

Fortismere School - Annex to Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy

1 April 2020 (updated January 2021)

Context

On the 20 March 2020 and on January 5 2021 the government announced that schools were to close to all but children of key workers and vulnerable students - but that these students should only attend if they had no other alternative; it is clear that the ideal for all is that as few students and staff as possible are on the school site at any time.

Response to COVID-19

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak. The majority of our students are now at home and our staffing may at points be affected through illness and self-isolation.

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

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the school and following advice from the government and local agencies.

Reporting arrangements

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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is:

Kirsten Sullivan, Deputy Head, ksullivan@fortismere.org.uk

and the Deputy DSL is:

Lynnette Brown, Pastoral Officer/ Student Welfare, lbrown@fortismere.org.uk

The school's approach ensures the DSL or the Deputy DSL is always available via email to parents and outside agencies, and via telephone and email to all staff.

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. Staff will be in daily 'contact' with their students via the google classroom suite of educational resources. They have been advised to follow the normal safeguarding procedures if they have any concerns during this time and should remain vigilant in looking out for students who may be 'at risk'.

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 remain the same at this time.

Identifying vulnerability

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable children. Key school staff will be working with our Safeguarding Partners, families and students to monitor. Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list of students and our general engagement with all students through our continued pastoral involvement may yet identify others.

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.
- 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 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 or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability. Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

Fortismere School 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 for LAC and PLAC students is:

Emily Brooks (AHT: Inclusion) ebrooks@fortismere.org.uk supported by

Romina Harris O'Hanlon, Parent and student Engagement officer,

rharrisohanlon@fortismere.org.uk

Where students have a social worker, the school will contact the family to determine whether the student needs to attend school. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, Fortismere School or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England. Where these students do not attend school will encourage our vulnerable children to access school remotely and will monitor this.

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

- **Children of key workers who may attend school** - Kirsten Sullivan (DSL) is in contact with the parents of those accessing the school.
- **Students at home** – HOYs have overall pastoral responsibility and are monitoring students use of remote learning platforms and the level of engagement from students.

Holiday arrangements

Holiday arrangements in school will be reviewed according to the situation at the time.

Attendance

At this time, normal attendance procedures are not required. Fortismere School will inform the DFE daily of the number of students from key worker families or vulnerable children who are on site.

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 will be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of

online learning). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns.

Fortismere School has established google classrooms for Mental Health and Wellbeing for both staff and students. This is resourced and managed by the school's **Mental Health Champion**:

Katherine Jackson kjackson@fortismere.org.uk.

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. Staff managing the students on site are aware of issues that can arise where groups are mixed age.

Risk online

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other potential risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the school.

For those students who are working in school at this time we will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

The majority of our students are accessing learning remotely and we will continue to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place. We have discussed with our staff the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and have reminded them of the school's Code of Conduct and the 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](#). These links are on the Safeguarding pages of the school's website.

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 carers 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

Advice to staff and families regarding online learning

Below are some things to consider especially for the virtual lessons:

- 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.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms provided by Fortismere School to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record the attendance of any sessions held
- Students and parents must not record or screen grab any parts of the lesson.

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.

Contact details for the LADO are available on our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

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.

New staff or volunteers

It is unlikely that during this period of school closure we will continue with our recruitment process. However, if that were to change we would ensure that new starters have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the DSL or a deputy. They will 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 1 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. We will ensure the Single Central Record is updated. A record of who is working on site is collected each day.

This policy has been remotely approved by Governors in April 2020 and January 2021 and is available on the school website at [Policies](#)