

# Safeguarding Policy: COVID-19 addendum



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## Important contacts

ROLE/ORGANISATION	NAME	CONTACT DETAILS
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# 1. Context and definitions

## 1.1 Context

This addendum applies during the period of school closure due to COVID-19, and reflects updated advice from our three local safeguarding partners (Torbay Council, NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group and Devon & Cornwall Police).

It sets out changes to our normal Safeguarding Policy in light of the Department for Education's guidance [Coronavirus: safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#) and [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus](#) and should be read in conjunction with our normal Safeguarding Policy.

Unless covered here, our normal Safeguarding Policy continues to apply.

From 20 March 2020 parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and schools were told to remain open only for vulnerable children and those 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 Safeguarding Policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements during this period of time and is likely to be reviewed at regular intervals particularly when new advice is released by the LA or DfE.

This addendum of the Safeguarding Policy will also be reviewed should the College play 'host' to a collapsed provision or direct students/staff to a 'cluster' school. The review will then consider any information about 'hub' working issued by the DfE, and consideration will be made, for example, of the sharing of vulnerable children's information, the reporting of concerns and the updating of safeguarding files.

It remains the case that **safeguarding is everybody's responsibility**, therefore this additional information needs to be shared with all staff and volunteers who in turn must read, digest and seek support from the DSL team or College leaders if further clarification is required. All staff should continue to have access to the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and KCSiE 2019 where further details and information can be found.

## 1.2 Definitions

The Department for Education's (DfE's) definition of 'vulnerable children' includes those who:

- ▲ have a social worker, including children:
  - with a child protection plan
  - assessed as being in need (by the College, or other professional) or otherwise meet the definition in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
  - looked after by the local authority
- ▲ have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the SENDCO, 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 and available, 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, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead 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.

Senior leaders must also consider the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and all other children attending the College. If a child is unwell, or showing the symptoms of COVID 19 (as defined by current government guidelines) they will expect the child to remain at home and the College will offer provision and support remotely, informing relevant partner agencies. This will include establishing regular contact with the family until such time as they have adhered to guidelines enabling the now well or symptom-free child to return to school. These arrangements will also apply is any member of a vulnerable child's household is unwell or exhibiting symptoms of COVID 19.

If the school has information that parents are not following current government guidelines College leaders will use their professional discretion, working with any partner agencies and LA officers, to agree appropriate action. This will firstly take into account the child's safety however, where other exceptional circumstances exist whereby a child compromises the health, wellbeing or safety of staff or other children, then appropriate action will be agreed by the school together with the social worker/LA.

The Spires College 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. If current plans and support packages exist for these students the

College will continue to provide for these as best as possible in conjunction with the relevant agencies. The lead person for this will be Tracy French (DSL).

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 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 College will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID 19, the social worker or the College's DSL will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England. We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend school, including remotely if not possible by other means.

## **2. Reporting concerns**

All staff and volunteers must continue to act on any concerns they have immediately. It is still vitally important to do this, both for children still attending school and those at home.

### **2.1 Reporting a concern about a child**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the College's Safeguarding Policy. Concerns can be reported remotely via email ([safeguarding@thespirescollege.com](mailto:safeguarding@thespirescollege.com)) or by telephone to the DSL (07595 120842). Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

### **2.2 Reporting a concern about an adult/the Principal**

We will continue to follow the principles set out in Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children, either in College or remotely, they should report the concern to the Principal. Concerns around the Principal should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

We will continue to refer adults who have harmed or pose a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

We will continue to refer potential cases of teacher misconduct to the Teaching Regulation Agency. We will do this using the email address [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk) for the duration of the COVID-19 period, in line with government guidance.

### 3. Designated Safeguarding Lead

We aim to have a trained DSL or trained safeguarding team member on site wherever possible. Details of all important contacts are listed in the 'Important Contacts' section at the start of this addendum.

If our DSL is not in College, she can be contacted remotely by email or by telephone.

We will keep all College staff and volunteers informed by email if there are any changes to who is our DSL or any changes to the Safeguarding Team.

We will ensure that DSLs (and deputies), wherever their location, know who the most vulnerable children in our school are.

On occasions where there is no DSL or safeguarding team member on site, a senior leader will take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding. This will be the duty SLT member (as per the rota). You can contact them by email.

The senior leader will be responsible for liaising with the off-site DSL (or deputy) to make sure they (the senior leader) can:

- ▲ identify the most vulnerable children in school
- ▲ update and manage access to child protection files, where necessary
- ▲ liaise with children's social workers where they need access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments

### 4. Working with other agencies

We will continue to work with children's social care, and with virtual school heads for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

We will continue to update this addendum where necessary, to reflect any updated guidance from:

- ▲ our three local safeguarding partners
- ▲ the local authority about children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need

### 5. Monitoring attendance

As most children will not be attending school during this period of school closure, we will not be completing our usual attendance registers or following our usual procedures to follow up on non-attendance.

The exception to this is where any vulnerable child whom we expect to attend school during the closure doesn't attend, or stops attending. In these cases we will:

- ▲ Follow up on their absence with their parents or carers, by telephone, on the first, and every, day of absence
- ▲ Notify their social worker, where they have one, via the DSL

The Spires College will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) where the child(ren) subsequently does not attend, on the first and every day of absence.

We are maintaining a daily register to keep an accurate record of who is attending school and using the Department for Education's daily online attendance form to report this data.

## **6. Peer-on-peer abuse**

We will continue to follow the principles set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and those outlined in the Safeguarding Policy when managing reports and supporting victims of peer-on-peer abuse.

Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately – about both children attending school and those at home.

The Spires College recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims. We will listen to and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person. Concerns and actions must be recorded and appropriate referrals made.

## **7. Support for children who aren't 'vulnerable' but about whom we have concerns**

We have the option to offer places in school to children who don't meet the Department for Education's definition of 'vulnerable', but about whom we have safeguarding concerns. We will work with parents/carers to do this.

If these children will not be attending school, we will put a contact plan in place, as explained in Section 8 below.

## **8. Supporting children who are not in school**

The Spires College is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children. Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or in cases where a child would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, we will ensure that a contact plan is in place for that child or young person. Details of this plan will be recorded, as will a record of contact that has been made.

The Spires College and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any contact plan. If concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as

appropriate. The Spires College recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of students and their parents and carers.

All staff at The Spires College need to be aware of this in setting expectations of students' work where they are at home.

We have contact plans for children with a social worker and children about whom we have safeguarding concerns, in circumstances where:

- ▲ they won't be attending College (for example where the DSL, parent/carer and social worker, if relevant, have decided together that this wouldn't be in the child's best interests); or
- ▲ they would usually attend but have to self-isolate

Each child has an individual plan which sets out:

- ▲ how often the College will make contact – this will be at least once a week
- ▲ which staff member(s) will make contact – as far as possible, this will be staff who know the family well
- ▲ how staff will make contact – this will be over the phone, doorstep visits, or a combination of both

We have agreed these plans with children's social care where relevant, and these are reviewed weekly between the DSL and the Principal.

If we can't make contact, we will seek support from social workers where necessary. Members of the safeguarding team will continue to make home visits. They will ensure they see the child but will not enter the home and will observe social distancing measures.

## 9. Supporting children who are in school

The Spires College 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.

The Principal will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to student ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety. The Spires College will continually refer to the most recent 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.

## 10. Safeguarding all children

Staff and volunteers are aware that this difficult time potentially puts all children at greater risk.

Staff and volunteers will continue to be alert to any signs of abuse, or effects on students' mental health that are also safeguarding concerns, and act on concerns immediately in line with the procedures set out in Section 2 above.

For children at home, they will look out for signs like:

- ▲ not completing assigned work or logging on to school systems
- ▲ no contact from children or families

Children are likely to be spending more time online during this period. See Section 11 below for our approach to online safety both in and outside school.

## 11. Online safety

### 11.1 In school

We will continue to have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in school and supervising staff will be vigilant.

### 11.2 Outside school

The Spires College has robust policies in place with regard to interacting and communicating with children online. Our expectations are described in the College's:

- ▲ Code of Conduct
- ▲ Acceptable Use Policy
- ▲ Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy

Where staff are interacting with children online, they will continue to follow our existing policies as well as the additional remote working guidance issued to all staff.

Staff will also follow the Government guidance regarding [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus](#).

Staff will continue to be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of harm online, and act on any concerns immediately, following our reporting procedures as set out in Section 2 of this addendum.

We will make sure children know how to report any concerns they have back to College staff, and signpost them to other sources of support too.

### 11.3 Support for parents and carers

The Spires College will continue to support parents and carers to keep their children safe online by sharing online safety information, websites and resources for them to utilise on the College website, in communications and updates and via social media.

## **12. Staff recruitment, training and induction**

### **12.1 Recruiting new staff and volunteers**

We continue to recognise the importance of robust safer recruitment procedures, so that adults and volunteers who work in our school are safe to work with children.

We will continue to follow our safer recruitment procedures, and Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

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. In urgent cases, when validating proof of identity documents to apply for a DBS check, we will initially accept verification of scanned documents via online video link, rather than being in physical possession of the original documents. This approach is in line with revised guidance from the DBS.

New staff must still present the original documents when they first attend work at our College.

If The Spires College utilises volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity. We will continue to do our usual checks on new volunteers, and undertake risk assessments to decide whether volunteers who aren't in regulated activity should have an enhanced DBS check, in accordance with paragraphs 167-172 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

### **12.2 Safeguarding induction and training**

DSL training is very 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 have or will miss their refresher training. All existing school staff who have had safeguarding training and have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019), are similarly likely to not receive whole staff training during this time. DSLs should therefore communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child. This should be achieved through emails and similar electronic means.

New staff and volunteers will continue to receive:

- ▲ a safeguarding induction
- ▲ a copy of our Safeguarding Policy (and this addendum)
- ▲ Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1

## 13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the three local safeguarding partners, the LA or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every four week by a member of the SLT. At every review, it will be approved by the governing body.

## 14. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- ▲ Safeguarding Policy
- ▲ Student Behaviour Policy
- ▲ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ▲ Staff Code of Conduct
- ▲ Staff Disciplinary Policy
- ▲ Whistle-Blowing Policy
- ▲ Complaints Policy
- ▲ Online Safety Policy
- ▲ Data Protection and Privacy notices
- ▲ Photography and Video Consent, Use and Storage Policy
- ▲ Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy
- ▲ ICT Acceptable Use Policies
- ▲ SEND Policy
- ▲ Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation Policy
- ▲ Remote Working Guidelines

