



# COVID-19 Safeguarding and Child Protection Arrangements During Partial or Complete School Closure

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## Context

From 20th March 2020 parents and carers were asked to keep their children at home wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID- 19 response and those children who are classified as vulnerable.

This document should be read as a COVID-19-specific supplementary amendment to our existing Safeguarding (Child Protection) policy, to be used in conjunctions with our existing Safeguarding (Child Protection) policy until the local authority/ central government/ PHE release further information relating to schools opening again for more than those learners stated in paragraph 1.

## Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact number	Email
Designated Safeguarding Lead & Head Teacher	Samantha Hoyer	07415 871847	<a href="mailto:samanthahoyer@thewritetime.org.uk">samanthahoyer@thewritetime.org.uk</a>
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Lana Philippson	07572 710635	<a href="mailto:Lanapilippson@thewritetime.org.uk">Lanapilippson@thewritetime.org.uk</a>
Head of Quality & Admissions	Sam Murray	07939 655309	<a href="mailto:Sammurray@thewritetime.org.uk">Sammurray@thewritetime.org.uk</a>
Chair of Governors	Chris Murray	07973 886796	<a href="mailto:chrismurray@thewritetime.org.uk">chrismurray@thewritetime.org.uk</a>

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## Vulnerable children

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.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents/ carers, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered on-site education 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.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) 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.

The Write Time Independent School 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 for looked-after and previously looked-after children. The lead person for this will be Alton McDonald. The DfE has 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 risk. In circumstances where a parent/carer does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and The Write Time Independent School will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent/carer.

Where parents/carers are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, The Write Time Independent School or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

The Write Time Independent School will encourage our vulnerable children and young people in remaining engaged with their education, including remote learning where necessary.

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## **Attendance monitoring**

The Write Time Independent School will continue to send weekly registers and reports to local authorities' parents/carers and schools regarding attendance and progress in lessons onsite or online.

The Write Time Independent School and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – The Write Time Independent School will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, and who do not

Daily contact will be made with parents/carers to ensure that we have regular updates regarding the wellbeing of their child(ren).

## **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The Write Time Independent School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Alton McDonald.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Lana Philippson.

The optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case a trained Deputy DSL (or 'deputy') will be available to be contacted via phone or online video – for example when working from home.

Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This senior leader will be Designated Safeguarding Lead trained. The acting DSL's duties might include updating and managing access to child protection online management system, liaising 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.

It is important that all The Write Time Independent School staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day staff onsite will be made aware who that person is and how to speak to them.

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

## **Reporting a concern**

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Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy by completing the form 'Safeguarding Report Appendix (Offline).doc' that is available at : Company/ AP Independent School/ Safeguarding Information/ Safeguarding Report Appendix (Offline).doc , which can be accessed remotely where necessary. Once completed, this form needs to be stored securely under: Company/ AP Independent School/ Safeguarding Information/ Safeguarding reports, and the DSL/ DDSL/ SLT member responsible for safeguarding contacted immediately.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff needs to report a safeguarding concern and does not have access to the internet, they should document the details as fully as possible, and relay this information to the DSL via telephone/ alternative method as soon as is possible

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

The reporting procedure for events that happen away from the school site (including distance outreach visits and virtual learning), remain identical to those that occur onsite.

### **Allegations involving a member of staff / volunteer:**

The Write Time is committed to having effective and safe recruitment and human resources procedures, including conducting all of the necessary DBS checks, and checking of the ISA barred list to make sure that all staff and volunteers (including volunteering parents) are safe to work with children and young people. It is an essential element of The Write Time policy that all such checks are completed before any member of staff or volunteer has any form of access to children even if directly supervised.

If, in the course of these checks for either a member of staff or a volunteer a result is returned that raises concerns or is not up to the standard required the matter will be referred to Chris Murray.

However, there may still be occasions when there is an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer. Allegations against those who work with children, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, cover a wide range of circumstances.

The following procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way which has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way which indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

The allegations may relate to the person's behaviour at work, at home or in another setting.

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All allegations should be notified directly to the DSL, who will then instigate communication of the allegation to the Borough's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day.

Croydon's named LADO is Steve Hall, and he can be contacted on: 020 8726 6400 (extension 84322)

The DSL should receive reports in relation to allegations against those within the organisation. The employee, against whom allegations have been made, will be suspended from duties if an investigation is required. This is in the best interests of the child / individual and the employee.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will discuss the matter with the Named Senior Officer/Manager to determine what steps should be taken and where necessary obtain further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made. The discussion should also consider whether there is evidence/information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded, whether a referral to the Children's Social Care team is required and/or whether suspension and investigation leading to subsequent disciplinary action is appropriate.

Some allegations will be so serious as to require immediate referral to the Children's Social Care team and the Police, but common sense and judgment must be applied in reaching a decision about what action to take.

If the allegation is not patently false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the LADO will immediately refer the matter to the Children's Social Care team and ask for a Strategy Discussion/Meeting to be convened straight away.

Where the safety of other children is in question as a result of the allegation, consideration should be given to invoking the Complex (Organised or Multiple) Abuse Procedure.

Some allegations may be less serious and at first sight might not seem to warrant consideration of a police investigation or enquiries by Children's Social Care team. However, it is important to ensure that even apparently less serious allegations are followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation. Consequently, the LADO should be informed of all allegations that come to the employer's attention and appear to come within the scope of this procedure so that he or she can consult Police and social care colleagues as appropriate.

Where a referral is made directly to Children's Social Care, they will consult with the Local

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Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Police and the Named Senior Officer.

Where such allegations are made, consideration must be given to the following three strands:

1. The police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
2. Enquiries and assessment by Children's Social Care as to whether the child is in need of protection or in need of services
3. Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

In addition, such allegations may give rise to complaints of poor practice, which should be considered in line with The Write Time's complaints or disciplinary procedures. Concerns around the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be directed to the Chair of Governors: Chris Murray.

The school will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

## Safeguarding training and induction

DSL training will take place online through our online training provider. The Designated Safeguarding Lead has received external face to face training. It is very unlikely that any face-to-face training will take place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training, completed online DSL training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). 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, they will continue to be provided with relevant safeguarding and DSL training online.

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 our Safeguarding (Child Protection) policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

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### **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, The Write Time Independent School will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education ('KCSiE') 2019. 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. The Write Time Independent School 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 adult. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSiE 2019.

The Write Time Independent School will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSiE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral'. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing: [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk)

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, The Write Time Independent School will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSiE.

### **Online safety in schools**

The Write Time Independent School will continue to provide a safe environment, including during its virtual schooling platform. This includes the use of restrictive access settings on technology where appropriate. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

### **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 Safeguarding (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 school's Employee Handbook.

The Write Time Independent School will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

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Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only. Where a 1:1 is necessary, it must be explained to the learner that a second member of staff or parent/carer will be present as a passive observer
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household who may become visible to learners of any age
- Any computers used should be in an appropriate area, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred out
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms approved by the headteacher to communicate with pupils.
- Staff should record the dates and time and attendance of any sessions held.

## Supporting children not in school

The Write Time Independent School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its Children and Young people.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person.

The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

The Write Time Independent School and its DSL 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 Write Time Independent School recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers at The Write Time Independent School need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

The Write Time Independent School 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.

## Supporting children in school



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The Write Time Independent School 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.

The Write Time Independent School will refer to 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.

Where The Write Time Independent School staff have concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – staff will discuss them immediately with the headteacher or Chair of Governors.

### **Peer-on-Peer abuse**

The Write Time Independent School recognises that during the 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 the Safeguarding (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.