



## **Meadow Vale Primary School**

# **COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection**

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

## 1. Context

From 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

Schools and all childcare providers were asked to 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 addendum of the Meadow Vale Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

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## Key contacts

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Safeguarding Governor	Richard Stok	07879 432887	chair@meadowvaleprimary.com

## Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Those who have a social worker include 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.

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. 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 in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders 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.

Meadow Vale Primary 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 key worker from the Safeguarding Team for each individual case will be responsible for this.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and the school's identified key worker will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, the school's key worker or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Meadow Vale Primary School will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

### **Attendance monitoring**

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

If Meadow Vale Primary School has any children in attendance (e.g. because they are vulnerable or their parent(s) / carers are critical workers) we will submit the daily attendance sheet to the DfE by 12 noon - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

The school will use the Excel Spreadsheet provided by the department to record attendance. This form will then enable the completion of the Department's daily 'webform' that will send aggregated data back the Department for tracking purposes.

The excel spreadsheet is then sent to the Local Authority daily for monitoring.

If the school has closed, we will complete the return once as requested by the DfE.

The school's key worker and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school. Meadow Vale Primary School will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Meadow Vale Primary School will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.

When communicating with parents/carers and carers, Meadow Vale Primary School will confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers, where they are available.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the school's key worker will notify their social worker.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Meadow Vale Primary School will ensure that there is a Designated Safeguarding Lead on site whilst there are children in school. However, if this is not possible, a nominated member of staff will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. They will liaise with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaise with children's social workers. This may include providing access for social workers to see children in school as part of an assessment or required contact.

### **Reporting a concern**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via electronic systems where appropriate, which can be done remotely. Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should follow the usual process to report the concern to the headteacher. If there is a requirement to make a notification to the headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the headteacher.

Concerns around the Headteacher should continue to be directed to the Chair of Governors.

### **Safeguarding Training and induction**

DSL training is very unlikely to take place unlikely to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID 19 virus.

For the period COVID-19 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 miss their refresher training.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The DSL will communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the

COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:-

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

The school will seek confirmation that the member of staff has received appropriate safeguarding training.

Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of the receiving schools child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

### **Safer recruitment/volunteers 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. When recruiting new staff, Meadow Vale Primary School will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) (KCSIE).

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.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:-

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

Meadow Vale Primary School 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. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

Meadow Vale Primary School will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral.

During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk)

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current national emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, we will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

### **Online safety in schools and colleges**

Meadow Vale Primary School 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.

### **Children and online safety away from school and college**

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police.

Any online contact with children and their families should follow the same principles as set out in the school code of conduct.

Meadow Vale Primary School will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

### **Supporting children not in school**

Meadow Vale Primary School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person. The communication plans may include remote or phone contact and details must be recorded on the child's safeguarding file, as should a record of any contact made. The school will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan and will be reviewed at least once a fortnight.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for many children and young people and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Our staff team are aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

## **Supporting children in school**

Meadow Vale Primary School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students and will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Headteacher will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

We will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID19.

Meadow Vale Primary School will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Where the school has concerns about the impact of staff absence, such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders, we will discuss them immediately with the Local Authority Safeguarding our Schools Team.

## **Mental health**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. We as a school are aware of this, in particular when considering setting work for pupils where they are at home.

For those pupils where we are already aware of mental health difficulties, we are monitoring these closely and keeping in regular contact.

Where there are emerging mental health difficulties, we encourage parents and carers to share this information with the school in order for us to assess how we may be able to support and advise.

## **Peer on Peer Abuse**

Meadow Vale Primary School recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where a school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within of the Child Protection Policy.

The school 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 on the child's safeguarding file and appropriate referrals made.

## **Support from the Safeguarding our Schools Team (Bracknell Forest)**

The Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Our Schools Team will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the DSL to carry out their role effectively.

This includes the cascading of guidance, remote meetings with senior leaders as required, telephone and email contact.

**Links to Government Guidance** (please note these will be updated on a regular basis)

### **Covid-19 Guidance for Education Settings:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

### **Safeguarding:**

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

### **Vulnerable Children and Young People:**

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

### **Maintaining Social Distancing in Education:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

### **Mental Health Guidance for Parents and Carers:**

<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>

### **School Closure:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>