



# **COVID-19 amendments to the Child Protection Policy**

**The Palmer Catholic Academy**

1st June 2020

This interim guidance has been developed as a response to Government's guidance, however, please be aware this could be subject to change as legislation develops. Please make sure you have the latest version of this document. There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak of Covid19. Many young people are now at home and staffing is likely to be significantly affected through illness and self-isolation. However, as of Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 schools will be extending their opening to include all students in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 from the week commencing 1 June, alongside priority groups (vulnerable children and the children of critical workers). Eligible children should be offered a full-time place. For more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

Despite the changes, the school's Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DSL in line with our established safeguarding procedure.

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the school and following advice from government and local agencies.

### **The current school position and local advice**

Any updates from the 3 safeguarding partners including information on changes in arrangements for CP Conferences and Looked After Reviews can be found here:

<https://www.redbridgescp.org.uk/>

### **Reporting arrangements**

The school arrangements continue in line with our child protection policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: L Williams

The Deputy DSLs are: C Mayer & M Allitt

The school's approach ensures the DSL or a deputy is always on site while the school is open. In the unusual circumstance this is not possible the DSL or Deputy DSL will be contactable and the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will email all staff by 8am to advise they are acting in an on-site safeguarding role together with contact details for the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Staff will continue to follow the Child Protection procedure and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

There has been a slight reduction to MASH referrals during lockdown so we anticipate that as children return we may see an increase in MASH referrals. Children's services may be affected by an increased demand for services. Please discuss any referrals you are unsure of with the MASH team/Safeguarding lead before sending to ensure that urgent referrals are dealt with promptly. Please ensure you have checked the thresholds document:

<https://www.redbridgescp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Redbridge-LSCB-Multi-Agency-Thresholds-Document-September-208-Final.pdf>

Where a child is at risk of significant harm there may be a need to be persistent in referring concerns to the local authority. The arrangements for contacting children's services are:

### **Redbridge**

If you have concerns about a child's welfare or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, please telephone Redbridge Council on:

020 8708 3885 from 9.00am to 5.00pm

020 8708 5897 (after 5.00pm and weekends)

Alternatively, you may complete and submit a LBR Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) Template to [CPAT.referrals@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:CPAT.referrals@redbridge.gov.uk).

### **Barking & Dagenham**

If you have concerns about a child's welfare or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, please telephone Barking & Dagenham council on:-

020 8 227 3811

Alternatively, you may complete and submit a LBBD Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) via the online portal <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/form/child-protection-referral-form>

### **Newham**

If you have concerns about a child's welfare or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, please telephone Newham council on:-

020 3 373 4600

020 8 430 2000

Alternatively you may complete and submit a Newham Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) via the online portal [https://azcareportal-live.newham.gov.uk/aztriageportal/jsp\\_mash/admin/login.jsp](https://azcareportal-live.newham.gov.uk/aztriageportal/jsp_mash/admin/login.jsp)

### **Havering**

If you have concerns about a child's welfare or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, please telephone Havering council on:-

01708 433222

01708 433999 (after 5.00pm and weekends)

Alternatively, you may complete and submit a Havering Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) via the online portal

[https://www.havering.gov.uk/info/20083/safeguarding\\_children/412/report\\_a\\_concern\\_with\\_a\\_chi  
ld](https://www.havering.gov.uk/info/20083/safeguarding_children/412/report_a_concern_with_a_child)

## **Essex**

If you have concerns about a child's welfare or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, please telephone Essex council on:-

0345 6037627

0345 6061212 (after 5.00pm and weekends)

Alternatively, you may complete and submit an Essex Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) via the portal <https://www.essexeffectivesupport.org.uk/request-support/>

For immediate help ring the police on 999.

Should a child in the school's view be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the school will immediately follow the safeguarding children partnership escalation procedure, available here:

## **Redbridge**

<https://www.redbridgescp.org.uk/professionals/what-should-you-do-when-there-is-a-professional-disagreement-about-a-child/>

### **Identifying vulnerability**

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most 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 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 should be risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority (LA) 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.

We know that schools and other education providers may also want to support other children who are vulnerable where they are able to do so. Eligibility for free school meals should not be the only determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

We have put in place specific arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Looked After Children – [designated teacher calling each week, contact with social workers/Virtual schools regarding whether or not a child is attending]
- Previously Looked After Children – [included in calls from form tutors and Heads of Year]
- Children subject to a child protection plan – [Liaison with children's services regarding whether or not child is attending academy, members of safeguarding team contacting twice weekly and any failure to contact reported same day to children's services]

- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker. [CIN children contacted weekly by member of safeguarding team and any failure to contact reported same day to children's services] There is an expectation that children with a social worker must attend school (or another school by arrangement), unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.

- Children with an EHCP – [All students with an EHCP Plan have been offered a place in the academy, risk assessments have been carried out for those remaining at home and those attending the academy]

- Children on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker – [a number of these students have been offered places and are attending the academy]. Where required these children will be offered a place at school (or another school by arrangement).

- Other children the school considers vulnerable. More children may be added to this group in response to concerns raised with the DSL. These children can be offered care at school if required.

Each of these children has an individual plan which has been shared with other agencies involved in their care, including where appropriate their social worker and the Virtual School Head for Looked After and previously Looked After Children.

In addition, the following groups have specific arrangements around contact and support from the school.

- Children of key workers who may attend school – [parents have contacted the academy and a number of children have been attending since commencement of lockdown]

The plans in respect of each child in these groups should state how often they are to be reviewed.

### **Attendance**

Parents and carers of eligible year groups, and critical workers/parents and carers of vulnerable children, are strongly encouraged to bring in their children, but they will not face fines or other sanctions if they don't.

Your school will not be held to account for your attendance figures during this time.

You should encourage parents whose children have been invited in to call you each day if they are not coming in as normal, so you understand why and can discuss it with them if needed.

You should also prepare to continue with any arrangements that have been made with the local authority with the aim of safeguarding vulnerable children.

The school is following the attendance guidance issued by Government. Where a child is expected and does not arrive the school will follow our attendance procedure and make contact with the family. If contact is not possible by 9:30am the DSL must be informed. The DSL will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent (Skype, FaceTime, through a relative etc) but if necessary arrange a home visit by the school or another appropriate agency. A risk assessment will be undertaken to consider managing the implications of COVID-19 alongside other risks perceived to the child. The risk of COVID-19 does not override the duty on the school to ensure children and young people are safe.

The School will follow the guidance below issued by the Local Authority.

## **Procedures for recording school attendance**

Please record all students on the electronic registration system with a # code regardless of whether they are in school.

Use the spreadsheet provided by the Redbridge Research and Data Team to record the attendance of those students who you are expecting to attend school on each day.

Allocate staff to follow up those children who are not in attendance by normal procedures i.e. group-call, telephone call.

For those students not in attendance who are open to Social Care either under the category of Child in Need or subject to a Child Protection plan could you please email the names of these to Sue Bendon at [sue.bendon@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:sue.bendon@redbridge.gov.uk). Please advise if you have managed to speak to the parent/carer and if so, please give the reason provided by the parent for absence. EWS will liaise with our Social Care colleagues where necessary to decide on the next course of action.

For other children who do not attend and you have concerns please discuss with your LBR allocated EWO.

If you are a school that does not currently use our service, we are asking that you follow step 4 as above. For step 5 please contact us on 0208 708 6020 or [ews@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:ews@redbridge.gov.uk). We are asking for these procedures to be adopted by all schools during the current time so that we can ensure that a consistent approach is adopted for the follow up of this vulnerable cohort.

## **Staff will be aware of increased risk**

The pressures on children and their families now are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty, and financial or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning – see below). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns.

## **Peer on peer abuse**

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a school closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other schools as an interim measure and similar. When contacting these families our staff will ask about relationships between learners.

We also address the issue of peer-on-peer abuse in our remote learning curriculum. [please describe].

## **Mental Health**

The coronavirus outbreak may have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties for some children. It is important to recognise that while 'getting back to normal' is important and will be reassuring for many, school staff will need to consider how to support:

- individual children who have found the long period at home hard to manage
- those who have developed anxieties related to the virus
- those about whom there are safeguarding concerns
- those who may make safeguarding disclosures once they are back in schools

Some children may also have experienced bereavements in their immediate family or wider circle of friends or family or had increased/new caring responsibilities. All children will have missed the routine of school, seeing their friends, and being supported by their teachers and other adults in the school.

To assist students who may be in need of support the academy can help with referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and with parental permission and where appropriate refer students for in house counselling with trained counsellors from Brentwood Catholic Children's Services.

### **Risk online**

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. The school may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the school.

- The school continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- Our governing body will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate
- The school has taken on board guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium. We have reviewed the code of conduct and information sharing policy accordingly.
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the school's code of conduct and importance of using school systems to communicate with children and their families.
- Staff have read the academy's guidance on live and pre-recorded video and audio lessons for distance learning dated April 2020.

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

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs that 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 code of conduct.

The Palmer Catholic Academy 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 1:1s, 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 the school to communicate with students.
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the school, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. We have set out the school's approach, including the sites children will be asked to access and set out who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online. Parents have been offered the following links:

- Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- London Grid for Learning - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- Net-aware - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
- Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers
- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre.

### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

With such different arrangements young people could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

Any staff or volunteers from outside our setting will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of the risks and know what they need to do if they are concerned.

We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authority remain unchanged:

### **Redbridge**

Helen Curtis, 020 8708 5350

[helen.curtis@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:helen.curtis@redbridge.gov.uk)

If necessary, the school will continue to follow the duty to refer to DBS any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, and to the Teacher Regulation Agency in line with paragraph 166 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 using the address [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk)

### **New staff or volunteers**

New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the DSL or a deputy. They must read the school child protection policy, the behaviour policy, the whistleblowing policy and the code of conduct. The DSL or deputy will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a child and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

If staff or volunteers are transferring in from other registered education or childcare settings for a temporary period to support the care of children, we will seek evidence from their setting that:

- the member of staff has completed relevant safeguarding training in line with other similar staff or volunteers,
- they have read Part I and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and
- where the role involves regulated activity and the appropriate DBS check has been undertaken by that setting we will undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether a new DBS would need to be undertaken. It may be in these exceptional times we can rely on the DBS undertaken by their setting.

[If you register with Safeguarding Network you can include: New starters will complete the Keeping Children Safe in Education Knowledge Check and the Introduction to Safeguarding Children online courses with Safeguarding Network within their first week.]

#### **Our child protection procedures hold strong:**

- Volunteers may not be left unsupervised with children until suitable checks have been undertaken. People supervising volunteers must be themselves in regulated activity, able to provide regular, day to day supervision and reasonable in all circumstances to protect the children.
- The school will undertake a written risk assessment on the specific role of each volunteer to decide whether to obtain an enhanced DBS check (with barred list information) for all staff and volunteers new to working in regulated activity in line with DBS guidance.
- When undertaking ID checks on documents for the DBS it is reasonable to initially check these documents online through a live video link and to accept scanned images of documents for the purpose of applying for the check. The actual documents will then be checked against the scanned images when the employee or volunteer arrives for their first day.
- The school will update the Single Central Record of all staff and volunteers working in the school, including those from other settings. This will include the risk assessment around the DBS. A record will be kept by [insert arrangements] of who is working in the school each day.

#### **New children at the school**

Where children join our school from other settings we will require confirmation from the DSL whether they have a Safeguarding File or SEN statement/EHCP. This file must be provided securely before the child begins at our school and a call made from our DSL or a deputy to the placing school's DSL to discuss how best to keep the child safe. In some unusual circumstance this may not be possible. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker and where relevant for the Virtual School Head. Safeguarding information about children placed in our school will be recorded on our safeguarding system, will be securely copied to the placing school DSL and will be securely returned to the placing school on completion of the child's placement with us so there is a continuous safeguarding record for the child.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information. This will be recorded on our safeguarding recording system.

This policy has been remotely approved by Governors on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and is available on the academy website at [www.tpc.academy](http://www.tpc.academy).