COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection

Addendum to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

January 2021

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Context

From 4th January 2021 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 workers as defined by the government and children who are vulnerable.

This addendum to the NEST Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy contains details of the Trust safeguarding arrangements during the period of partial school closure form January 2021.

The way schools are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. However, the government have highlighted the following key principles:

- The best interests of children must always continue to come first
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act and act immediately
- A DSL or deputy should be available and preferably on site
- It is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online.

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who:

- Are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children 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.
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health.
- 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 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 school will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent/carer. Where parents or carers are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, the school or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England and the Department for Education.
- At least weekly contact will be made by the school with vulnerable children and their families when they are not in school.
- Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed by the school, in consultation with the Local Authority if necessary and parents or carers, to decide where their needs are best met. We expect that most children with an EHC plan will be in school.
- Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy), have the flexibility to offer a place to children who they feel are vulnerable.

Attendance Monitoring

- Schools will follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not.
- Schools will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.
- In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, school name will notify their social worker.
- There will be systems for checking, at least weekly, whether pupils are engaging with their work, contact will be made with parents/carers where engagement is a concern to put in place a plan for greater engagement with learning.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Each NEST school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL. These are listed in Appendix 1 of this addendum with their contact details. There should be a DSL or Deputy DSL on site at all times.

If it is not possible to have a trained DSL (or deputy) on site, they should be available to be contacted via phone and/or email. Where a school's 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 access to the Safeguard system and
- Liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy)
- As required, liaising with children's social workers.

All school staff need to have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day, staff on site will be made aware of that person is and how to speak to them.

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

If a DSL cannot be contacted, the NEST lead for safeguaurding should be contacted. See Appendix 1

Working with other agencies

NEST will continue to work with Children's Social Care, and with Virtual School Head for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children. It is expected that Child Protection conferences or review meetings concerning vulnerable children will be attended remotely, by the relevant staff if possible.

This addendum will be updated where necessary, to reflect any updated guidance from:

- Our 3 local safeguarding partners
- The Local Authority about children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and Children's Social Care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.

Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child either in school or at home, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the NEST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via Safeguard, which can be done remotely.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the Safeguard system, they should email the school Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher and the Trust Safeguarding Lead. Appendix 1

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay whether this arises from seeing the child in person or remotely.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should email their report the concern to the Headteacher. Concerns around the Headteacher should be

directed to the Chair of the Local Committee of each school. NEST will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

Safeguarding training and induction

DSL training and update training should continue during this period of closure via on-line courses.

Safer Recruitment training should be kept up to date and is being offered remotely by The Trust.

Staff should continue to receive regular safeguarding updates and reminders, including confirming that they have read this addendum.

NEST will communicate any new local arrangements, so that staff know what to do if they are worried about a child.

The Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy applies to all staff in all NEST schools and will continue to apply in collaboration with this addendum.

Where new staff are recruited, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

Safer recruitment 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, all NEST schools will continue to follow safer recruitment processes.

In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its guidance on DBS ID checking to minimise the need for face-to-face contact. The DBS ID checking guidance will be changed for a temporary period.

The change will enable:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted

Please note, the change should only be implemented for urgent cases where it is not possible to follow the normal identity checking guidelines. The applicant must present the original versions of these documents when they first attend the school.

Schools 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.
- Consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) if needed. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk
- Be aware, on any given day, which staff will be in the school, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity.
- Keep the Single Central Record (SCR) up to date.

Supporting children not in school

NEST is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children. 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.

Details of this plan must be recorded on Safeguard, as should a record of any contact have made.

The communication plans can include:

- Remote online contact and/or phone contact.
- All individualised contact methods should be recorded on Safeguard.
- Each 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 in term time) and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.
- The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages.
- NEST 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 will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

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 NEST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police via the DSL.
Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the NEST Code of Conduct, Online Safety Policy and Pupil and Staff AUPs.
Online learning tools and systems need to be in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Schools need to be aware that parents and carers may choose to supplement the school online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their communications with parents and carers, schools should emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children. Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online includes:

- 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 careers 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

Supporting children in school

NEST is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils. Schools 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. Staff need to be mindful of one adult to one child groupings.

Risk assessments will be reviewed and updated regularly.

Schools 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 COVID19.

Schools 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. If needed any concerns will be recorded on Safeguard.

If a school has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as that of a Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aider they will raise this concern with the NEST Central Team.

Children attending other settings

Where a child/children is/are temporarily required to attend another setting, we will make sure the receiving school is provided with any relevant welfare and child protection information.

Wherever possible, the DSL or Deputy and/or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) will share, as applicable:

- The reason(s) why the child is considered vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them
- The child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or personal education plan
- Details of the child's social worker
- Details of the virtual school head
- Where the DSL, Deputy or SENCO can't share this information, a Senior Leader will do so.

We will share this information before the child arrives as far as is possible, and otherwise as soon as possible afterwards. Appendix 2

Online safety in schools

All NEST schools will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of the LGFL online filtering system. Where pupils are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

Mental health

Where possible, schools will continue to offer support for pupil mental health.

We will aim to signpost all pupils, parents and staff to resources to support good mental health at this time.

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children's and adults' mental health.

Support from NEST

NEST Central Team will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable each DSL to carry out their role effectively.

This includes, remotely accessing Child Protection files if needed for the purpose of support, guidance and direction.

Appendix 1

Dedicated Safeguarding Leads across the Trust

School	Safeguarding Leads	Contact Details
NEST Central Team	Ann Golding	ofice@nestschools.org
Alexandra Infant School	**DSL**	admin@alexandra-inf.bromley.sch.uk
	Alison Hills	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Maria Cenayko Elizabeth Frost Mandie Fulker	
Alexandra Junior School	**DSL**	admin.office@alexandra-jun.bromley.sch.uk
	Claudette Maragh	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Panayiota Shaw	
Balgowan Primary School	**DSL**	admin@balgowan.bromley.sch.uk
	Hayley Andrews	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Peter Hines Maria Veysey	
Bickley Primary School	**DSL**	admin.office@bickley.bromley.sch.uk
	Elizabeth Blake	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Cara Moon Louisa Dakin	
Farnborough Primary School	**DSL**	admin.office@farnborough.bromley.sch.uk
	Angela James	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Claire Browne Belinda Jones	
Highfield Schools	**DSL**	general.office@highfield-inf.bromley.sch.uk
	Allison Morris	
	Deputy DSLs	admin@highfield-jun.bromley.sch.uk
	Zoe Frankis Alastair Taylor Nicola Williamson	
Manor Oak Primary School	**DSL**	office@manoroak.bromley.sch.uk
	Jane Butler	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Victoria Colyer Tracey Prandota	
Perry Hall Primary School	**DSL**	admin@perryhall.bromley.sch.uk
	Lorraine Richards	
	Deputy DSLs	
	Nicola Smith Jonathan Hewitt	

School	Safeguarding Leads		Contact Details
Pickhurst Infant School	**DSL**		office@pickhurst-inf.bromley.sch.uk
	Elizabeth Laws		
	Deputy DSLs		
	Esin Aziz Lee Pender Kasia Ledwidge		
Worsley Bridge Primary School	**DSL**		admin@worsleybridge.bromley.sch.uk
	Angela James		
	Deputy DSLs		
	Sophie Drake David Bennett Fiona Swain Emma Bartlett		

Appendix 2

Checklist for safeguarding information to be sent when a child moves school

This form needs to accompany the transfer of a vulnerable child to a hub school, along with information listed.

Child's Name:	
Hub attending:	
Information which is to be sent:	**Yes/ No**
EHCP Plan	
Child Protection Plan	
Child in Need Plan	
Personal Education Plan	
Name and contact details of social worker	
Name of and contact details for the link at the Virtual School	
Details of any special provision	
Details of any induction needed for staff	
Contact details for staff member/s at home school	
Actions to follow if the child is not attending the hub school	