



**COVID-19 school temporary closure  
arrangements for**

# **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

**(Addendum to 2019 Policy)**

**March 2020**

## **Context**

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

Schools were asked to provide care for a limited number of children; children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

This addendum of the James Montgomery Academy Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our safeguarding arrangements as a Trust in this time of national emergency.

## **Our responsibility**

Though schools are closed due to the outbreak, we are responsible for providing places to vulnerable children and the children of workers critical to the COVID-19. It is imperative that school remains a safe place for children, however the fewer children making the journey to school, and therefore the fewer children in school, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

It may be that not all JMAT schools can remain open. In this case, the JMAT will move to a hub model of providing childcare provision. This will be four hub schools located over the trust. The JMAT will work with the local authority to agree the provision needed locally to support the needs identified.

## **Children of Key Workers**

Children with one parent/carer who is listed on the government's critical worker list should be considered for a school place, so long as their job cannot be done from home. Employees of the following sectors are classed as key workers:

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services
- Local and national government
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services

Many parents working in these sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, in order to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

## **Vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children are children who:

- Are supported by social care.
- Have safeguarding and welfare needs.
- Have child in need plans.

- Have child protection plans.
- Are 'looked after' children.
- Are young carers.
- Are disabled.
- Have an EHC plan.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents. This is to decide whether they need to continue to be offered childcare provision in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This risk assessment will take a RAG-rating format, as directed by the local authority. 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.

The James Montgomery Academy Trust schools 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 person for this is the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children in each school.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an educational setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an educational setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and DSL/Designated Teacher will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

The James Montgomery Academy Trust will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the DSL will notify their social worker.

## **Supporting children not in school**

The JMAT and its schools is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children.

All JMAT staff recognise that school is a protective factor for children and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

**It is expected that class teachers have regular contact with the children in their class to support home learning. If they have any concerns about lack of contact, response to home learning or any other safeguarding concerns, they should log their concern on Safeguard for the safeguarding team to follow up.**

Where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

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.

Details of this communication must be recorded on Safeguard, as should a record of any contact made, whether successful or not (no response).

The communication plans can include: remote contact by Dojo, email, text or phone contact. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

## **Contact with vulnerable children not in school**

Where applicable, and when a child has a social care provision, the social worker must be informed that the child(ren) is not attending school.

**School contact with vulnerable children should be at least weekly. DSLs know who their vulnerable children are and should put a plan in place for regular contact on a case to case basis. School staff will not make home visits to pupils at this time, any concerns should be reported to the DSL and further advice sought from agencies such as MASH, early help or the police for a safety and welfare check.**

## **Supporting children in school**

The JMAT is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff, and will continue to provide 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 JMAT 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.

The JMAT 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.

Where the hub school Lead has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – they will discuss them immediately with trust staff.

## **Attendance monitoring**

During this period of temporary closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools do not need to take an attendance register. For administrative purposes Code # (planned whole or partial closure) should be used.

However, schools/hub schools will be required to submit attendance information for childcare provision to the local authority. This will provide a record of attendance for safeguarding purposes and allow schools to provide accurate, up to date data to the government. This will also help DfE to track capacity in the system, enabling the department to feed into wider tracking of the impact of the virus to support scientific advice.

## **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Where childcare is provided on individual school sites each JMAT school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL present.

For childcare provision in the hub model the optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or Deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case, in the scenario of a protracted closure and/or high staff infection rates, a trained 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.

It is important that all staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy) whilst they are providing childcare, whether this is in an individual school or a hub model. Each day, staff on site will be made aware of who that person is and how to speak to them.

The DSLs in each JMAT school will continue to engage with social workers and attend all multi-agency meetings if required. This can be done remotely.

## **Reporting a concern**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the JMAT Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via Safeguard, which can be done remotely. This applies when working in the childcare provision or interacting/communicating remotely with pupils for home learning.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access Safeguard from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy or Headteacher. This will ensure that the concern is received.

**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/hub model, they should report the concern to their headteacher by phone and followed up with an email as soon as possible.

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors of that school. The JMAT will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

## **Safeguarding Training and induction**

DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst the threat of COVID-19 remains. For the period that 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 and have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The DSL should communicate any new local arrangements with staff, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

If staff are deployed from another education 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

For movement within the JMAT, the DSL from the hub school should seek assurance that the member of staff has received appropriate safeguarding training.

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

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 the JMAT are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process required by KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

The JMAT 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. The JMAT 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.

## **Single Central Record**

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 hub school will continue to keep the Single Central Record (SCR) up to date as required by KCSIE, requesting DBS and safer recruitment information from individual trust schools.

## **Online safety in schools**

The JMAT and its schools 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/hub 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 JMAT Safeguarding Policy using the Safeguard electronic recording system. 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 JMAT Digital Safeguarding Policy and the JMAT Code of Conduct.

JMAT school staff 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 when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No one-to-ones, groups only
- 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; and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- 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 JMAT to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

## **Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

The JMAT 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 procedure outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. Concerns and actions must be recorded on Safeguard and appropriate referrals made.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The current COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation. Thus, this addendum will be regularly monitored and reviewed. Any updates will then be communicated with school staff via Designated Safeguarding Leads and Headteachers.

**Date of Addendum: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**