

Child protection and safeguarding: COVID-19 addendum

White Trees Independent School

White Trees
independent school



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Important contacts

ROLE	NAME	CONTACT DETAILS
Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)	Laura Bull	Laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com
Deputy Head and Deputy DSL	Louise Gordon	louise.gordon@whitetrees-school.com
Deputy DSL	Lukas Bradon	Lukas.bradon@whitetrees-school.com
Other contactable DSL(s) and/or deputy DSL(s):	Aaron Shead	aaron.shead@whitetrees-school.com
Headteacher	Laura Bull	Laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com
Local authority designated officer (LADO)	Hertfordshire Grid for Learning	01438 845111 Bill Jephson Community Safety Lead
Chair of governors	Richard Hilditch	

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential and **the purpose of all intervention is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.** We are aware that

our pupils, most of which have special educational needs and/or disability are more vulnerable to be subject to abuse and neglect. For example, there could be a reluctance to believe children with special educational needs and/or disability are being abused, limited opportunities for these children to seek help from someone else or a lack of access to support services. Staff have an awareness that behaviour, mood and injury may relate to possible abuse and not just their SEN or disability. Our pupils may have a higher risk of being isolated from their peers, left out of group activities or bullied. As a school, we strive to help safeguard these pupils by ensuring that they are heard, have unlimited access to therapeutic support and liaise with external support services on the family's behalf.

1. Scope and definitions

This addendum applies during the period of school closure due to COVID-19, and reflects updated advice from our 3 local safeguarding partners and local authority (LA) Hertfordshire.

It sets out changes to our normal child protection policy in light of the Department for Education's guidance [Coronavirus: safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#), and should be read in conjunction with that policy.

Unless covered here, our normal child protection policy continues to apply.

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
- Looked after by the local authority
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2. Core safeguarding principles

We will still have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Although we are operating in a different way to normal, we are still following these important safeguarding principles:

- The best interests of children must come first
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to act on it immediately
- A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy should be available at all times (see section 4 for details of our arrangements)
- It's essential that unsuitable people don't enter the school workforce or gain access to children
- Children should continue to be protected when they are online

3. Reporting concerns

All staff must continue to act on any concerns they have about a child immediately. It is still vitally important to do this, both for children still attending school and those at home. All staff have access to CPOMs and should report concerns as soon as possible.

As a reminder, all staff should continue to work with and support children's social workers, where they have one, to help protect vulnerable children.

4. DSL (and deputy) arrangements

We aim to have a trained DSL or deputy DSL 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 (or deputy) can't be in school, they can be contacted remotely by: email or by phone, they will also respond to any CPOM's alerts that are sent to them immediately.

Laura.bull@whitetrees-school.com Lukas.bradon@whitetrees-school.com
louise.gordon@whitetrees-school.com

All school staff are aware who is the DSL and DDSL and they are available via cpoms, email and by phone.

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 deputy on site, a senior leader will take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding. This will be Louise Gordon, Deputy Head and Deputy DSL. You can contact her by alerting her on CPOMs and by email:

louise.gordon@whitetrees-school.com

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

5. 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 3 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

6. 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 child 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
- Notify their social worker, where they have one.

We are using the Department for Education's daily online attendance form to keep an accurate record of who is attending school.

We will plan with parents and carers to make sure we have up-to-date emergency contact details, and additional contact details where possible, all involved have received an in-depth personalised letter providing details of the pupil’s timetable and provided contact details if needed.

7. Peer-on-peer abuse

We will continue to follow the principles set out in part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 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.

We understand that bullying, including cyber-bullying, is harmful to children. We have an **anti-bullying policy** that sets out our aim of ensuring no child becomes a victim of any form of bullying and the work that we carry out in school to foster an environment where bullying behaviour is known to be unacceptable. We will always take seriously any reports of bullying and respond appropriately.

We understand that bullying may take different forms and may include, as examples, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and biphobic behaviours. Any such reported or observed incident will be dealt with in accordance with our anti-bullying policy.

8. Concerns about a staff member

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

Staff should continue to act on any concerns they have immediately – whether those concerns are about staff/volunteers working on site or remotely.

WHO WILL LEAD AN INVESTIGATION IN THE FIRST PLACE?	
Concern about...	Who will investigate?
About any member or members of staff below the senior leadership team	Head Teacher
About a head teacher or member of the senior leadership team	Director of operations and Chair of Governors, Christina Wells
About the proprietor	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Hertfordshire Children’s Services & MASH:	03001234043 protectedreferrals.cs@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Local Authority Designated Officer (Hertfordshire’s safeguarding children board)	Community Safety Lead: Bill Jephson, 03001234043 Head of CP: Roger Carruthers, 01992556937 Consultation Hub: 01438737511

Our procedures for managing allegations of abuse against members of staff are simple and clear – the quick resolution of any allegation is an absolute priority. Put simply, allegations

made should be reported straight away, normally to the associate executive head with safeguarding responsibility, executive head or the proprietor. The school must then involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if the allegations require investigation. In response to an allegation, suspending the member of staff is not the default response, unless there is no reasonable alternative. If suspension is deemed appropriate, the reasons and justification will be recorded by the school's leaders (or proprietor) and the individual notified of the reasons.

Allegations that are found to have been malicious will be removed from personnel records and any that are not substantiated, are unfounded or malicious will not be referred to in employer references. Pupils who have made malicious allegations are likely to have breached the schools' behaviour policy and will receive an appropriate sanction which is likely to be a fixed-term exclusion.

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 for the duration of the COVID-19 period, in line with government guidance.

9. Support for children who aren't 'vulnerable' but where 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 who we have safeguarding concerns about. We will work with parents/carers to do this. All pupils at White Trees Independent School have an EHCP, therefore will and are receiving some form of education during this time.

10. Contact plans

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

- They won't be attending school (for example where the school, 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
- How often the school 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, emails, doorstep visits, or a combination of both

We have agreed these plans with children's social care where relevant, and will review them every 3-4 weeks.

If we can't make contact, we will contact external professionals/social care where relevant.

11. Safeguarding all children

Staff and volunteers are aware that this difficult time potentially puts all children at greater risk. Staff will continue to be alert to any signs of abuse, or effects on pupils' mental health

that are also safeguarding concerns, and act on concerns immediately in line with the procedures set out in section 3 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
- Seeming more withdrawn during any class check-ins or video calls

Children are likely to be spending more time online during this period – see section 12 below for our approach to online safety both in and outside school.

See section 13 below for information on how we will support pupils' mental health.

12. Online safety

12.1 In school

We will continue to have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place in school. All computers have a security system on them, Umbrella Cisco system – this to ensure that any inappropriate/potential dangerous websites/searches are blocked immediately.

12.2 Outside school

Where staff are interacting with children online, they will continue to follow our existing staff behaviour policy/code of conduct/IT acceptable use policy. Staff are using Zoom to video teach and support pupils – sessions are to be recorded (using Zoom's recording facilities) to ensure all parties are safeguarded during the video call.

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 3 of this addendum.

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

13.3 Working with parents and carers

We will make sure parents and carers:

- Are aware of the potential risks to children online and the importance of staying safe online
- Know what our school is asking children to do online, including what sites they will be using and who they will be interacting with from our school
- Are aware that they should only use reputable online companies or tutors if they wish to supplement the remote teaching and resources our school provides.

13. Mental health

Where possible, we will continue to offer our current support for pupil mental health for all pupils. The member of staff who is Mental Health First Aid is available to make calls, zoom, door step visits and contact pupils – both for pupils who are accessing the site and who are distance learning. We will also signpost all pupils, parents and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time.

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children's and adults' mental health.

14. Staff recruitment, training and induction

14.1 Recruiting new staff and volunteers

We continue to recognise the importance of robust safer recruitment procedures, so that adults 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 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 school.

We will continue to do our usual checks on new volunteers and do 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.

14.2 Safeguarding induction and training

We will make sure staff are aware of changes to our procedures and local arrangements.

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

14.3 Keeping records of who's on site

We will keep a record of which staff are on site each day, and that appropriate checks have been carried out for them. Only permanent members of staff who have been safer recruitment cleared/checked are to work with our pupils.

We will continue to keep our single central record up to date, with arrangements, timetables, logistics and risk assessments securely and safely stored on the drive.

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the 3 local safeguarding partners, the LA or DfE is updated, and as a minimum 3-4 weeks by Laura Bull, Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by the Director of Children Services.

16. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Child protection policy
- Who we are and what we do
- IT acceptable use policy
- Health and safety policy
- Online safety
- Equalities
- First Aid & Medication
- Health & Safety
- Healthy Schools
- Anti-Bullying

➤ Attendance