for example if they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice or in the event of a local lockdown.

We acknowledge that some pupils will return to school having been exposed to a range of adversity and trauma, including bereavement, anxiety and increased welfare and safeguarding risks. This may lead to an increase in social, emotional and mental health concerns.

All staff have watched a training video produced by Educational Psychologists who work across the Trust, on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people following the pandemic, including supporting a safe and successful return to school.

We will identify pupils who might need further support and be mindful of the guidance on [mental health and behaviour in schools](#), particularly how mental health issues can bring about changes in a young person's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, and that can be an indication of an underlying problem. This could include being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional and excessive clinginess. Anxiety, stress and low mood may be experienced by pupils in response to the pandemic and this may particularly be the case for vulnerable children such as those with a social worker and young carers. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation and whereas some pupils will be keen and ready to return to school, others may need support in readjusting to being at school, be reluctant to return and/or show signs of more severe anxiety or depression.

We will consider how best to support any pupil identified as needing help with their mental health, including children whose needs we are already aware of and those identified as newly vulnerable on their return to school. Support for children may include existing provision or support from specialist staff or support services through referrals, drawing on external support where needed. Communication with the school nurse will continue as an important source of support for safeguarding and wellbeing.

Any concerns relating to mental health should be logged on MyConcern as per the usual procedure.