



The Oak-Tree Group of Schools Safeguarding Policy Addendum during COVID-19

Introduction

This addendum applies during the period of school closure due to COVID-19 and reflects updated advice from our local safeguarding partners and local authority.

It sets out changes to our normal child protection policy in light of the Department for Education's guidance [Coronavirus: safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#), and should be read in conjunction with that policy.

Unless covered here, our normal child protection policies continue to apply.

Core Safeguarding Principles

During these challenging times, the safeguarding of all children at our schools – whether they are currently at home or in attendance – continues to be our priority. We will still have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (Sept 2019).

Although we are operating in a different way to normal, we are still following these important safeguarding principles:

- The best interests of children must come first.
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act on it 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

From 21 April 2020 until the government allows schools to reopen, our status will be as follows:

1. In school
 - Children of 'key workers' from Lower Kindergarten to Year 7 at Oaklands, Coopersale Hall, Normanhurst and Braeside will be invited to one central 'hub' at Oaklands, where they will be supervised by volunteer staff from across the Group.
 - There will always be at least one of the Heads present when children are on site, who will act as DSL.
2. Home learning
 - Teachers will be interacting with children on a daily basis either through portal/email/ Show My Homework messages or face-to-face through Zoom lessons.
 - Teachers should be mindful of the children's emotional and mental needs, and that all children's home lives will differ.

Reporting Concerns

All staff and volunteers must continue to act on any concerns they have about a child immediately. It is still vitally important to do this.

As a reminder, all staff should continue to work with and support children's social workers, where they have one, to help protect vulnerable children.

DSL (and deputy) arrangements

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding remain in line with those set out in our Child Protection Policy.

We will have a trained DSL or deputy DSL on site during the school day. Please contact the following if you have a concern about a child at any time:

- Braeside School: Chloe Moon cmoon@braesideschool.co.uk
- Coopersale Hall School: Kaye Lovejoy klovejoy@coopersalehallschool.co.uk
- Normanhurst School: Claire Osborn cosborn@oaktreeschools.co.uk
- Oaklands School: Sue Belej sbelej@oaklandsschool.co.uk

Each school has a number of Deputy DSLs, with whom the DSLs might liaise when discussing a concern. The nominated governor for Child Protection is Matthew Hagger: mh@oaktreeschools.co.uk.

Please use the following telephone numbers if you need to speak with somebody about a concern:

- Oaklands School Office: 020 8508 3517
- Oak-Tree Head Office: 020 8508 3109

The Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (for children at Braeside, Coopersale Hall and Oaklands) can be contacted directly on:

- 03330 139797 or 01245 435167
- escb@essex.gov.uk

The Waltham Local Authority Designated Officer (for children at Normanhurst) can be contacted directly on:

- 020 8496 3646 or 020 8496 6310

We will keep all school staff and volunteers informed by email as to who will be the DSL on any given day, and how to contact them. We will also ensure that DSLs (and deputies), wherever their location, know who the most vulnerable children in school are.

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people 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.

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.

The DSLs (and deputies) know who our most vulnerable children are and will liaise with them on an individual basis.

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. When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers should bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children's and adults' mental health. Where we are providing for children of 'key 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. We will also signpost all pupils, parents and staff to other resources to support good mental health.

We have the option to offer places in school to children who do not meet the Department for Education's definition of 'vulnerable', but about whom we have safeguarding concerns. We will work with parents/carers to do this on an individual basis.

Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. We are clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect.

During this period, there will be occasions where we have children from other schools in the Oak-Tree Group attending one central 'hub'. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between the schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

Monitoring Attendance

As most children will not be attending school during this period of school closure, we will not be completing our usual attendance registers or following our usual procedures to follow up on non-attendance.

The exception to this is where any child we expect to attend school during the closure does not attend or stops attending. In this case:

- We will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family.
- If contact cannot be made, the DSL or a deputy will be informed.
- The DSL or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents.
- 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 and the family are not put at risk.

We will use the Department for Education's daily online attendance form to keep an accurate record of who is attending school. We will check with parents and carers that we have up-to-date emergency contact details and any additional contact details where necessary.

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. Therefore, staff who volunteer to supervise children will sign in and out each day from the School Office using a new spreadsheet.

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 and Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

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. In urgent cases, when validating proof of identity documents to apply for a DBS check, we will initially accept verification of scanned documents via online video link, rather than being in physical possession of the original documents. New staff must still present the original documents when they first attend work at our school.

Staff training and induction

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLs 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 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. We do not envisage any new staff starting with us during the period of closure.

Concerns about a staff member or volunteer

We will continue to follow the principles set out in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately.

We will continue to refer adults who have harmed or pose a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

We will continue to refer potential cases of teacher misconduct to the Teaching Regulation Agency. We will do this using the email address Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk for the duration of the COVID-19 period, in line with government guidance.

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 and will follow the process set out in our Child Protection Policy. Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately.

We will continue to follow the principles set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education when managing reports and supporting victims of peer-on-peer abuse.

Online safety

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. Staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and will follow the process for online safety set out in our Child Protection 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 report the concern immediately to the DSL.

- In school
 - We will continue to have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in school.
 - Members of the Group IT support team will be on hand to support the learning.
- Outside school
 - Where staff are interacting with children online, they will continue to follow our existing Staff Code of Conduct and Staff Use of ICT Policy.
 - When using Zoom for 'live' lessons, staff should always:
 - make sure they are the meeting host with control over the lesson.
 - be dressed appropriately to be facing children.
 - make sure that there is nothing compromising in the background, for example photographs or pictures not appropriate for young children.
 - talk professionally to the children as if in the school classroom.
 - When using emails to communicate with children, staff should always:
 - use official school email addresses for correspondence and never their own personal email addresses.
 - openly copy their line manager or Head into an email to a child's personal email account when replying to a child.

We will make sure children know how to report any concerns they have back to our school, and signpost them to other sources of support too.

We will make sure parents and carers:

- Are aware of the potential risks to children online and the importance of staying safe online.
 - Know what our school is asking children to do online, including what sites they will be using and who they will be interacting with from our school.
 - Are aware that they should only use reputable online companies or tutors if they wish to supplement the remote teaching and resources our school provides.
- Know where else they can go for support to keep their children safe online. Particularly useful websites are:
- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
 - Childnet
 - Internet Matters
 - Net Aware
 - NSPCC
 - Parent Info
 - Safer Internet