CHILD PROTECTION POLICY DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE FOR ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS - *January 2021*
(Approved under Chair's Action)

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED – March 2021

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During this period of closure, if it is not possible to always have a Designated Lead (or Deputy) on school site, there will always be access to a Designated Lead or Deputy (Level 3 trained), either from our school via email/telephone, or another school or from the Local Authority

"Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community"

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**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FOR ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL, DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE DUE TO COVID-19**

1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system (a protective factor) for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is **an addition to our existing Child Protection Policy** and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to COVID-19.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- the current Child Protection Policy (September 2020)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- the school Character Education policy (Behaviour);
- the school Staff Behaviour policy (sometimes called Staff Code of Conduct);
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children *(everyone under the age of 18)* is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

2. Current context / statutory framework

Schools have been instructed to close, although are required to offer a place to vulnerable children and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and to agree an appropriate plan for that child.

We obviously want to support all our children during this time and will consider making a place available to other children with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.

3. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our pupils and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support pupils with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

In addition, we have put in place and will maintain safeguarding arrangements during the COVID-19 school closure period including:

- Welfare checks for all children. These are primarily achieved via twice daily 'Google Meet' sessions via Google Classroom where the classteacher and/or other adults can check in with the child to review and assess academic engagement with remote learning as well as emotional/social/welfare support. If a child fails to engage with these daily meetings or drops out of the sessions for no apparent reason a welfare telephone call will be made to see why these circumstances have occurred. Classteachers will keep the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** up to date with any areas of concern.
- In addition to the above, welfare checks on our most vulnerable families, including those with EHCPs (weekly telephone calls and an expectation to speak with the child; weekly email from SENCo for EHCP children with a follow up telephone call if no response within 24 hours)
- Risk assessments (These have been completed for all vulnerable and EHCP children. Where appropriate these have been shared with other key professional agencies, e.g. Social Care, Young Carers…etc.)

For vulnerable children (including those with a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan), existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet their need. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care. Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be assessed in consultation with the local authority, other involved agencies and parents.

As always, all staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** (or, in their absence, the **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead**).

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- Essex Effective Support
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2020)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the Essex Effective Support portal. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents / carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

4. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our school is 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. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have children from another school attending our site, or where our pupils may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between 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.

5. Interagency working

It is the responsibility of the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

6. Staff conduct

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. We have adapted our policies to reflect the current arrangements to ensure they cover online/remote learning.
The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

7. Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of all our pupils is always a priority and it is recognised that, without the protective factor of attending school, some of our children may be more vulnerable. Understandably, this is a worrying and challenging time for everyone, and we understand that families may be placed under considerable additional pressures, potentially coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home full-time and illness or bereavement.

We want to continue to do all we can to support our pupils and it is vital, therefore, that we work in partnership with parents / carers to do so. Parents / carers should share any concerns about the wellbeing of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

8. Online safety (for children away from school)

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability.

The breadth of issues within online safety is considerable. It can be categorised into three main areas of risk:

- **Content** - exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material. For example, pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **Contact** - subjection to harmful online interaction with other users. For example, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults;
- **Conduct** - personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. For example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

It is important for parents to be vigilant about their child's online activity and to inform the school of any concerns they may have about their child in this respect.

We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them to do this. (see Appendix A, B and C). Particularly useful websites are:

- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- Childnet
- Internet Matters
- Net Aware
- NSPCC
- Parent Info
- Safer Internet

Staff are aware that children are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.

APPENDIX A - online safety resources for pupils

Childline

Childline helps anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Children can talk with Childline about anything, whether big or small; their trained counsellors can help. See their website or call free on 0800 1111.

BBC Own It

Updated in relation to COVID-19, this website provides support for young people to take control of their online life. Topics include help and advice, skills and inspiration on matters such as friendships and bullying, safety and self-esteem.

BBC Bitesize

A free online study support resource designed to help with learning, revision and homework. Bitesize provides support for learners aged 5 to 16+ across a wide range of school subjects. It also supports children and young people's wellbeing and career choices; since 20 April daily lessons have been published to help pupils across the UK with home schooling.

APPENDIX B - online resources for parents and carers

Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)

The ESCB is a statutory multi agency organisation which brings together agencies who work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Essex. It has produced guidance for parents and carers to help them understand online safety and exploitation generally.

Internet Matters – helping parents and carers keep their children safe online

A not-for-profit organisation that has a simple purpose – to empower parents and carers to keep children safe in the digital world. See their website for further information.

The Children's Society

A charity fighting child poverty and neglect, and helping all children have a better chance in life. They have produced information about online safety.

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

The NSPCC has produced several online safety guides, from setting up parental controls to advice on sexting, online games and video apps.

Parent Info

A website offering expert safety advice in relation to a range of online harms, endorsed by the National Crime Agency's CEOP command.

Common Sense Media

Independent reviews, age ratings, & other information about all types of media for children and their parents.

Parent Zone **for families**

A website with a range of digital age resources for families, including guides on digital platforms and trends.

Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner has published a digital safety and wellbeing kit for parents, and a safety guide for children. The kit and guide have been designed to help ensure children are safe and their wellbeing is looked after while at home during the coronavirus outbreak – when their screen time maybe higher than usual.

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS)

The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) is a collaborative forum through which government, the tech community and the third sector work together to ensure the UK is the safest place in the world to be online.

Disrespect Nobody

Home Office advice on healthy relationships, including sexting and pornography.

LGfL DigiSafe
keeping children safe

SIX TOP TIPS
To Keep Primary Kids Safe Online During School Closure

Children are bound to spend lots more time on devices during school closure. DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT IT – lots will be schoolwork or catching up with friends. But there are ways to keep them safe, healthy and happy.

Don't worry about screen time; aim for screen quality

Scrolling through social media isn't the same as making a film or story, or Skyping Grandma. Use the Children's Commissioner's 'Digital Five A Day' to plan or review each day together.

Pie chart labels: Be Mindful, Connect, Be Active, Get Creative, Give to others

Check the safety settings are turned on

Whether it's your home internet, mobile devices, consoles, apps or games, there are lots of settings to make them safer. The key ones are - can they chat to strangers, can they video chat or 'go live', are their posts public? Internet Matters has hundreds of guides to parental controls.

Get your children to show you their apps and games

You don't need to know all about the latest app or game, but if your child shows you what they are doing and with whom, you'll probably see if it's appropriate or not. Remember 18 games are not more advanced – they are harmful to children! For parent guides to apps, including recommendations for kidsafe apps and video platforms, search for Common Sense Media or NSPCC's NetAware. And why not download the BBC Own It app?

Don't try to hide the news about coronavirus

If you don't talk about it, your children might read inappropriate pages, believe scare stories or simply catastrophise in their heads. Why not watch Newsround together and talk about how they feel – there is guidance from Childline to help you.

Remind them of key online safety principles

There are too many to list, but remember human behaviour is the same online and offline. Remind your children to be a good friend, to ask for help if they are worried or if someone is mean, not to get undressed on camera and most important of all... if somebody tells them not to tell or ask for help because it's too late or they will get in trouble, THAT'S A LIE!

If you aren't sure, ASK!

Your school may be able to give you advice, but there are plenty of other places to ask for help as a parent or a child, whether it is advice or help to fix something. Lots of sites are listed at reporting.lgfl.net, including ones to tell your kids about (they might not want to talk to you in the first instance).

Why not stick me to the fridge and check in each day?
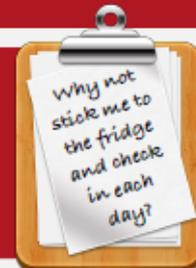
You can find anything above by just googling it, or follow us @LGfLDigiSafe on Twitter or Facebook where we regularly share these resources