

## **COVID-19 Safeguarding Practice Guidance for Educational Settings**

The following guidance has been created to assist educational senior leadership teams to ensure that full consideration and prominence is given to safeguarding matters in Outcomes First Group Educational settings during the COVID-19 outbreak in the United Kingdom. The guidance is based on current government guidance and information provided by the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-maintained Special Schools.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with any government guidance issued for educational settings (links provided below) and with regard to the Outcomes First Group COVID-19 updates.

### **Legislation and statutory guidance always supersede this guidance.**

All employees, children and young people must follow the government guidance on self-isolation and social distancing. Any child or staff member who appears to be or is reporting to be symptomatic should be sent home without delay.

Each setting will have individual arrangements and characteristics that may require deviation from this guidance document. In this case, the Assistant Director of the setting should be informed.

All staff should continue to have full regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) and all Outcomes First Group procedures, including the Safeguarding and Managing Allegations against Outcomes First Group employees policies. This applies at all times, when working online or offline, remotely or at a setting.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead role and responsibilities**

Ensure that all staff, children and young people are aware of how to contact the DSL and who their deputies are should they be unavailable to work.

Develop and agree a setting contingency plan should the DSL become unavailable for work and the current deputising arrangements become depleted. This may be that an alternative senior leader has a buddying arrangement with a DSL from another setting for support should this be required.

Consider whether electronic record keeping systems can be accessed remotely (only if able to do this securely). If a member of the team is unable to attend work due to self-isolation, they may be able to continue to function as part of the DSL team remotely with this access.

Do not remove sensitive or confidential case-related information from the school to take to another location for remote working. Consider other mechanisms to access the information securely.

Ensure that DSL's and deputies have methods for regular discussion to avoid any miscommunication.

It is encouraged that DSL's form cluster groups (within the Assistant Director's immediate team) to ensure all settings are supported effectively throughout this period. Assistant Directors may nominate a lead DSL from each cluster to facilitate regular discussion among the schools DSL's.

### **Practice Guidance (Children and Young People)**

Many of the children and young people we educate have EHC plans and may remain in school throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. It is important that we consider each individual child's circumstances and do not assume that all children with EHC plans should be in school regardless of circumstance.

All schools will be offering a form of education and ongoing contact with all children and young people. The following steps should be taken to agree a plan in respect of individual children and young people:

A risk assessment must be undertaken for each child. This should consider whether either parent or carer is deemed a key worker and then all known risk factors associated with the child. This includes any health-related vulnerabilities of the child or members of their household (if known), social distancing guidance, any specific online risks and any child protection concerns.

For every child with an allocated social worker we should agree the most suitable course of action as to whether the child will remain in school with both the placing authority or local authority and/or their parent or carer. The rationale for the decision, the people involved in the decision-making, and the date and time of the discussion should be recorded clearly on the child's chronology.

For any children subject to child protection plans, the local authority has a duty to remain in contact and see the child or young person at least every 10 working days. Confirm with the local authority social worker that this arrangement will continue. Should it continue in school, all efforts should be made to ensure that contact from visiting professionals, with others is limited as much as possible. If the child is at home, have a discussion with the social worker about their expectation of the school, striking a balance between social distancing requirements and the protection of children. Remember that it is the local authority's duty to see the child every 10 working days but as a key agency in the child's life, we will commit to maintain contact with them. How we maintain contact is a matter for individual consideration.

For children in need (As defined in section 17 of The Children Act 2004) we should recognise that these families require support and the local authority has an obligation to provide that. You should ask the allocated social worker what the arrangements will be to support that child and family and what their expectations are of the school and record the outcome of the discussion.

For any child or young person receiving early help services or subject to non-statutory multi agency plans. You should contact the manager or allocated worker for that child to establish how regularly the child will be seen and what the expectations are of the school to maintain contact with that child or provide support for the family.

Each head or principal must inform the placing local authority of all children who will be accessing off-site education or those attending school. Ensure a record of the communication and any response received from the local authority is held at the school.

As an absolute minimum requirement, during term-time we must make **weekly** contact with children and young people who are not attending school in person. This should be over the telephone or through virtual communications platforms.

There will be arrangements to maintain contact with some children and young people during holidays. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Should we be unable to make contact successfully with any child or young person we must consider this as a potential safeguarding or child protection matter and make a referral through local safeguarding arrangements.

## **Digital Learning**

The organisation will take steps to ensure that where possible there are digital learning options for children and young people. All teaching staff should be mindful that the organisation and schools traditional safeguarding policies and procedure apply in these circumstances, at all times when working online or offline at any location.

Data protection and GDPR considerations must be taken into account when providing digital learning. This includes rules on signing pupils up to online services, and staff accessing personal data when working at home. It is recommended that staff are reminded of the data protection and GDPR policies and procedures at this time, whether they are working from school or remotely.

Attached at Appendix 1.2 is The National Association of Independent Schools and Non-maintained Special Schools guidance when using virtual learning platforms.

Specific guidance to help educational leaders consider safeguarding issues when making arrangements for remote learning during the Covid-19 outbreak has been published by DFE. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Additional guidance specific to Acorn Digital Learning such as:

- Live Online Risk Assessment;
- Template Student Remote Learning; and
- Online Safety policies

are available for schools to tailor to their individual settings and can be sought from [AcornDigitalLearning@nfa.co.uk](mailto:AcornDigitalLearning@nfa.co.uk).

## **Home visits**

All staff should be mindful of their own wellbeing and safety if conducting visits to the homes of children and their families.

Follow the lone working procedure and guidance for your own school. This should prescribe that you must at least inform another member of staff of your whereabouts and the time you plan to return to the school.

Wherever possible, arrange for colleagues to accompany you. This is particularly important for visiting households with identified risks to the safety of professionals. You should discuss and assess those risks with the appropriate local authority.

Where colleagues accompany on visits, this must be in line with social distancing guidance. You should therefore consider travelling in separate vehicles and your colleague remaining in their own vehicle outside.

### Additional Information

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought unprecedented circumstances and we appreciate that senior leaders and DSL's will be making challenging decisions as the situation progresses.

Please seek support from:

- Max Turner, [max.turner@ofgl.uk](mailto:max.turner@ofgl.uk)
- Nicola Thomas, Group Safeguarding Lead – Quality on 07733 808705  
[nthomas@nfa.co.uk](mailto:nthomas@nfa.co.uk)
- Carmel Walberg, Employee Relations Manager on 07799 821136  
[cwalberg@nfa.co.uk](mailto:cwalberg@nfa.co.uk)

You may also email any COVID-19 related questions to [Covid-19.Questions@ofgl.co.uk](mailto:Covid-19.Questions@ofgl.co.uk)

The Department for Education COVID-19 helpline is available to answer questions.

### DfE coronavirus helpline

Email [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

Telephone 0800 046 8687

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm.

Please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.

### Other resources

Please check the links below regularly for changes to government guidance that may influence practice.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>

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## Appendix 1.1

### Key Safeguarding Messages to Parents and Pupils (Carolyn Eyre NASS, 22.03.20)

- Discuss with parents the impact of closure on their ability to work and their mental health
- Check if all parents have internet access and make alternative resource and information sharing arrangements for those who do not.
- Share information about Early Help, Samaritans, Mind, Domestic abuse helplines and other support services that can help - the Safeguarding Hub includes links to almost every safeguarding service / organisation in England  
<https://www.safeguardingresourcehub.co.uk/>
- For pupils living in the same area as the school, provide parents with contact details for the local early help / children's social care services
- It is likely that children will spend more time online; re-share online safety advice and resources such as Thinkuknow, Safer Internet Centre and Digital Parenting
- Provide all parents with the Thinkuknow parent guide relevant to the age / developmental stage of their child/ren
- If not already done so, add a link to ParentInfo to your website – this DfE backed website provides parents with up to date information about a range of topics <https://parentinfo.org/>
- Children and young people are hearing about the Coronavirus too, or may be picking up changes in mood / behaviour / routines around them, and may be feeling scared and anxious. Talking to children about their worries can help; Child Mind Institute, Beacon House, Young Minds, Special Needs Jungle have resources that can support you and can be shared with parents. Victoria Education Centre has shared a couple of social stories on COVID-19 online (embedded below)
- Ensure all contact details are up to date for staff, governors/ trustees, children and families

## Appendix 1.2

### Working remotely with pupils (Carolyn Eyre NASS, 22.03.20)

- Existing policies (child protection, staff code of conduct, acceptable use agreement, etc) are still in operation. Staff should re-read these policies and ask a member of the Designated staff team if they have any questions or are unsure
- Staff must not communicate with pupils and students in a way which could cause alarm, distress or misunderstanding. There should be no room for ambiguity
- If staff are concerned about a comment made online by a pupil or the work they share, the staff member should take a screen shot and report it to the DSL via MyConcern / CPOMS (or the school's existing protocol as long as it is secure)
- Current guidelines for residential pupils skyping / facetimeing family members are a sound basis for acceptable behaviour during online learning sessions using visuals; staff and pupils should be fully dressed and take into account the background / surroundings. Staff should use a communal area, think about anything in the background that could cause concern (e.g. art work) or would identify family members / personal information, and hang a sheet behind them if necessary
- The teacher should always act as moderator and be the responsible adult, especially where a pupil may need guidance to remove items from view. If a pupil is inappropriately dressed or in an unsuitable setting (e.g. a bedroom) they must be removed from the video call
- Using only audio is safer than live video feed. Using pre-recorded film clips or Youtube links, established webinars or other existing resources will also be preferable to a live video session
- Staff must not enter into one-to-one tuition voice or video call with an individual pupil or student without SLT agreement. If there is a need for single pupil interaction, please ensure that a colleague is added to the call, or that a parent is present with the pupil
- If a staff member urgently needs to call a parent or pupil from their personal phone, the number must be withheld by dialling 141 first and a record of the call must be made (e.g. an email to the HSM, DH or DSL to explain the purpose of the call and any actions taken as a result of it)
- Home filters may block different content at a different level to the school's filtering software; if this appears to be the case for one pupil in the group the teacher should revert to or suggest an alternative resource
- Take care that any material provided to students to watch is age and developmentally appropriate. For instance, do not ask Year 9 pupils to watch a film with a 15 rating. Although this might be justified in a classroom setting (in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of senior leaders), it is not acceptable during remote learning activities

- Staff should model good online behaviour in all ways, including the language used to interact with pupils and colleagues, which should be respectful at all times
- School leaders should make clear to staff the operating times for online learning (for example, only during the normal school day); no staff member should engage with or respond to any pupil outside these times

### **Guidelines for students connecting to a virtual classroom session**

Pupils should be reminded of the following:

- Always use a communal space such as a dining room, and NEVER a bedroom or exclusively private space
- The location needs to be quiet and away from other distractions
- Personal appearance - always be appropriately dressed, even if casual and, regardless of the time of day or night, NEVER in sleepwear or anything similar
- A clear background free from distractions or unwanted/inappropriate imagery. Ideally a blank wall - or hang a sheet behind yourself
- Always remove any personal items from any sight line that could identify other members of the family or other personal details
- Remember that mirrors could display items you are not expecting to be seen
- Check that the camera angle is straight ahead and stable
- Ensure you have a strong wi-fi connection to ensure quality video and audio
- Ensure you will not be interrupted – especially loudly or embarrassingly
- No staff member should try to have one to one contact with you – if you are concerned or uncomfortable, contact your Head of Year / pastoral lead / Designated safeguarding lead / the Head teacher

### **Virtual meetings between staff and parents**

The same principles apply:

- In school use an office or one of the meeting rooms if possible. If not in a school location, always use a communal space such as a dining room, and NEVER a bedroom or exclusively private space.
- Personal appearance- always appropriately dressed, ideally work wear.
- A clear background free from distractions or unwanted/inappropriate imagery. Ideally a blank wall - or hang a sheet behind yourself.
- Always remove any personal items from any sight line that could identify other members of the family or other personal details.
- Remember that mirrors could display items you are not expecting.