Newhall Primary Academy and Nursery safeguarding and child protection
Annex 6 – COVID-19 school closure arrangements for safeguarding
31st March 2020

Key contacts

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Introduction

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked to keep their children at home, and schools were requested to offer childcare only for those children who are vulnerable, and for those who are offspring of critical workers who cannot otherwise be safely cared for at home. For the purposes of this policy, 'vulnerable' was defined by DfE as:

- those children who have a social worker, including children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority; it can also include those who have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at increased 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 and the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, these will be discussed with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Pupils 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 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, 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.

It is recognised that many children are considered to be vulnerable for reasons that are not included in the criteria above, for whom we will also put in place additional support, as detailed below. The DfE has given schools the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support, which will be discussed and agreed with parents as required.

Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements

Throughout the period of partial school closure, a minimum of one person from the school staff listed above will be designated to be responsible for safeguarding of pupils from our school. They will be available and on call either face to face or remotely as per the rota put in place by the school's leaders. Staff working in the

childcare provision will be informed at the start of each day of the named designated safeguarding person responsible for that day, and their contact details (phone and email) will be shared, as required.

In the event that DSL training expires for any of the above named staff members, the Trust safeguarding team will signpost an online DSL training course that can be used in lieu of face to face training during this period. The Deputy Director of Education (DDoE) and Trust safeguarding team will arrange for additional DSL capacity in the event that the DSL and Deputies named above are unable to provide adequate DSL cover.

The DSL and Deputy DSLs will continue to liaise closely with the Local Authority, Social Work teams and the Virtual School, as applicable, to support vulnerable pupils. Any professionals' meetings, i.e. core groups, child protection conferences, will be attended remotely where the facility from the Local Authority and school allows; in the event that this is not possible, a written report will be submitted. Where a vulnerable child who has a Social Worker does not attend childcare provision, the child's Social Worker will be informed.

Supporting pupils in school

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of our pupils. We will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. Senior Leaders will ensure that appropriate staff are on site throughout the operation of childcare provision, and that staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate to the number, age and understanding of the pupils who are attending, in order to maximise safety. This includes staff designated to undertake First Aid, and those supporting pupils with EHC plans.

To promote good physical health, we will refer to the 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 COVID-19. We also recognise that the current circumstances may affect a child's mental health. We will be alert to any changes in a pupil's behaviour, presentation and mood, and will support them, in collaboration with their parents, to manage any worries or anxieties that they may have.

Where a pupil is expected to attend childcare provision and does not do so, the usual absence procedures will be followed by school to ascertain their whereabouts, in line with the attendance policy. Parents are requested to inform the school as soon as possible if their child is not attending childcare provision on a day that had been previously agreed.

Safeguarding pupils who are not in school

To support and safeguard pupils known to be vulnerable whilst they are not attending school or childcare provision, the following procedures have been put in place, as a minimum:

- Review all pupils on vulnerable pupil list and identify those for whom school closure and a lack of contact with school staff would pose most risk, allocating each child to a member of the DSL team
- Ensure pupil contact details are up to date and are remotely accessible by all DSLs
- Ensure all DSLs have remote access to email and CPOMS
- Issue letter/communication to parent and any allocated workers of each pupil at risk to explain DSL contact taking place during school closure
- Make phone contact with each pupil at risk 3x per week to check safety and wellbeing; where possible, speaking to the child not just the parent
- Record a summary of conversation on CPOMS
- Monitor CPOMS and emails daily, and respond as required in line with main safeguarding policy and Local Authority thresholds

These procedures will continue throughout the period of childcare provision, including times designated as school holidays. During school holidays, communication to parents and pupils and record keeping will be

undertaken by the DSL who is 'on call' for the school on the given day as detailed above, to allow adequate opportunity for other members of the DSL team to have time off of work.

Where contact with vulnerable pupils not attending childcare provision has been difficult to achieve or maintain, every effort will be made to safely contact parents through all available means of school communication, i.e. phone, text, email. Staff are requested to not make home visits due to the risk of infection. If there are concerns about the welfare of a pupil where contact has not been established, we will follow our Local Authority Social Care referral processes.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for our pupils, and that the current circumstances surrounding restriction of movement may affect the mental health of all of our pupils and their parents/carers. All staff will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work to be completed at home, and in any other communications with parents and pupils. Any concerns for either parents or pupils related to mental health will be recorded as per the guidance above and below.

These procedures will be reviewed by the DSL and Deputy DSLs regularly, and no less than fortnightly. Any substantial changes to processes will be updated in the monthly policy review (see below)

Reporting a concern

If staff have a safeguarding concern about a child, they should follow the usual process as per the main safeguarding and child protection policy. Concerns should be reported on CPOMS and a DSL should also be told verbally. In the event that staff do not have access to the necessary device or systems for recording their concern, they must contact the named person responsible for safeguarding on the day in question via phone in order to make a verbal report. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay; where a concern is urgent and high risk, a verbal report must be made first, either in person or via phone, and followed up in writing as soon as possible thereafter. CPOMS and Emails will be monitored by the DSL team regularly, no less than daily, and actions will be completed and recorded in line with the main safeguarding policy and Local Authority thresholds.

We recognise that incidents of peer on peer abuse may still occur whilst childcare provision is in operation. In such an event, guidance contained within Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and from the main safeguarding and child protection policy will be followed, and staff will report this in line with the school's reporting procedures, as outlined above.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, the guidance contained within Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and Annex 5 of our main safeguarding and child protection policy still applies. Any concern of this nature must be reported directly to the Headteacher; if he/she is away from school, this should be done verbally via phone and followed up in writing as per the Headteacher's direction. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, this should be reported to the school's Deputy Director of Education and to the Chair of Governors.

Online safety

We will continue to provide a safe environment for pupils, which includes any activities undertaken online. Our online filtering system restricts access to unsuitable material. When electronic devices are in use by pupils in the school building, this will take place under appropriate supervision from adults, in line with our E-Safety Policy and Computing Policy.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns will be dealt with as per the main safeguarding and child protection policy, and where appropriate referrals will be made in line with Local Authority thresholds. Staff must only use approved methods or platforms to communicate with parents and pupils, and a record of all interactions must be kept, with a record of the date, time, length and purpose/nature of the interaction. Where this communication was on the phone, the record is expected to be created in line with the school's processes for

recording parental phone calls; in the event of an email communication, a retained copy of the email within the sender's email account is sufficient. If any communication with parents or pupils relates to or indicates a safeguarding concern, the usual safeguarding reporting procedures, as outlined above, must be followed.

Advice for parents regarding keeping their child safe online while at home has been shared via social media, which will be regularly updated to ensure it remains high profile for our parents.

Staff and volunteer recruitment

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable to work with children are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. Recruitment of staff and volunteers in our school is expected to remain at a minimum during this period; however, where recruitment is required and necessary, we will continue to follow the requirements set out within Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and our recruitment policy. Under no circumstances will a member of staff or volunteer upon whom the appropriate checks have not been completed be left to work unsupervised with a child or children.

Safeguarding induction and training

All current staff have received safeguarding induction and safeguarding training in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) and our main safeguarding policy. Where new staff start work with us during the period of partial school closure, they will be provided with, as a minimum, the main safeguarding and child protection policy, a copy of this annex, and Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) In addition, they will be provided with an induction session arranged by the DSL, this will include a Zoom Session with the DSL Flick online learning and CPOMs guidance.

Hub arrangements

As per previous REAch2 guidance, the principle of a 'school hub' would see a group of schools who are geographically close with a named school being allocated to house the provision of childcare for 'local children'. This would involve two or more schools working together to provide one childcare facility on one school site, thus reducing the immense demand on individual schools but still enabling the provision of a childcare facility within the local community. This may take place between schools from within REAch2, or it may involve joining with schools from outside of the Trust. In either case, the following principles, in addition to those already outlined in this annex, apply:

- each school within the hub will name a DSL or Deputy DSL to be responsible for safeguarding of their pupils on each day, which will be communicated with all staff at the beginning of each day
- staff working at the hub will be given sufficient access to each school's system for reporting safeguarding concerns, by taking their laptop and recording concerns on CPOMs and alerting a DSL via telephone/email.
- the responsible DSL from each school will monitor their safeguarding system i.e. CPOMS and e-mail regularly, no less than daily
- Headteachers of staff attending the hub will confirm in writing that their staff have full safer recruitment checks completed; this may be achieved by sharing safer recruitment policies and receiving written confirmation that staff have had all required checks (non-REAch2 schools) or by sharing relevant information from the school's SCR (REAch2 schools)
- staff attending at the hub will show school-based photo ID on arrival, which will be cross referenced with the staff rota
- a daily register will be completed and the home school will be informed of their children's attendance
- social workers will be informed of children attending the hub by their own school

Safeguarding support

The REAch2 safeguarding team will provide remote support to schools, DSLs and other school leaders to enable safeguarding to operate effectively. This may involve secure remote access to files and record keeping for the

purposes of quality assurance, guidance and direction. Regular DSL forums will also take place with a member of the Trust safeguarding team to offer guidance and support, to which all DSLs and Deputy DSLs will be invited.

Review

This annex will be reviewed by REAch2's Head of Safeguarding, and then by the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, on the first of each month throughout the period of partial school closure, or more frequently if updates from the DfE require. This will include any information received from Essex Local Authority safeguarding children partnership, Social Care, Virtual School, and the Designated Officer.