



Covid19 Child Protection Policy Addendum:

Supporting children not in school (vulnerable children, as defined, and those assessed as vulnerable by school)

Since 23rd March, schools have been operating under the COVID-19 guidance for schools and other educational settings and have implemented procedures that enable them to keep their pupils and staff safe at all times.

This addendum is to be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection policy.

Vulnerable children

Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance requires schools and the LA to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Whilst the majority of people are being urged to stay at home and adhere to guidance about social distancing, the DfE guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for schools and other educational settings sets a clear expectation that schools stay open and make provision for vulnerable children where education is a protective factor.

This includes:

- children who have a social worker i.e. children who have a child protection plan 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 Children Act 1989.
- children and young people with an EHCP who cannot be safely supported at home.

Children assessed as vulnerable by school

In addition to the children and young people identified as vulnerable in the recent government guidance, Foxfields Academy will identify children on the edge of social care or who normally receive pastoral-type support in school to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

This information will be established through discussion with the designated safeguarding lead from the pupil's previous educational establishment and other agencies involved with the pupil.

Vulnerable children not in school

Whilst a number of vulnerable children will attend school regularly, there may be some who do not. It is the role of the school to make day to day decisions based on the vulnerability of a child and it remains the Local Authority Children's Services responsibility to assess and respond to the safeguarding concerns raised by the school, whether or not they are within the identified vulnerable categories. Therefore, given the current circumstances, it is more important than ever for school and Children's Services to work collectively to ensure the safety of our children and to facilitate joint working so appropriate support and interventions are provided.

Communication

In order to respond efficiently and timely to the needs of vulnerable children, communication is vital.

Communication with parents/carers – Foxfields Academy will ensure that up to date contact details for parents and other identified responsible adults are kept. Those responsible for safeguarding and home contact will establish best times to call with the parents and a process for follow up if no response is forthcoming. For any child who has another key worker involved e.g. social worker, the school will endeavour to coordinate contact with the home and establish who is calling, when and the purpose of the call, to reduce undue duplication of contact to parents/carers.

Parents/carers communication with schools – Foxfields Academy will provide parents/carers with contact details for staff who they can talk to about any concerns and update this regularly to reflect staffing variations. The fixed hours that the school is open, and when the school office is manned, will be communication to parents and carers. Considerations will be made for how key messages can be received outside the school opening hours, and Foxfields Academy will ensure this information reaches those families that do not have access to technology.

Schools communication with social worker/Early Help and SEND worker – Efficient contact with a child's social worker or SEND worker is key to supporting pupils and families. All communications will be made promptly and recorded via the school's electronic recording system.

Making Decisions about Vulnerable Children Attending School

The school will conduct a risk assessment regarding the vulnerability of every child. The school will determine the frequency of this assessment based on current and of any newly identified needs of a child. This information will be gathered through consultation with any

other professionals supporting the pupil, and discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead from the pupil's previous educational establishment.

The majority of the children who are not attending school will be classified as 'not currently vulnerable'. For these children, weekly welfare checks and arrangements for home learning will be made.

If a parent/carer of a vulnerable child (as defined above), does not want them to attend school, the social worker/ SEND caseworker and school staff should joint risk assess in consultation with the parents/carers. Where the child does not have a social worker or SEND caseworker, the risk assessment will be carried by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Senior Leadership Team, the relevant professionals from the pupil's previous educational establishment and together with parents and carers.

The risk assessment should explore the reasons for the parent/carer not wanting the child to come to school and talk through these with them, including any anxieties they may have about the risk of contracting the virus. Efforts will be made to reassure them of the processes that the school are taking to minimise the risk. Each child will be considered individually according to the school environment, the child's needs and family circumstances. The following issues will be taken into account:

- i) The potential health risks to the child from COVID-19, bearing in mind any underlying health conditions and available health advice
- ii) The ability of the child's parent or carer to ensure their health and care needs can be met safely at home
- iii) The level of vulnerability and any associated risks and whether these are likely to increase if the child was not attending school
- iv) The potential impact on the child's wellbeing as a result of any changes to the child's routine or the way in which their provision is delivered
- v) The likelihood of any increased risk to the child if some or all elements of their plan (including EHCP where appropriate) cannot be delivered; including consideration of associated risks if some or all elements of the plan cannot be delivered in the usual way or in the usual setting
- vi) The ability of the school to continue to provide the specific support the child requires, especially if key trusted staff are not available or the school delivers provision from another site
- vii) How easily the child can access another setting which has capacity to meet need

The risk assessment process is dynamic in order to address any changes to the national advice and guidance as well as any changes associated with school capacity or home circumstances, for each child.

The risk assessment must take the form of, at least, a recorded conversation with agreed actions, ensuring that all appropriate agencies and workers are informed. For children on child protection plans, this will feed into the Covid19 risk assessment completed by the social worker.

The frequency and pace of review will be determined by the nature and level of identified risk for the child within the context of the changing national landscape. However, a risk assessment should be completed at least every two weeks.

Risk Assessments

Following risk assessments, it is expected that children will fall into the following categories, and could move between this over time:

- 1) Attending school in best interests
- 2) Child is safer at home
- 3) Parental choice for child to not attend
 - I. Shielding/self-isolating due to underlying health condition
 - II. Family member shielding for 12 weeks
 - III. COVID19 related illness and self-isolation for 7 days
 - IV. Other illness
 - V. Family member unwell and family self-isolating for 14 days
 - VI. Other appropriate reason
 - VII. No appropriate reason established

Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment for each individual child, there may be increased safeguarding concerns for children whose parents choose not to send them to school although this is considered to be in their best interests. Over time, social isolation is likely to increase pressure on some families. Where pre-existing concerns exist about domestic abuse, for example, some children may be at increased risk of likely significant harm as a result. For these children, school will continue to play a critical safeguarding role.

Outcome of Risk assessments

The senior leadership of the school will have oversight of all the vulnerable pupils during this time. They will be responsible for ensuring appropriate care and welfare, through effective communication, takes place between the parents and the school that reflects the level of vulnerability of the child. Any safeguarding concerns that become apparent during such communication will be managed following the school's safeguarding procedures.

Following the initial and continual risk assessment, the vulnerable children will be grouped depending on the level of support they require, for example,

1. Those who need daily monitoring
2. Those who need monitoring 3 times per week
3. Those who need weekly monitoring

All vulnerable children must be contacted on a weekly basis as an absolute minimum.

Recording of contact and actions

The designated safeguarding lead will hold an up to date current list of identified vulnerable pupils including those who are medically shielding. All communications, agreed actions, and outcomes of risk assessments will be recorded and monitored via the school's electronic recording system. All safeguarding concerns and notes will be recorded as per normal safeguarding practice.

Communication plan with parents of vulnerable children

All welfare communications will be made through telephone calls. Other communications may be made via and email, to those parents/carers that deem this a preferable method of communication. All email correspondence will be carried out through authorised school emails and recorded on the school's electronic system. If telephone contact has not been achieved within a period of seven days, a home visit will be conducted by the designated safeguarding lead and/or a member of the senior leadership team.

As per government guidance, home visiting should be kept to an absolute minimum and all other means of assessing the child's safety should be attempted beforehand. If the child has a social worker the school first will check to confirm if a social worker intends to conduct a visit. The school will follow the social distancing guidelines; check-in visits can be conducted from the doorstep.

Communication with vulnerable children

For pupils who are risk assessed as being the most vulnerable, contact should take place with them directly (phone call), in line with the agreed actions from the assessment. Coordination and communication will take place between the school and social care e.g. the child's social worker or early help staff to agree what is being asked and by whom.

Referrals to Children's Social Care must continue to be made in the usual way. The need to refer a child to social care is unlikely to decrease and may possibly increase during the period of lockdown, the school will therefore continue to refer or request a consultation to ensure children remain safe.

For further information access:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for schools and other educational settings](#)

[Leicestershire County Council: Coronavirus Information](#)

[Guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus infection](#)