

ROYAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, LIVERPOOL (RSB)

Appendix 1

Child Protection COVID-19 School Closure Arrangements Annex Date: Updated November 2020

This annex provides guidance to all adults working within the school, whether paid or voluntary or directly employed by the school or by a third party.

Keeping Children Safe in Education is statutory safeguarding guidance we will continue to have regard to as per our legislative duty. The government has provided additional guidance to support governing bodies, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) in order that they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep their children safe. The additional guidance for the COVID-19 period can be found here:

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

Please note: the government is preparing additional guidance for hubs or school clusters.

This annex should be read alongside RSB's Protection policy, Part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020, and in conjunction with Part 1 of the School Improvement Liverpool Schools Safeguarding Handbook which is made available to all staff and volunteers.

1. Context

From 20th March 2020 the government asked parents to keep their children at home, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response where those workers have no other safe arrangements for the care of their child/ren.

Schools were also asked to provide care for additional children. These children were identified by the government as being vulnerable due to social care involvement, or as a result of Special Educational Needs or Disability. Further detail is specified in section 2 below.

During this time, RSB will do what it reasonably can in order to keep all of our children safe. In some cases some of our children will not physically be attending the school. 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 will be dealt with in line with our main Child Protection policy and local safeguarding arrangements. Where appropriate, referrals will still be made to children's services and as required, the police, **without delay**.

Across Liverpool it was agreed that the Local Authority would adopt a Hub model for providing care to the key groups of children of primary age. A number of school sites were identified to remain open, with all other schools closing. The Hubs are strategically located across the city and are staffed by members of staff from schools within their locality. Children needing care have been signposted to their nearest Hub, but parents are also free to choose the most convenient Hub location.

Further information regarding the response by Liverpool City Council to COVID-19 can be found here:

<https://liverpool.gov.uk/communities-and-safety/emergency-planning/coronavirus/>

RSB is open but not operating as a Hub site.

- We have a whole school/residential risk assessment in place and this is constantly updated as needed and government guidance changes, and then disseminated amongst all staff.
- RSB has remained open throughout the current COVID-19 pandemic. Early on it was for children of key workers only. We are now open to all children able to return to school.
- We run our own school transport. This has been risk assessed so all children are travelling with staff from their own class bubbles and wearing the appropriate PPE. The buses are cleaned down after every use.
- The risk group meet weekly or as needed, to ensure all children are well and able to attend. This has been done on an individual basis following government guidance. When this has changed so have our actions. We have followed medical guidance on this as well as working with the parents.
- Any actions from the risk meetings is disseminated through a weekly briefing sheet or emergency staff memo as required.
- The whole school now follows a regular timetable of children entering and exiting school and residential within their own class bubbles.
- Moving around school for different timetabled activities, including swimming, soft play, sensory room, and the playground is also planned and risk assessed. All resources are cleaned once staff and children have exited a room.
- PPE. Staff have always had access to a full range of PPE and have received training from our lead nurse on putting on, removing and safe disposal. Also what PPE is needed in different situations.
- Designated rooms for children to be taken to while waiting to go home if they are showing symptoms.
- Lunch times are now held in class bubbles to ensure no shared equipment or crossing in corridors or dining area.
- Children accessing residential mainly have their own bedroom. Any shared rooms are always completely cleaned before another child uses it.
- AGP rooms have been set up for all individual children requiring these procedures throughout the day.

This addendum to our Child Protection policy specifies the details of our safeguarding arrangements during this time, which will remain until school is instructed it can safely fully open again.

2. Vulnerable Children

During school closures due to COVID-19, schools are required to provide care to children identified as being vulnerable.

The government defines vulnerable children as those who have a social worker and those children and young people up until the age of 25 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC).

Further information about vulnerable children can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Children who have a social worker include children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan and those who are looked after by the Local Authority. A child may also be considered vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Children with an EHC Plan will be risk assessed to determine whether they need to continue to be offered a school place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. Many children with EHC Plans can safely remain at home.

Eligibility for free school meals is not a determining factor when assessing vulnerability.

The government expects that vulnerable children with a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions which put them at increased risk. Within Liverpool, all children open to Children's Services have been assessed by their social worker and manager, and a priority list has been agreed. Children have been matched with their nearest Hub setting. Children on this list have been contacted by their social worker and will be supported to attend a Hub provision. Where a parent does not want to bring their child to a Hub setting and the child is deemed vulnerable, the social worker will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. In conjunction with the Virtual Head of School, Looked After Children (LAC) have also been risk assessed and a list of priority children has been identified. Many LAC can safely remain at home. Whilst there has been a priority list identified by the Local Authority, any child subject to Child Protection Planning can attend a Hub.

RSB has never closed but followed official guidance regarding who met the criteria of vulnerable children, our school SLT identified (with parental and medical involvement) who our most vulnerable children are and formulated a plan to monitor their safety and wellbeing during school closure.

- All children receive regular weekly phone calls to families to chat to parents and children if possible. This is recorded and if a family cannot be contacted then the lead safeguarding officer will be informed. Some families are obviously more vulnerable so the safeguarding lead will stay in contact with them and also their social workers if needed.
- Weekly zoom sessions have taken place so the parents and children can maintain contact with their class teacher, and if possible each other.
- Activities and lessons have gone home on a weekly basis and if needed parents can request additional or a change of activity.
- Toys and equipment have been loaned to some children, even being dropped off by our own staff,

Schools have flexibility and are able to offer a place to those children they determine to be vulnerable, particularly those who are on the edge of receiving support or assessment from children's services.

RSB will continue to work with, and support, children's services to help protect vulnerable children. This is especially important during the COVID-19 period.

3. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

When school is open:

Schools should attempt to ensure there is always a trained DSL or Deputy available on site. All safeguarding concerns should be reported **without delay** to the RSB DSL/Deputy DSL. It is recognised however that this may not be possible and where this is the case, RSB will consider the following options:

- A trained DSL or Deputy is available to be contacted via phone, email or video call when working from home.

- Sharing trained DSL's or Deputies from other schools, who would be available to contact via phone, email or video call.

If it is not possible to have a trained DSL or Deputy on site, RSB will ensure that there is a senior leader who takes responsibility for coordinating safeguarding on site. This senior leader can also take advice from School Improvement Liverpool's School Improvement Officers for Safeguarding:

Email: safeguarding@si.liverpool.gov.uk

Phil Cooper Nicola Noon

It is essential that all staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL or Deputy and are made aware of the arrangements on a daily basis regarding who that named person is and how to speak

When school is closed:

Staff should follow the procedures set out in the main Child Protection policy for contacting and reporting concerns to the DSL and/or Deputy.

RSB has not closed at any time during the pandemic. The DSL and Deputies are on site every day. If the DSL is working from home then the two Deputies would take responsibility. They have the contact details for the Lead Safeguarding Officer who can be contacted 24 hour a day.

Throughout the COVID-19 period, the safeguarding team will continue to engage with social workers and attend and contribute to all multi-agency meetings, as determined by the local procedures for remote meetings.

It is acknowledged by the government that face to face DSL training is unlikely to take place during the COVID-19 period. For the period these 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 missed their refresher training.

4. Safeguarding Procedures

A key safeguarding information booklet including key contacts and other resources can be found [here](#).

The Head of School should follow the normal safeguarding operating procedures for managing an educational setting or school or childcare provider and should adhere to the schools own child protection, managing allegations policies and staff code of conduct. For example, everyone should be aware of children with specific safeguarding or health needs or disabilities. Medicines should be stored and administered safely. Everyone should be clear as to the setting's child protection and fire evacuation procedures. Everyone on site should know how to contact the Hub's DSL/Deputies and First Aiders. If staff are working on a rota basis, there should always be appropriately trained key personnel on site. The names of these staff should be displayed and updated as required.

Each school must follow normal [Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures](#)

All safeguarding concerns should be reported **without delay** to the DSL or in her absence or unavailability then one of the Deputy DSL's.

If any member of staff believes a child is at risk of harm then the DSL should ring **Liverpool Careline on 0151 233 3700, without delay**. If the DSL is *unavailable* then **any** member of staff should ensure Liverpool Careline is contacted without delay.

If a child is in immediate/imminent danger then staff should ring the police.

[Safeguarding-mate](http://www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/safeguarding-mate/) can provide additional key guidance to all staff regarding key safeguarding procedures www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/safeguarding-mate/.

If colleagues need further safeguarding guidance or support then they should email safeguarding@si.liverpool.gov.uk providing a mobile number for either Phil Cooper or Nicola Noon to contact them.

Concerns regarding the conduct of staff should be dealt with in line with the setting's managing allegations policy.

Where staff in school have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in our main Child Protection policy. This includes making a report via the agreed methods, telephone, email, marf. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

If a member of staff believes a child is at risk of harm then the DSL should ring **Liverpool Careline on 0151 233 3700, without delay**. If the DSL is *unavailable* then **any** member of staff should ensure Liverpool Careline is contacted without delay.

If a child is in immediate/imminent danger then staff should ring the police.

[Safeguarding-mate](http://www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/safeguarding-mate/) can provide additional key guidance to all staff regarding key safeguarding procedures www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/safeguarding-mate/

Concerns regarding the conduct of a member of staff should continue to be dealt with in line with our managing allegations policy.

5. Attendance Monitoring

Local Authorities and schools do not need to complete their usual day to day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

The DfE have devised an online for and supporting spreadsheet for the COVID-19 period. It can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

RSB remaining open:

A daily online attendance form will be submitted to the DfE each day for all those children in attendance. This is to keep a record of children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are attending school. This allows a record for safeguarding purposes and ensures schools provide accurate, up to date data to the Department for Education on the number of children taking up places.

Each school's liaison officer will communicate the method for submitting attendance data for prioritised vulnerable children to the Local Authority.

RSB should follow up with any parents/carers or social workers who have arranged care for their child but their child subsequently does not attend. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up a place at school, and was expected to, the social worker should be informed. If the parents did not ring and inform school their child was not attending and why then the staff would ring home. If no contact can be made then the Safeguarding lead would be informed and appropriate action taken. This could mean contacting social workers or social services.

6. Children moving between Schools and Hubs

Where it is identified that a child from RSB is attending another Hub/school setting, we will share relevant welfare and child protection information with the DSL for that Hub. The receiving Hub/school should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and the arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum, we will share the child's EHC Plan, Child in Need plan, Child Protection Plan or for LAC, their personal education plan. The name of the child's social worker will also be shared. We intend that this will happen prior to the child arriving in the new setting but where that is not possible, we will share as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Schools must have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR, but this does not prevent sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

7. 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. Schools should continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, set out in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Where schools or Hubs are using volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. RSB will ensure that there are no circumstances where a volunteer who has not been checked, will be left unsupervised with children or allowed to work in regulated activity. If new staff or volunteers are recruited, the usual Safer Recruitment processes will be followed, and they will also be provided with a safeguarding induction.

Our school workforce may be asked to temporarily move to another school setting to support the care of children. There is no expectation that a new Enhanced DBS with Barred List check will be obtained by the new setting. As the current employer, RSB can provide assurance to the new setting that the individual has been subject to the correct pre-employment checks (including an Enhanced DBS and Barred List check). If there are current concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children or there are ongoing disciplinary investigations relating to safeguarding involving that individual, they should not be deployed in an alternative setting.

RSB

In order to support the running of our school, members of staff from outside of our workforce may temporarily move to work within our setting, in a specific bubble. Where they engage in regulated activity as part of their normal work and they already have the appropriate Enhanced DBS with Barred List check, there is no expectation that a new check will be applied for. The type of setting on a DBS check, e.g. a specific category of school, is not a barrier. Similarly, the same principle applies if other workers move to temporarily work in a school setting. Our school will risk assess each situation and we will satisfy ourselves that each person in our setting has had the required level of checks. We will seek written assurance from the individual's current employer as opposed to undertaking new checks.

The Head of School will ensure that:

Each member of staff presents with their employee photo ID and either one of the following:

1. Their original Enhanced DBS Certificate confirming a children's barred list check has been undertaken
2. Written confirmation from their employer that an Enhanced DBS Certificate with a children's barred list check has been undertaken. (This is to be the likely mechanism for all staff provided by other schools, LA, SIL and LLP)

Photo ID only is required for supervised visitors and also for Police, Health and Children's Services.

There is no statutory expectation for schools to renew their DBS certificates every three years. Most schools do not retain DBS numbers as there is no statutory requirement to do so. For members of staff who present their DBS certificate and are also part of the DBS Update Service, an online check can be undertaken to establish if their certificate is still valid <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

Any volunteers must be supervised and a risk assessment undertaken (see template in the School's Safeguarding Handbook).

Upon arrival at the school, new staff and volunteers will be given a copy of the setting's Child Protection policy, staff code of conduct, confirmation of DSL arrangements and the setting's [Safeguarding Induction Booklet](#).

It is essential, from a safeguarding perspective, that we are aware, on any given day, which staff or volunteers will be on site and that the appropriate checks have been carried out. As such, we will continue to keep our Single Central Record (SCR) up to date. We will use our SCR to record all those working or volunteering, including those who are temporarily working there from other settings. The SCR can also log details of any risk assessments carried out on staff and volunteers on loan from elsewhere. A template for these checks is included in the Hub centre manager's handbook.

RSB 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 (as per paragraph 163 of Keeping Children Safe in Education).

RSB will also continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (as per paragraph 166 of Keeping Children Safe in Education). During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk.

8. Mental Health

It is acknowledged that the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19 are particularly stressful and may cause increased anxieties and stress for all members of our school community. When children and staff are away from their usual routine and social contact, this can become a negative and stressful experience. RSB will ensure there is appropriate support available for the whole school community at this time. Support can include existing provision in the school, or from specialist staff or support services.

Where children of critical workers and vulnerable children continue to attend the setting, appropriate support will be offered to them whilst on site. RSB will ensure there is appropriate support for the whole school community at this very stressful time. Specialist support can be given to staff if needed. We have an ethos of supporting each other and always offering a listening ear. We are offering wellbeing supervisions to all staff.

The school community can also be signposted to the government's advice on supporting children and young people's mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Staff should also be aware of the mental health of their pupils and parents when setting expectations regarding pupil's work when they are at home.

9. Online Safety in Schools and Hubs

Where the site remains open, RSB will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect children when they are online on the school's IT systems or recommended resources. Measures will be put in place to ensure safe IT arrangements and RSB will consider what the contingency arrangements are if the named IT staff become unavailable.

The [UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards and proprietors assure themselves](#) that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline](#) also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face

10. Online Safety away from Schools and Hubs

Where children are not physically attending a school, RSB will consider the safety of our children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching remains the same as the principles set out in our school's staff code of conduct. This policy includes acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communication including the use of social media. This policy applies equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which have been introduced. The principles set out in the [guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings published by the Safer Recruitment Consortium](#) should be adhered to by all staff.

Any online learning tools or systems recommended for use by RSB are be in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Whilst pupils are having to work from home class teachers will provide:

- A weekly ZOOM session.
- A weekly welfare telephone call to parents.
- Links to sensory activities.
- Where appropriate worksheets and reading book.
- The DSL will make calls to pupil's families that she considers vulnerable.

Our school will also be in contact with parents and carers during this time. Communication with parents will reinforce the importance of children being safe online. Families will be made aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and who their child is going to be interacting with online, including members of staff from our school.

RSB acknowledges that some parents and carers may choose to supplement the school's online offer with support from online companies and in some cases, individual tutors. We will raise awareness with parents the importance of only accessing online support from a reputable organisation or individual who can provide evidence that they are a safe organisation and can be trusted to have access to children. We will signpost parents to support such as [Internet matters](#), [London Grid for Learning](#), [Net-aware](#), [Parent info](#), [Thinkuknow](#) and the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

11. Operation Encompass

When we receive an operation encompass notification relating to a pupil at our school, during the COVID-19 period, our response may be different to normal. If the subject of the notification remains in attendance at our school, we will follow our usual procedures. If the child is in attendance at an alternative Hub/school, we will securely share the information with the DSL for that setting. If the child is not attending any setting and is being cared for at home, we will risk assess the situation taking into

consideration the history of the child and family. This information will be used in order to determine our response to each individual case. In all situations we would always aim to speak to the child.

12. Peer on Peer Abuse

RSB recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims. Where we receive a report of peer on peer abuse, we will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within our main Child Protection policy. We will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person. Concerns and actions will be recorded using the agreed methods and appropriate referrals made.