

Annex to Child Protection Policy
COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy
27 March 2020

1. Context

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

School were asked are 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 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.

2. Response to COVID-19

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak. Many students are now at home and staffing is significantly affected through illness and self-isolation.

Despite the changes, the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding 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.**

3. The current school position and local advice

Northern House Academy is at present partially open to provide emergency child care for key workers and for students that are deemed to be vulnerable and unable to be safely cared for at home. The school has risk assessed, and continue to risk assess students that are attending provision at school and are regularly keeping parents, carers and named social workers informed. The school is maintaining regular contact with all students and families and sharing information as appropriate, including safeguarding concerns with the appropriate agencies.

Reporting arrangements

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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Michelle Griffiths, Deputy Head Teacher, 07535 176307, mgriffiths@northernhouseacademy.co.uk

The Deputy DSL is: Kate Bartlett, School Business Manager, 07934 731190, kbartlett@northernhouseacademy.co.uk

The Gallery Trust Safeguarding lead is: Jo Jones, 07983 748220, j.jones@thegallerytrust.co.uk

The school's approach ensures the DSL or a deputy is always on site while the school is open. In the unusual circumstance that this is not possible the DSL or Deputy DSL will be contactable and the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team on duty will inform staff at morning briefing of any changes to the DSL, including how they can be contacted.

DSLs have the contact details for the Trust Safeguarding Lead should they need further advice. All staff have contact details for the Trust Safeguarding Lead as a back-up should they not be able to make contact with the DSL or a 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.

Children's services may be affected by the impact of the virus on staff and an increased demand for services. 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:

For students already known to, and open to social care, contact will be made with the allocated worker. If contact is unable to be made a call will be made to the team and the concern discussed with the social worker. All concerns will be followed up by email to the allocated worker.

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 arrangements:

For students that are not open to social care a call will be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 050 7666 and concerns will be shared with the worker and advice followed. If it is agreed that referral to the MASH is appropriate, an online enquiry form will be submitted sharing key information and the cause for concern.

4. Vulnerable Students

Vulnerable students include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans).

Those who have a social worker include students who have a Child Protection Plan, and those looked after by the Local Authority. A student 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 will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents, to decide 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. 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.***

Eligibility for free school meals must not be the determining factor in accessing vulnerability.

5. Identifying vulnerability

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable children. Through a process of thorough risk assessment, using our knowledge of students' individual needs, history, medical, family and environmental factors a core group of students have been identified as being the 'most vulnerable' in our setting.

We have put in place specific arrangements in respect of the following groups: Guidance for staff completing this contact can be found at the end of this annex.

The following contact is being made by a member of the school's Safeguarding Team.

- Looked After Children – Regular contact is being maintained through enhanced (twice weekly) keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will contact the social worker or other external agencies as appropriate.
Where the child or young person is able to communicate on the phone, once a week the contact will include a conversation with the young person to maintain a relationship, discuss what they have been doing and how they are coping during this period.
- Previously Looked After Children – Regular contact is being maintained through enhanced (twice weekly) keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will contact the social worker or other external agencies as appropriate.
Where the child or young person is able to communicate on the phone, once a week the contact will include a conversation with the young person to maintain a relationship, discuss what they have been doing and how they are coping during this period.
- Children subject to a child protection plan – Regular contact is being maintained through enhanced (twice weekly) keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will contact the social worker or other external agencies as appropriate.
Where the child or young person is able to communicate on the phone, once a week the contact will include a conversation with the young person to maintain a relationship, discuss what they have been doing and how they are coping during this period.
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker – Regular contact is being maintained through enhanced (twice weekly) keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will contact the social worker or other external agencies as appropriate.

Where the child or young person is able to communicate on the phone, once a week the contact will include a conversation with the young person to maintain a relationship, discuss what they have been doing and how they are coping during this period.

- Children on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker – Regular contact is being maintained through enhanced (**twice weekly**) keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will contact the social worker or other external agencies as appropriate.

Where the child or young person is able to communicate on the phone, once a week the contact will include a conversation with the young person to maintain a relationship, discuss what they have been doing and how they are coping during this period.

The following contact may be made by class teachers, or other school staff familiar to the family:

- Children with an EHCP – All students at Northern House Academy have an EHCP. Due to this, risk assessments have been completed to identify those where continuing to attend the school-based provision may not be in their best interests as well as those who are most vulnerable in our community and attending school is important for their safety. Regular contact is maintained through at least **weekly** keeping in touch calls, focusing on the health and well-being of the family and any additional support needs. If concerns or additional needs are raised the school will share this information with other agencies, in line with protocols already in place.
- If in the phone call above, the member of staff has a safeguarding concern or considers that there is a change in risk for the child at home they will refer this to the DSL via the school's safeguarding record system. The DSL will liaise with other agencies and these children may be offered care at school if it is felt that this would be in their best interests and they cannot be safely cared for at home.

All keeping in touch calls will be recorded, and for students that are open to social care all contacts with the family will be added to their individual safeguarding file (paper or electronic recording system). Concerns raised in these calls will be shared with the DSL and actioned as appropriate

All allocated social workers have received a written statement explaining whether or not the student has been offered provision, if this has been accepted by the parent/carer and the plans in place for maintaining contact with the family. If we are unable to make contact with the family the allocated social worker will be made aware and asked to follow up.

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

- Children of key workers who may attend school – Through discussion with families this group has been identified and provision has been made available to ensure that parents/carers can continue with front line working.
- Children at home – All students have the opportunity to complete work at home, either through working online or work packs which will be updated frequently. The school is maintaining contact with all families through regular keeping in touch calls.

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

6. Holiday arrangements

Northern House Academy is continuing to provide emergency child care for students during the Easter break, but this will be limited to children of key workers, and may not be full-time, but in line with the parent/carers working hours. This will be held on the school site/at another school within The Gallery Trust.

7. Attendance

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. The school will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent but if necessary the DSL will arrange for a welfare check to be carried out by an 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 also follow the attendance procedure if contact proves impossible with children at home.

- If the family cannot be contacted by telephone using their provided contact number (call, text, email),
- Further calls will be made to the alternative emergency contact numbers held
- Allocated social workers will be informed (call, email) and further advice sought,
- If students are not known to other agencies the LCSS will be contacted for advice and support.
- If the school believes that the student may be at risk of significant harm the police may be called on 101 to request a welfare check

8. Staff will be aware of increased risk

The pressures on children and their families at this time 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.

9. 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 making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between learners.

10. 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](#) and when students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be 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.
- Children and young people accessing remote learning receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the school, [Childline](#), the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) and [CEOP](#).
- 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. 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 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
- 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](#).

11. 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 how to take action if they are concerned.

We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authority remain unchanged. The LADO team (Alison Beesley, Donna Crozier and Sandra Barrett) can be contacted on 01865 810603 or lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk. The team operate a duty system so there is always a trained member of staff available.

Concerns regarding the Headteacher should be raised with the Chair of Trustees: Sian Rodway, s.rodway@thegallerytrust.co.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.

12. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

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.

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](#).
- 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. 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 the Headteacher or SLT member on duty of who is working in the school each day.

13. 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 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 Trustees on 2 April 2020 and is available on the school website at www.northernhouseacademy.co.uk

Questions for contact with families

In line with our Communication Protocol all contact must be made using work phones. Personal mobiles or house phones must not be used to contact families.

Framework for phone calls with parents, carers and pupils:

This information should be used to guide your discussions with parents, carers and children. Part of the contact is to maintain a relationship, so it is fine to paraphrase the questions as long as you gain the required information.

Explanation (at start of call, and to be used on first phone call and at member of staff's discretion on future calls):

Explain to the parent or carer that during the period of schools being closed we have a duty of care to monitor the wellbeing of all children. Explain the frequency of contact for the parent and check with them if there is a time that works best. Explain that the frequency of contact is important and if it is not possible to make contact you have a duty to pass that information to the school's Safeguarding lead and it may in turn be referred to social care or other agencies. Where appropriate explain you would like to speak directly with the child or young person once a week.

Please ensure the following questions are covered during your phone call. Answers to these questions must be recorded on the school's agreed communication record system or the school's safeguarding record system as required.

How has [name of child] been doing since our last phone call (if may be relevant to refer to previous contact)?

Is anything working particularly well for the child?

Is anything particularly difficult or challenging for the child or family at the moment?

Is the child completing learning at home? If so, how is this going and do you require anything further to support this?

Is there any further information you would like to share with me about how [name of child] or the family are managing during this period?

As appropriate (at least once a week for children identified above), I'd like to talk with [name of child] to discuss how they are doing during this period. This will include finding out how they are and what they have been doing during this period.

If any safeguarding concerns are raised during this phone call they must be immediately reported to the DSL via the Safeguarding Record System and a phone call.

Remember, this call is a welfare check on the child and family. Staff making any calls should not get involved in parenting the child or resolving any family difficulties between the parent or carer and the child.

Questions for contact with children and young people:

How are you today (it may be relevant to refer to previous contact)?

What have you been doing since we last spoke?

Has anything been particularly good at home?

Have you been completing work at home and if so, how is this going?

Are you finding anything difficult, or do you have any worries you'd like to share with me at the moment?