



Diverse
Academies



Covid-19 appendix to Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy across Diverse Academies Trust June 2021

Additional information for academies

Office use

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Associated documents:			
Safeguarding and child protection policy			

Links to:	
	https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare
	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision
	www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-complete-the-educational-setting-status-form
	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak
	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing?priority-taxon=b350e61d-1db9-4cc2-bb44-fab02882ac25
	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf
	https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/
	https://nationalonlinesafety.com/

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1 Context

From 8 March 2021, schools in England re-opened to pupils of all ages, with secondary given allowance for a staggered re-opening until becoming fully operational by 15 March.

From 15 March 2021 the trust academies follow the Diverse Academies Trust safeguarding and attendance policies, with the proviso that Covid-19 coding for absence follows the latest DfE guidance.

In the event of a future full or partial school closure, Diverse Academies Trust follows the guidance on critical workers and vulnerable children as laid out in the latest version of the following document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

In the event of any further wholesale closure of academies during 2020-21, Diverse Academies Trust will operate/re-instate hubs for vulnerable children and those of key workers in accordance with the latest government guidance, as covered in the first section of this appendix.

Key contacts

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This Covid-19 addendum of the Diverse Academies safeguarding and child protection policy 2020 contains details of our collective safeguarding arrangements in the following areas.

2 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 (CPP) 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 Childrens Act 1989.

Those with an education, health and care plan are vulnerable and are offered a place at the academy hub. Those not in the hub will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered an academy hub 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.

Other vulnerable children may include those at risk of NEET (not in education, employment or training), those who are homeless, those who have a supervision order, those formerly looked after, those adopted and those who are home carers.

The trust academies will also commit to providing good education and effective safeguarding for those children at risk of referral to social services, those who lack adequate digital resources to access home learning and those whose domestic situation and circumstances *may* prevent them accessing remote education.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself is not a determining factor in assessing vulnerability. The trust is committed to maintaining effective provision of free school meals to all eligible children throughout the Covid-19 crisis.

In the event of further Covid-19 enforced absence, senior leaders in our academies, especially the designated safeguarding lead (and the deputy designated safeguarding leads) know who our most vulnerable children are. In addition to those children on a CPP, or who are CIN (children in need), CLA (children looked after) or a home carer, the trust expects staff to provide a safeguarding check to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support and to provide educational provision for those who have an education health care plan (EHCP).

In the event of a Covid-19 enforced absence, safeguarding teams across our academies 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 in each academy for this will be the designated safeguarding lead.

In the event of a further Covid closure, there remains the expectation across Diverse Academies Trust academies that vulnerable children who have a social worker and / or who meet the DfE definition of vulnerable, will attend, so long as they do not have an underlying serious health condition (as defined in the government Covid-19 attendance guidance) that places them at increased risk of infection. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to school, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and the designated safeguarding team in the respective academy will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Vulnerable children remain the safeguarding priority – both those in attendance and those absent from our academies.

Currently all children, unless there is an enforced closure, or they are covered by the latest shielding advice from the government MUST attend Diverse Academies Trust academy settings or their alternative provision.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting Covid-19, the respective academy safeguarding lead, or the social worker will continue to attempt to contact the parent / carer to talk through these anxieties following the latest advice set out by Public Health England at the time.

Academy staff will continue to provide remote learning for those pupils unable to attend or who are precluded from attending due to Covid-19 for legitimate, authorised reasons. All Diverse Academies Trust academies will continue to provide online learning resources for their respective cohorts in the event of any period of closure and partial closure (for example a year bubble needing to self-isolate). Children unable to access online learning are encouraged to contact their respective academy in order for the leadership team to make appropriate arrangements for participation in the curriculum. The overriding principle during this period of re-opening is to mitigate against increasing the risk of transmission, whilst at the same time expecting full and uninterrupted attendance from all pupils.

3 Attendance and wider monitoring

Whilst all schools are fully open all non-attending pupils, who are absent for established, legitimate Covid-19 related reasons will be marked with the temporary Covid-19 X code for the duration of the period of absence.

Diverse Academies follow the latest guidance on attendance in the document below:

1. Diverse Academies Trust shall adopt the usual practice of first day calls – ‘safe and well’ checks – for any child not attending an academy setting. Once the parent/carer has established the cause of the absence with the academy – vulnerable pupils will be given the appropriate code for absence.
2. In the event of a future full re-closure each academy will be able to provide an on-call DSL in the event that they cannot provide an on-site DSL for vulnerable and key worker children. Any concerns when in an academy hub should be reported to the respective DSL/DDSL – this will then be logged on the relevant My Concern system within 24 hours.
3. Appropriate arrangements remain in place for the safe drop off and pick up of children. No one under 10 years of age can go home unaccompanied.

4 The role of the academy designated safeguarding lead

The DSL shall ensure that the academy safeguarding processes and procedures remain in place for those children not attending the academy setting.

The DSL, MHL and the wider safeguarding team shall ensure that “adequate mental health first aid’ provision is in place for both those attending and those absent from the academy.

Liaison with outside agencies and where applicable, home visits should continue to take place, prioritising vulnerable children and families.

The DSL or a designated deputy, will continue to attend all multi-agency meetings which are likely to be conducted remotely until further notice.

5 Reporting a concern

There are no changes to the measures outlined in the main safeguarding policy 2020.

Where Diverse Academies Trust staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the trust safeguarding policy, this includes making a report via My Concern, which can be done remotely.

In the unlikely event that a member of the trust's staff cannot access their My Concern from home, they should email the respective designated safeguarding lead, deputy safeguarding lead and principal. This will ensure that the concern is received and logged.

The trust's staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

Normal safeguarding whistleblowing protocols are applied.

Concerns around the designated safeguarding lead should be directed to the principal.

Concerns around the principal should be directed to the executive principal.

The trust will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations in accordance with the safeguarding whistleblowing protocol.

6 Safeguarding training and induction

DSL and wider safeguarding training continue during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The expectation is that accredited, mandatory training is prioritised and delivered via online platforms and training providers.

The trust will continue to facilitate training opportunities through 2020-21 via the Institute, with a priority being placed on the core safeguarding team in each academy

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

7 Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter any Diverse Academies Trust academy or other educational setting (such as alternative provision) or gain access to children. When recruiting new staff, the trust will continue to follow the relevant safer

recruitment processes for their settings, 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.

In the unlikely event that staff are deployed from another educational setting to our academies due to new Covid-19 arrangements, the trust 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.

Where the academy is utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Diverse Academies Trust 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.

The trust 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'. All referrals should be made by emailing: Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any academy is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be on site and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, all Diverse Academies Trust academies will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

8 Online safety in Diverse Academies Trust academies

At all times and in all situations (academy closure or open); all Diverse Academies Trust academies continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system.

Where students are using computers in an academy setting, appropriate supervision remains in place in accordance with the online safety policy.

In the event of a subsequent closure the trust 'live online lessons protocol' will be followed by all staff undertaking live teaching via MS Teams.

All trust staff and pupils adhere to the agreed online learning protocols and safeguarding checks.

Safeguarding checks *may* be carried out by teaching staff engaged in live lessons, and any concerns must be referred to the DSL via My Concern (if applicable).

9 Children and online safety away from Diverse Academies Trust academies

At all times and in all situations, 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 trust child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police. The threat of online safety being compromised will be heightened during times that children are doing the majority of their learning from home.

Online teaching follows the same principles as set out in the trust code of conduct – Diverse Academies staff have received the revised live lessons protocol (November 2020).

The academy senior leaders, in conjunction with trust IT personnel will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

All staff must follow the revised protocols around live lessons/recorded lessons using Microsoft Teams. This revised guidance was issued by the trust direct to principals during the week ended 20 November 2020.

In the event of a future school closure, below are some key considerations when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved (further detail is outlined in the specific protocol):

- 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 and follow the usual academy timetable where possible.
- Language must be professional and appropriate.
- Staff must only use MS Teams approved by our IT network manager / provider to communicate with pupils.
- Staff should record, the length, time, date, and attendance of any sessions held.

10 Supporting children not attending academy settings due to Covid-19 related absence

Diverse Academies Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children and young people at all times.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be absent AND 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 continue to be recorded on My Concern, as should a record of contact made.

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

The respective academy and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan. In the event of a further Covid-19 or long-term absence from an academy, the most vulnerable children identified by the DSL in each academy should aim to have a 'safe and well' call TWICE per week. All other vulnerable children (including those on an EHCP) should continue to have contact at least ONCE per week.

All communications should be logged using the academy logging system and when necessary, My Concern.

This plan must be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight) and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The academy will share general safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages, including content from National Online Safety (NOS).

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/>

Diverse Academies Trust recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the circumstances of a national lockdown can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers and parents need to be aware of the trust expectation that ALL eligible pupils should attend school unless they meet the strict government criteria for authorised Covid-19 absence.

11 Supporting children attending academy settings during the Covid-19 pandemic

Diverse Academies Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

Diverse Academies Trust academies will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish.

Diverse Academies Trust academies will refer to the latest government guidance on how to implement the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other health and safety measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19, including the wearing of face-coverings in educational settings.

Diverse Academies Trust will continue to work with respective trade unions to ensure that the health and safety, safeguarding, and other arrangements set out in each academy are fit for purpose, meet the latest guidelines and mitigate risk as far as possible.

Where the academy has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our designated safeguarding lead or first aiders – they will discuss them immediately with the trust.

12 Peer on peer abuse

Diverse Academies Trust adheres to the guidance as stated in KCSIE 2020. Concerns and actions continue to be recorded on My Concern and appropriate referrals made.

13 Support from Diverse Academies Trust

The trust central safeguarding team will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the respective DSLs to carry out their role effectively.

Working directly with the respective DSL, this may include, remotely accessing child protection files for the purpose of quality assurance, support, guidance, and direction.

The trust will also provide regular group and individual supervision sessions for staff. This is likely to take the form of an online meeting.

Since re-opening from the national lockdown and closure of schools each academy ensures:

- A full risk assessment is carried out prior to any staff or students admitted onto any Diverse Academies Trust site.
- Adequate PPE and testing equipment issued to academies and routinely used by trained staff in order to address symptoms and conditions present in any child at any Diverse Academies Trust academy setting.
- All relevant Covid-19 safeguarding protocols above will still apply for those not in any academy setting.
- All usual safeguarding protocols are followed in accordance with the trust safeguarding policy by staff working with children in an academy setting.
- In the event of a subsequent closure / partial opening, a dedicated safeguarding team off-site is identified and tasked by leadership to continue (if applicable) to conduct 'safe and well' calls and execute their safeguarding duties to children and families still not present in an academy setting until further notice.
- In the event of a subsequent closure / partial opening, dedicated off-site safeguarding includes at least once weekly contact with children and families who are vulnerable, have an EHCP or those at risk of becoming vulnerable, in accordance with the Covid-19 arrangements.
- In the event of a subsequent closure / partial opening identified teams of staff dedicated to delivering educational provision online follow the trust safeguarding policy in accordance

with the agreed protocols including recording of disclosures/observed safeguarding concerns.

- Staff in academy settings report directly through to DSL/DDSL on site.
- Staff conducting remote safeguarding 'safe and well' calls report directly through to the DSL / DDSL via the usual channel.

This policy appendix will be reviewed when circumstances dictate but no later than Autumn term 2021.