



## **Child Protection Policy Addendum**

# **COVID-19 Partial School Closure Arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School**

**Date: March 2020, updated Jan 2021**

**Approved by Covid-19 Sub-committee of Full Governing Board on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020  
and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Date shared with staff: 31.03.2020, 09.02.2021**

## Context

From 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, and again from January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, during national lockdowns, parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible. Schools were asked to remain open for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are Critical Workers in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whose cannot be safely cared for at home.

This addendum of St Bernadette's Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements for pupils during this period of partial closure.

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To be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection Policy and the most up-to-date government guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak?priority-taxon=b350e61d-1db9-4cc2-bb44-fab02882ac25>

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**Designated LAC & PLAC (Looked After  
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## Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children, as defined by the government are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
  - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
  - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
  - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- others at the school and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Schools are expected to allow and strongly encourage vulnerable children to attend. Parents/carers of vulnerable children and young people are strongly encouraged by the school to take up the place. In particular, children with a social worker are expected to attend provision (subject to public health advice), given their safeguarding and welfare needs.

If vulnerable children and young people do not attend, the school should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance considering the child's circumstances and their best interests
  - work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child or young person to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker and the Virtual School Head (where applicable) agrees that the child or young person's attendance would be appropriate
- Where a parent or carer of a vulnerable child wishes for their child to be absent, the government expects schools to authorise the absence during the Spring Term national lockdown period. Absence will not be penalised.

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should still speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. This conversation is particularly important for children with a social worker. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person and ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home. This situation should be kept under review and informed by any changes to the child's welfare. Where a vulnerable child or young person is not attending, schools

should have in place procedures to maintain contact, ensure they are able to access remote education support and regularly check if they are doing so.

Vulnerable children and young people who have not attended their setting following the introduction of national restrictions can revisit that decision at any point in time and parents, carers and young people should talk to their education setting and social worker (if they have one) if they wish to do so. Education settings should also continue to encourage vulnerable children to attend and review whether there are other children and young people who might be newly vulnerable and benefit from on-site attendance.

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. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. If parents of pupils with EHC Plans choose to keep their children at home, tailored provision and regular communication, check-ins and support from the school must take place.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability. The school will continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are attending school. The school will also continue to supply free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits related free school meals and who are learning at home, by providing lunch parcels or vouchers.

Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Leads and SENCo 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 or, alternatively, to provide a support plan for those remaining at home.

St Bernadette's 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. The lead persons for this will be: Mrs Jane Zamora - Headteacher/DSL and Mrs Melanie Smith - Deputy Headteacher/DSL

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or discontinues, the school will notify their social worker and maintain a regular communication and support plan for the children and family.

### **Attendance monitoring**

St Bernadette's will follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. The school will complete the daily DfE attendance form and the SIMs daily school attendance register. Attendance at live lessons for remote learning and engagement in remote learning activities will also be monitored. Where pupils educated off-site are not engaging in remote learning, parents will be contacted and appropriate support put in place. Weekly well-being phone calls will also be made.

St Bernadette's will, when communicating with parents and carers, confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

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 and email for example when working from home. All contact details can be seen on P2 of the addendum.

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing records with any newly raised concerns and liaising directly 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.

The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency Meetings and PEP meetings, which can be carried remotely.

### **Reporting a Concern**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Child Protection Policy, this includes making a report via the concerns reporting form, which can be done remotely but sent encrypted with a password which must be shared verbally by phone with the Designated (or Deputy) Safeguarding Lead.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the reporting form from home, they should telephone the Designated (or Deputy) Safeguarding Lead, who will record the concern on the reporting form.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they must use the concerns form to report the concern immediately to the headteacher - see contacts p2. If there is a requirement to make a notification to the headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done verbally by telephone and followed up with password protected emailed document to the headteacher.

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors (see contacts above)

### **Safeguarding Training and induction**

DSLs will continue to access appropriate, statutory training to fulfil their roles.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020). The DSL should communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter St Bernadette's, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the 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

Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of this Child Protection Policy Addendum, which will also be available within all red group register folders.

### **Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff**

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the school's workforce or gain access to children. When recruiting new staff, St Bernadette's will continue to follow the Safer Recruitment Policy and processes for our setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) (KCSIE).

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.

Where St Bernadette's are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in part 3 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

St Bernadette's 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 adults.

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, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, St Bernadette's will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined from paragraph 164 in KCSIE.

### **Online safety in school**

St Bernadette's 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, alongside the filtering systems that are in place. (See Online and Computer Safety Policy)

### **Children and online safety away from school**

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 should be dealt with as per the Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the staff code of Conduct. Staff and pupils must adhere to the guidance for live lessons as set out in the Remote Learning Policy and the Behaviour Policy Covid-19 Addendum.

St Bernadette's 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 if delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s - groups only unless with knowledge and consent of parents
- 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;
- Any 'live' class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be amended.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time
- Language used must be professional and appropriate, including by any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use the Google Classroom or school email address to communicate with pupils and families

### **Supporting children not in school**

St Bernadette's is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils. Where vulnerable pupils, those on the edge of social care support, or those who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, are not in attendance at the Childcare Provision the school will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person.

Details of contact and communication must be recorded on the Covid-19 register. The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, email contact, doorstep food parcels etc. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

St Bernadette's and its DSLs and SENCo will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan. This plan must be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight) and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website. St Bernadette's recognises that school is a protective factor for children and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers at St Bernadette's need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

Both parents and pupils will receive regular advice regarding Mental Health and Well-being and designated activities will be available on Remote Learning platform Google Classroom

### **Supporting children in school**

St Bernadette's 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.

St Bernadette's is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students and 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.

St Bernadette's 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, ventilation and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

### **Peer on Peer Abuse**

St Bernadette's recognises that during the current partial 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 part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within of the Child Protection Policy.

The school 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 on the school's concerns reporting form and appropriate referrals made to MASH.

**This Addendum to the School's Child Protection Policy will be reviewed on a termly basis and updated with any new governmental or local procedures as they are received.**