

Stocksbridge High School



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CHANGES TO THIS EDITION

Not applicable.

Child protection during the COVID-19 measures
(Annex to Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy)

Contents

Context	4
Version control and dissemination	4
Safeguarding priority.....	4
Current school position.....	5
Roles and responsibilities.....	5
Vulnerable children.....	5
Increased vulnerability or risk.....	6
Children of parents who are critical to the COVID-19 response.....	7
Attendance.....	7
Reporting concerns about children or staff	8
Staff training and induction	8
Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff	9
Peer on peer abuse	9
Online safety	9
Supporting children not in school.....	10
QUALITY IMPACT AUDIT AND ACTION PLAN	11

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. Minerva Learning Trust (MLT) has issued guidance and instructions to the schools within the Trust to outline expectations of schools at this time and Stocksbridge High School is working closely with MLT and the Local Authority (including social care, the police and multi-agency support teams, MAST) in order to support and safeguard children at this time.

This Annex to our Child Protection policy sets out details regarding our safeguarding of children during this time.

Version control and dissemination

This policy will be reviewed by our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy DSL 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 here <https://stocksbridgehigh.co.uk/dfе-and-policies/policies> and is made available to staff by email, through the MLE and through electronic safeguarding snippets/digests. The systems that support these changes have been communicated through phone calls and emails principally between the DSL, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), safeguarding team (made up of Pastoral Managers and Phase Leaders), wider staff community and fellow practitioners from outside agencies.

All staff (both teaching and support staff) have been made aware of the ways in which they can contact the DSL or DDSL where this is necessary.

Safeguarding 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 wellbeing and interests of children continue to come first
- If anyone in our school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately and know how to raise these concerns, even if they or the DSL/DDSL are working from home.
- A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available during the hours at which they would be during normal school hours. Outside of these hours, staff know how to raise a concern if it is urgent and they can contact their line manager or member of the senior leadership team, who has access to the DSL or DDSL.
- No unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children

- **Children should continue to be protected when they are online and schools should take reasonable and proportionate steps to continue to work with parents and carers in order to help support them to safeguard children.**

Current school position

Stocksbridge High School continues to offer care for a very small number of students who are vulnerable (i.e. who have a social worker or who have an EHCP) or for children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. The school has contacted these parents and carers where this applies. The school is staffed by a small number of teaching and support staff. After the Easter holidays, we are working with Stocksbridge Junior School to provide care for these students from both schools, however High School students will be supervised by qualified teachers. Only part of the junior school site is open and there is clear guidance to staff working at these sites regarding the maintenance of good hygiene (e.g. regular washing of hands), social distancing on site (e.g. sitting more than 2 metres from one another and maintaining this distance during the day) and ensuring that the number of people in one room is kept to an absolute minimum.

We continue to work closely with our safeguarding partners (the Local Authority, the Minerva Learning Trust, the government), and we will ensure this annex is consistent 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.

Roles and responsibilities

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

There are 2 members of Stocksbridge High School staff on site each day, who are fully informed regarding the duties and the reporting of attendance and maintenance of good safeguarding practice on site. Our DSL and/or Deputy DSL and Headteacher are available during the school day, either by email or by phone. Stocksbridge Junior school have the telephone numbers to contact the DSL and Headteacher.

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.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) for child protection are Sarah Drayson and Sam Tipson (Assistant Headteacher). The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL) for child protection are Jill Ganley (Y7 & Y8), Andrew Goodings (Y9 & Y10) and Andy Proost (Y11).

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children have been defined by the government as including those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with 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 MLT has also stated that vulnerable students include those who may be more vulnerable at the present time for the following reasons:

- Financial situation
- Health conditions (compromised immunity or mobility)
- Child protection status
- Mental health (student)
- Mental and physical health (parent/carer/sibling) – this includes students identified as young carers

The government has advised 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. The school will work with parents and carers to ensure this care is extended to those children and that provision is made for them in school. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, the reasons for this will be explored with the parent/carer. The social worker will be informed that the parent/carer wishes for their child to remain at home and the offer of care will continue to be made. It is worth noting that some children with social care involvement can safely remain at home depending on the reason for social care involvement. In these cases, the school has put in place other safeguarding measures (e.g. regular Safe and Well phone calls to the parent/carer and child, liaison with the appropriate social worker, home visits where necessary) during the period of partial school closure.

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. Miss Feechan (SENDCo) is the primary point of contact regarding these children. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Those students who are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), will receive food vouchers of £15 per child per week in lieu of the support normally provided by the government through school paying for a main meal at lunchtime. These will be distributed through the school.

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.

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. The school has issued guidance to all teaching staff regarding the setting of appropriate work, including guidance on how to 'chunk' the work to guard against overwhelming children, how to set

appropriate timeframes in which the work will be done and safeguarding considerations. We are responding regularly to feedback from parents and carers regarding how children are managing the work that is being set and will continue to review this and the guidance being given to staff. 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 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. Guidance and good advice on supporting students' mental wellbeing at this time has been shared with parents and carers and continues to be a priority in the school's setting of work remotely.

Children of parents who are critical to the COVID-19 response

The school is committed to providing care for children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response where there is no alternative to providing safe care (e.g. where the only alternatives are vulnerable and elderly grandparents, a single parent is working long night-shifts). We recognise that many students in a secondary setting may well be judged to be old enough to be left unsupervised.

The school has contacted all parents and carers asking them to declare if they consider their jobs to be critical to the COVID-19 response and if they need school to provide care. Where they have declared this to be the case, the school has made contact with these parents and carers to make arrangements for their children to be in school either for part of the week (e.g. when the parents are at work) or full-time. We recognise that this may change as time goes on depending on shifts, parents/carers and children having to self-isolate etc.

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 phone, email and by contacting additional contacts on the student's account. If contact cannot be made and the risk deems this necessary, a member of the safeguarding team will undertake a home visit or ask an appropriate agency to do so. This will always be done in discussion with the DSL or DDSL who will ensure the visit is conducted in accordance with guidance issued by the Minerva Trust that governs the way that these visits would be conducted (including maintaining a good distance from the house and not persisting where the parents/carers do not wish the visit to take place). The visit will be recorded in writing by the member of staff and the outcome of this visit will determine what further action needs to be taken (e.g. escalation to social care, another home visit etc.)

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, school staff will be in contact with their social worker.

The attendance of students is reported daily to the Department for Education. In addition, the school is required to report to the Local Authority on the answers to the following questions:

- Does the school have enough staff to maintain provision for students?
- Is the school confident that we can provide a meal for children attending the setting where necessary?
- Is the school confident that we can provide a meal for FSM pupils where applicable?
- Is the school able to contact (call) vulnerable pupils (those open to social care in particular) who have not attended to note the reason?

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 <https://stocksbridgehigh.co.uk/dfc-and-policies/policies> and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school. A reminder of how to raise these concerns has been sent out to all staff and is included in the guidance to staff about how to set work. This includes how to raise a concern outside of regular school hours or where the concern is urgent.

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 our **Allegations Against Staff Policy**. Any allegations of abuse must be made directly to the Headteacher, Andy Ireland.

Staff have been given guidance on how to ensure that they maintain appropriate professional discourse and communication with students during this time including how to communicate with students by email, good practice when teaching via audio recordings or videos and the appropriate online platforms to use (which will principally be Show My Homework).

Staff training and induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLs are unlikely to receive their refresher training from the Local Authority. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training. Other training (e.g. training on online safety) has also be postponed.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and 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 staff from another setting attends the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm 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.

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 our 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.

During this time we are not anticipating that any new volunteers or visitors will be coming in to school to work with children. If they were to do this, we would continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process for volunteers 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. Where we are working with other schools (currently only Stocksbridge Junior School), the SCR for both schools will be up to date to ensure that children are only supervised by those who are safe.

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 partial school 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 as much as they can. Any reports to the DSL or DDSL regarding peer on peer abuse will be communicated to parents/carers where this is happening outside of school and investigations will take place in school where this involves children who are continuing to attend school.

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 who are working in school.

Children working from home will potentially be online for much longer than usual and this may expose them to more risks than normal. Behaviour relating to sexting, gaming addiction and exposure to violent/sexually explicit material may increase in some households due to the amount of time children

will be at home and online. There are many organisations who give advice and guidance on how parents can keep their children safe online (e.g. Net Aware, NSPCC, UK Safer Internet Centre). The school's setting of work online will use websites that are appropriate to the work that is being set. We will only use Show My Homework and appropriate education platforms to set work and teachers have been explicitly told not to use platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to communicate with students.

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.

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 communication plan is in place to support that child. For most children this takes the form of a Safe and Well Call that happens regularly, including during holidays for most children. The details of these calls are logged by the member of staff and will be retained in the pastoral or safeguarding files for that child. The list of these children has been compiled by the pastoral team and Designated Safeguarding Leads. A log of those children receiving this support is kept by the DSL.

Mental health of children is a concern at this time, with most children being asked to social distance and remain in their homes for the vast majority of the time. Local and national provision such as helplines from Kooth www.kooth.com NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk are still available and children are aware of these providers. Other charities have provided a huge amount of guidance and advice to parents, carers and children at this time of national change and the school is making these resources available to parents and carers via messages and through our Twitter site. We are aware that when children return to school, some safeguarding issues may arise as a result of the extended time away from school.

QUALITY IMPACT AUDIT AND ACTION PLAN

- Put X in the PLUS column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a positive impact on a group.
- Put X in the neutral column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a neutral impact on a group.
- Put X in the MINUS column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a negative impact on a group.

In making a judgement due regard has been paid to the requirement to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS		PLUS	NEUTRAL	MINUS	ACTION
1	Age				
2	Disability				
3	Gender Reassignment				
4	Marriage and Civil Partnership				
5	Pregnancy and Maternity				
6	Race				
7	Religion or Belief				
8	Gender				
9	Sexual Orientation				
Other: Disadvantaged pupils					