

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures

Annex to Child Protection policy – version 1.0

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.

This annex to our Child Protection policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.0 of this annex. It will be reviewed by Angela Stone and Katie Coleman (DSLs) on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the school website and will be made available to all staff, with any further subsequent updates being shared as and when required.

We will ensure that on any given day all staff will be aware of who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how staff and volunteers can to speak to them. This information will be posted centrally on the schools website.

Safeguarding priority

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – whether they are currently at home or in attendance on another site – 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

Current school position

Brentford School for Girls is currently closed. The school site was closed on the 25th March, due to the low numbers attending the provision offered and a full risk assessment being carried out. Those families still requiring support in a school structure have been hosted in a local authority hub school.

The school currently continue to provide support for its vulnerable children and families. This has continued through some of the following means

- 1) Deputy DSL and Heads of Year to contact the agreed 'vulnerable' list of students on a weekly basis and inform the DSL immediately if there are any concerns. Additional support required reviewed on a daily basis through these contacts
- 2) There will be a weekly review of all children on this list by DSL/deputy DSL and SLT member (Headteacher/DSL) Additional support may be triaged where this is felt necessary, including drawing down resource from other agencies
- 3) Teaching staff to continue to set work on a phased approach, mark and feedback to student
- 4) SEN team to have regular communication to those with EHCPs and SEN needs
- 5) Parents have access to class teachers on a daily basis. Contact can be made daily through direct contact to the class teacher by email
- 6) Additional support for parents who are struggling is identified on the school website and regular reminders are sent out in letters to parents and school newsletters

Safeguarding partners' advice

We continue to work closely with our three safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this annex is consistent opening with their advice. This will include expectations for supporting children with

education, health and care (EHC) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need. The current advice is below.

Child protection and Safeguarding procedures will continue as per school protocol with reporting any safeguarding concerns for Brentford School for Girls.

All key Social workers can still contact the DSL's/ Deputy DSL via email or telephone. The school will also contact the allocated SW if we feel there are any concerns with key students.

The school will continue to contribute to case conferences and reviews as and when these are being held

For any concerns or allegations against staff or volunteers at Brentford we will continue to follow the schools policy on allegations, and complete the consult and referral form and send it to LADO@Hounslow LA

The school is still following the safer recruitment process if and when new staff are recruited and we will make sure staff are inducted to all of our school's policies and any new guidelines we are following around online learning.

We will continue to update our Single Central Record with new staff and any changes if and when it is necessary.

We are continually updating our website with important information for parents/carers and students including 'top tips' sent by the Government specifically aimed at young people.

We are continuing to review and work with union advice on safeguarding procedures for staff to contact children in terms of delivering lessons on line. This will continually be refined to make sure both staff and students are safe and protected on line.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Child Protection Policy

If possible, our DSL and at least one deputy DSL will be available during the school day,

- by phone
- Email
- Video conferencing

The designated safeguarding lead in this school is Katie Coleman. The deputy is Angela Stone

Contact details: email: astone@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk, kcoleman@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk; or the head teacher- mleenders@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk

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 or health 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.

The government has requested that wherever possible children must remain at home during the lockdown. 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 EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the 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.

Senior leaders in our school, especially the DSL's and deputy DSL, know who our most vulnerable children are, if at home, will continue to monitor carefully in order to ensure the safeguarding of the child.

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.

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.

Additionally where required, additional external agency support will be sourced.

Attendance

The school is currently closed. This may change if the need increases and places at the HUB school become unavailable.

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 or deputy DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those not engaging with learning platforms. All concerns should continue to be reported using: astone@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk, kcoleman@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk; or the head teacher-mleenders@brentford.hounslow.sch.uk

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, virtually, or whilst attending school or home, are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy.

Staff training and Induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL & deputy DSL will continue to engage in online training.

All current school staff have read Part One and Annex 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 Policy.

If a child from our setting attends another local school (HUB), in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting, providing those staff confirm that:

- The adults have 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 the adults who work here
- The individuals remains suitable to work with children.

Safer recruitment

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 our Safer Recruitment policy and any new staff employed during this period will be trained remotely if required. 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.

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 recognise that the HUB school has strong safeguarding procedures in place and are mindful of need to ensure the safety of external children particularly in terms of peer to peer relationships.

Online safety

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. 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 policy. 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 annex and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL for guidance or further action to be taken.

Supporting children not in school

Where the DSL 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 plan is in place to support that child. Details of this will be recorded. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.