

COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at Oreston Community Academy

Subject to ratification by Trustees/LGBs.

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1.0 Context

This appendix was first developed in response to and aligned to DfE guidance in March 2020 parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for vulnerable children and those of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. It has now been updated in response to the national lockdown which commenced on 6 January, 2021 and in light of the latest DfE Guidance, “*Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools*”¹

Schools and all childcare providers have once again been asked to provide care for a limited number of children –

- children who are vulnerable and
- children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 or EU-transition (Brexit) response and cannot be safely cared for at home².

This appendix of the Safeguarding, and Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements during this period of time and is likely to be reviewed at regular intervals particularly when new advice is released by the DfE. This appendix of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy will also be reviewed should school play ‘host’ to a collapsed provision or direct pupils/staff to a ‘cluster’ school. The review will then consider any information about ‘hub’ working issued by the DfE, and consideration will be made for example on, the sharing of vulnerable pupil information, the reporting of concerns and updating of safeguarding files.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf (accessed 7/1/2021)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision> (accessed 7/1/2021)

It remains the case that **safeguarding is everybody's responsibility**, therefore this additional information needs to be shared with all staff and volunteers who in turn must read, digest and seek support from their DSL team or school leaders if further clarification is required. All staff should continue to have access to the Child Protection policy, Staff Code of Conduct and KCSiE 2020 where further details and information can be found.

The schools' safeguarding team (DSL, Safeguarding Governor etc) and their contact details can be found in the main body of Oreston Community Academy's Safeguarding Policy. Changes to the DSL and DDSL during these exceptional circumstances can be found in para 3 of this appendix. Any changes will be shared with all staff and volunteers of the school.

2.0 Vulnerable children³

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker (including children in care) and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care plans (EHCPs). A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed (by the school, or other professional) 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 SENDCO, Local Authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary and available, 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. However, Oreston Community Academy's is mindful of the government's desire for vulnerable children, including those with EHCPs, to be educated on-site but will retain the flexibility to allow parents to educate their child at home under the 'C' authorised absence code.⁴

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability. Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

School leaders must also consider the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and all other children attending the setting. If a child is unwell, or showing the symptoms of Covid-19 (as defined by current government guidelines⁵) they will expect the child to remain at home and the school will offer provision and support remotely informing relevant partner agencies. This will include establishing regular contact with the family until such time as they have adhered to guidelines enabling the now well or symptom free child to return to school.

If the school has information that parents are not following current government guidelines Leaders will use their professional discretion, working with any partner agencies and LA officers to agree appropriate action. This will firstly take into account the child's safety however where other exceptional circumstances exist whereby a child compromises the health, wellbeing or safety of staff or other children, then appropriate action will be agreed by the school together with the social worker/LA.

Oreston Community Academy will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children. If current plans and support packages exist for these pupils the school will continue to provide for these

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision> (accessed 7/1/2021)

⁴ "Schools should continue to record attendance in the register. Schools should follow up on absences of the pupils who are expected to be in school but where a parent wishes for their child to be absent, we expect schools to authorise the absence during this national lockdown period. Absence will not be penalised." [DfE \(2021\) Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools](#) p.25

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

as best as possible in conjunction with the relevant agencies. The lead person for this will be: Hannah Howarth.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker (if there is one) and school will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, Oreston Community Academy or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England. We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend school, including remotely if not possible by other means.

2.1 Attendance monitoring

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. Key staff and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need and those on CP should be attending school – we will then follow up on any pupil that we were expecting to attend, who does not.

Oreston Community Academy will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.

If required Oreston Community Academy will complete a return online so the DfE can monitor who is in school and who isn't each day.

The LA has a duty to monitor vulnerable children's attendance and Oreston Community Academy will be completing the necessary spreadsheets and returning daily.

2.2 How will this look in our school?

To support the above, Oreston Community Academy will, when communicating with parents/carers and carers, confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, Oreston Community Academy will take appropriate actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. Such actions, and their outcomes, will be recorded in CPOMS.

2.3 Those vulnerable children not attending school

Those vulnerable children who are not attending school will be contacted on a regular basis so that school are satisfied that they are safe. Oreston Community Academy will follow DfE and LA guidance as it becomes available, or is updated. The Director of Inclusion will support WeST schools with this. The DSL or Deputy DSL will review their RAG ratings for this group at least weekly taking into account any reported concerns from school contact or any information from partner agencies. Any changes will be recorded on the schools central vulnerable group spreadsheet (or equivalent) and shared with the Headteacher if not DSL. Any changes in the RAG rating will be sent to the relevant LA as requested.

3.0 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Oreston Community Academy has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL. During this extra ordinary situation their contact details are as follows:

Role	Name	Contact Number 1	Contact Number 2	Email
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Hannah Howarth	01752 402050	01752 402050	leaders@oreston.com
Deputy Designated	Lindsay Houghton	01752 402050	01752 402050	leaders@oreston.com

Safeguarding Lead				
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Susanne Parker	01752 402050	01752 402050	leaders@oreston.com

3.1 DSL cover in school

The optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case 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 senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This might include updating and managing access to child protection records and liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaising with children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school or college.

3.2 Informing staff

It is important that all school staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy), or the named school leader, Oreston Community Academy will inform all staff and volunteers of changes to the details above.

Therefore, each day staff on site will be made aware of who that person is and how to speak to them. The DSL will continue to engage with social workers and attend all multi-agency meetings, which can be done remotely or seek support and liaise with Early Help professionals.

Any changes to the DSL on duty will also be shared with those staff working from home via email. School will also have a daily information board sharing the DSL and safeguarding contacts for the day for all staff working on site.

Any changes to the Safeguarding team details will also be shared with the relevant LA Officers.

4.0 Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy which can be done remotely via email or through telephone. In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access any electronic system from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher or Safeguarding contact. This will ensure that the concern is received. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

4.1 Reporting a concern about an adult/the Headteacher

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

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors:

Anne Newall anne.newall@oreston.com

5.0 Safeguarding training and induction

Face to face DSL training is **very unlikely** to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID 19 virus. For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they have or will miss their refresher training (as occurred during the March 2020 lockdown). Oreston Community Academy through WeST, subscribes to Babcock LDP and Safeguarding Network support. DSLs can obtain online advice and support from these services. WeST will, wherever practicably possible, support schools to ensure that DSLs (and their deputies) can access remote training of an equivalent standard to the face to face courses. The Director of Inclusion will support schools with this.

All existing school staff who have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020), are similarly likely to not receive whole staff training during this time. DSLs should therefore communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child. This should be achieved through emails and similar electronic means. Online training is available via Safeguarding Network. Staff can approach the DSL if they wish to access this.

Where new staff or volunteers are recruited they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction (as identified in our safer recruitment policy/induction policy).

6.0 Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

The information in this section will be reviewed regularly in the expectation that the DfE may issue updated guidance in response to the national emergency. The overriding priority is to maintain a culture of safeguarding at Oreston Community Academy.

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, Oreston Community Academy will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) (KCSIE).

Where Oreston Community Academy are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in KCSIE. Under **no circumstances** will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Oreston Community Academy 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. Oreston Community Academy will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral. 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, Oreston Community Academy will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in KCSIE.

Where staff are required to work in schools that are not their normal place of work, senior leaders take into account any 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

There is no requirement to list such individuals in the school's SCR, unless leaders choose to do so as long as such written confirmation is received. School will retain this evidence until such time as the current restrictions on schools are lifted and in line with our current data and information retention policies.

For movement within the Westcountry Schools Trust, Oreston Community Academy should seek assurance from the Director of HR, or delegated member of the HR team, that the member of staff has received appropriate safeguarding training and all pre-employment safeguarding requirements are in place. Upon arrival, they must have access to a copy of the receiving school's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements and contact details.

7.0 Online safety in schools and colleges

Oreston Community Academy 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.

7.1 Children and online safety away from school and college

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk or suffering abuse. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the Child Protection Policy. Referrals should still be made to Gateway/social worker and as required, to the police. Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the code of conduct.

Oreston Community Academy will ensure any use of **online learning tools** and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements. Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved. They should be read alongside the WeST Guides on Remote Learning and Safeguarding Remote Learning During Coronavirus.

- No 1:1s, groups only, unless as a result of risk assessments confirmed with the Headteacher. This may for example involve having the parent in the room.
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms agreed by school leaders
- Staff should record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

7.2 Online safety at home

Oreston Community Academy will continue to support parents, sharing online safety information, websites and resources for them to utilise on the school website and in school communications and updates. E.g. links to CEOPs, ThinkUKnow.

8.0 Supporting children not in school

Oreston Community Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its 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 should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person. Details of this plan must be recorded, as should a record of contact have made. The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits (if appropriately risk assessed). Other individualised contact methods should be carefully considered, ideally working with families, and recorded.

Oreston Community Academy and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan. Any such plan must be reviewed at least weekly and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate. The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages. Oreston Community Academy recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents and carers

All staff at Oreston Community Academy need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. Oreston Community Academy 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. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded. Oreston Community Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students. We will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish.

The Headteacher will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety. Oreston Community Academy will continually refer to the most recent 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. Where staff have concerns about the impact of staff absence – such

as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – they discuss them immediately with senior leaders.

9.0 Peer on Peer Abuse

Oreston Community Academy recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims. Where a school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in KCSIE and of those outlined within of the Child Protection Policy.

Oreston Community Academy will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person. Concerns and actions must be recorded and appropriate referrals made.