

Whitefield Academy Trust  
COVID-19 School Closure arrangements for  
Safeguarding and Child Protection

April 2020

## 1. Context

Whitefield Academy Trust closed to children and young people in Whitefield Schools, Joseph Clarke School and Project Search from the end of the day on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 following a risk assessment of the actual and potential impact of COVID19 on the Trust community.

The risk assessment took account of:

- the number of children and young people who are medically vulnerable – both those with significant medical needs associated with profound and multiple learning difficulties and others with medical needs in addition to SEND
- the number of children and young people who are unable to follow routines for social distancing because of their developmental level, their need for physical support and guidance, the possibility of physical intervention or the need for frequent help with care and self-care. The Trust notes that Public Health England identifies people with learning difficulties among the groups needing to take particular care with social distancing
- the level of staff absence due to illness, self isolation and/or care for others in their household and the impact on children and young people of inconsistent staffing

As a result of this risk assessment the senior leadership teams concluded that it was not possible to educate or care for children and young people safely, or to protect staff, and the Directors ratified the decision to close the school, keeping the situation under review. Systems were established to provide work for children and young people to complete at home and phone numbers were provided for parents to make contact. The safeguarding teams identified the most vulnerable families with whom the Family Support Team would make regular contact (at least weekly and more often if there was immediate cause for concern). Parents and the local authorities were informed of these arrangements.

From 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the government announced ‘lockdown’ measures where parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible.

Schools and all childcare providers were at the same time 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.

Following this guidance and following further communication with the local authority the Trust leadership team reviewed their decision to close to all families. Parents were asked to indicate whether they were key workers and would use the key worker provision. Three families made themselves known; two have made alternative provision for their children and the school is working with social services to secure support for the third for whom provision in school would not be appropriate.

The other factors behind the Trust’s decision to close were unchanged and in fact the availability of staff has worsened, therefore the Trust remains closed to children and young people, with staff working from home.

This addendum to the Trust’s Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our safeguarding arrangements during the pandemic. It will also be the basis for the Trust’s response to any further situations requiring extended closure in whole or part.

## Key Contacts

Role	Name	Contact Number
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Laura Pease	07931 838113
	Chadia Filali Moutei	07731 323466
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Evelina Dimopoulou (Designated CLA Lead)	07889 800962
	Gill Wadeson	07871 735358
	Lesley Middleton	07871 780023
	Sarah Bent	07871 778470
CEO	Elaine Colquhoun	07737 629496
Chair of Directors	Andrew Howat	
Safeguarding Director	Owen O’Reagan	

Any written reports relating to safeguarding concerns should be reported through Safeguard (accessible via the school intranet or <https://app.safeguard.software/auth.asp?page=login>)

## 2. Vulnerable children

Government guidance when closing schools defined vulnerable children as those who have a social worker (including children with a Child Protection Plan, those that are looked after by the Local Authority and those assessed as Children in Need) and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

As all children and young people in the Trust have EHCPs, the safeguarding teams have identified those whom they believe to be particularly vulnerable. This includes all children who are looked after, all with Child Protection Plans and who are identified as Children in Need and a further group of children and young people who are routinely monitored by the safeguarding teams.

Whilst the Trust is closed these children and young people will be monitored by the Family Support Team (see below for further details). If the Trust were to open to any group of children and young people we would prioritise this group in discussions with parents, social services and the local authority. At present, in the context of the risk assessment referred to above, there are no children and young people for whom safeguarding concerns are so significant that they would be safer in school.

The Trust will continue to work with and support children’s social workers to help protect the vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children’s social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for care experienced children and young people. The lead person for this is Evelina Dimopoulou.

Members of the school leadership teams will make regular contact with families to monitor their wellbeing and to support with home learning. They will pass any safeguarding concerns to the safeguarding team.

The Trust will encourage all children and young people to take part in educational activities as set out on the website. However, we recognise that the national situation has a significant impact on families and will be mindful of this when discussing activities at home. School leaders will focus on educational activities in the widest sense when talking to families – e.g. children can be encouraged to help with cooking at home.

All contact with families is recorded and summarised securely and is used to inform the daily return to the local authority (see below).

### **3. Attendance monitoring**

The Trust will complete returns as requested by the DfE and the local authority.

Whilst the school is closed we will collate information around contact with families by the Family Support Team and school leaders and submit this to the local authority daily.

If the Trust were to reopen in whole or part we will submit the daily attendance sheet to the DfE and the Local Authority by 12 noon.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

At this point, the Trust and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children and young people should be attending school and will then follow up on any pupil expected to attend, who does not

To support the above, the Trust will, when communicating with parents/carers 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 stops attending, the Trust will notify their social worker or the appropriate SEND Officer.

### **4. Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Both schools in the Trust have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a team of deputy DSLs. In addition other members of the senior leadership teams have attended DSL training and some middle leaders have received additional training from the Waltham Forest safeguarding in schools lead.

Contact details are provided above.

Members of the Safeguarding Team can be contacted in normal school hours whilst the schools are closed. The safeguarding email and Safeguard is checked at least twice a day and appropriate action taken.

If the Trust were to open in whole or in part a member of the safeguarding team will be on site at all times when children or young people are present.

A member of the safeguarding team will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings, which will be held remotely.

## **5. Reporting a concern.**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding policy. School reporting systems are checked at least twice a day.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the schools safeguarding reporting system remotely, they should phone or email the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This will ensure that the concern is received.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.

If during the period away from work staff become concerned about an adult who is a member of staff or a volunteer within the Trust, they should follow the school reporting process and inform the Principal or Headteacher as soon as possible. This should be done by phone or email using the Principal or Headteacher's professional contact, not the safeguarding email.

Concerns around the Principal or Headteacher should be directed to the CEO and concerns about the CEO to the Chair of Directors.

If staff have a concern which they cannot otherwise report, they should utilise the whistleblowing process and contact [lado@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:lado@walthamforest.gov.uk)

Where in the process of speaking to parents during a period of closure a concern arises, for example, where discussion with a parent indicates that they are facing difficulties at home, the person making the call should inform a member of the safeguarding team. If the person making the call is a member of the team they should discuss the situation with a colleague on the team. The safeguarding team will make a log of the concern and follow up as appropriate. The following actions are likely but not exhaustive:

- offer practical advice and phone back the following day to review the situation
- offer practical support e.g. buying urgent supplies
- signpost the family to other means of support e.g. the Waltham Forest shopping service
- make contact with the allocated social worker
- make contact with the SEND Officer for the relevant part of the school

## **6. Safeguarding Training and Induction.**

Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 miss the refresher training.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). This has been reinforced during compulsory training for staff whilst the Trust is closed. Any new arrangements will be communicated through the Staff Bulletin.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter the Trust, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of the host setting's child protection policy, confirmation of the local processes and confirmation of the DSL arrangements.

## **7. 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, the Trust 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.

The Trust will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process for volunteers as set out in paragraphs 167-172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

The Trust will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer ([lado@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:lado@walthamforest.gov.uk)) and 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.

The Trust 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)

The Trust will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

## **8. Online safety**

If the Trust reopens in whole or in part, the Trust will continue to provide a safe online environment. This will include the use of an online filtering system.

Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

Staff working from home during this period are following protocols in line with the schools Online Safety policy and GDPR police for remote working,

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

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

The Trust will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with the privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

The learning platform used for parents to access online learning materials is being continuously monitored to ensure protection of data as well as to ensure the quality of the materials provided.

At present the Trust is not using virtual lessons but were we to do so we would fully consider the risks as advised by the local authority safeguarding team.

## **9. Supporting children not in school.**

The Whitefield Academy Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and well being of all children and young people.

The safeguarding team maintains a list of the children and young people identified as particularly vulnerable and will ensure that their families are contacted at least weekly and more often if there are concerns which warrant this. All contacts will be recorded and key information shared with other members of the team.

All concerns will be followed up as noted above.

Where there are significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or family and the necessary information cannot be gathered by phone the safeguarding team may

make a doorstep visit. If this is not deemed to be safe or if it is not likely to give the reassurances needed then the team will discuss their concerns with social services or police and ask for a welfare call.

A MASH referral may be made in accordance with the usual protocols.

The Trust and its safeguarding team will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of contact with families and any follow up actions.

The Trust will continue to share safeguarding messages on its website, via parent mail and its social media pages.

The Trust recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home and the Family Support Team will follow up accordingly.

### **10. Supporting children in school**

The Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

The schools will only reopen to any extent if they can continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish and if senior leaders can ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers and consistency can be maintained.

The Trust 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 others measures to limit the risk of the spread of COVID-19. The schools can only reopen insofar as this guidance can be followed for the children and young people present.

### **11. Peer on peer abuse**

If there are any reports of peer on peer abuse during a period of closure, the Trust will follow the principals as set out in Part 5 of KCSIE and those outlined in our safeguarding and child protection policy.

We 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 our safeguarding recording system and appropriate referrals will be made.

### **Support from the Multi-Academy Trust**

The CEO will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the safeguarding team to carry out their role effectively.

## **Support from the Safeguarding in Education Service**

The Safeguarding in Education Service will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the safeguarding team to carry out their role effectively.

This includes providing support, guidance and direction.

The Safeguarding in Education Service can provide group and individual supervision sessions. This may take the form of an online meeting.

## **Useful Contact Numbers**

MASH: 020 8496 2310

LADO: lado@walthamforest.gov.uk

020 8496 3646

Caroline: 07770 052 421

Gill: 07791 559 789

Safeguarding in Education: Safeguardingineducation@walthamforest.gov.uk

Caroline: 07770 052 421

Gill: 07791 559 789