



**CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

**SAFEGUARDING &  
CHILD PROTECTION  
PROTOCOL**

## **THIS IS INTERIM GUIDANCE THAT APPLIES TO ALL SCHOOLS WITHIN NICHOLAS POSTGATE CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST.**

### **Keeping Children Safe in Education**

Schools must continue to have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance and legislative functions as outlined in, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Schools must be safe places for children.

Safeguarding must continue to be everybody's responsibility.

In response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the following safeguarding principles remain the same:

- To always **act in the best interests of children.**
- If anyone has a safeguarding concern they must **continue to act in accordance with safeguarding practice** for the school and report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and to act immediately.
- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead** or Deputy must be available. If not on site, they must be contactable.
- **Safer recruitment** practice is maintained to ensure that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the workforce and/or gain access to children.
- Children continue to be **protected when they are online.**

### **Role of the Local Authority**

Information sharing on the broader aspects of safeguarding from within the Trust and advice from the local authority must be directed through the Head of Attendance and Welfare. This will help to reduce any conflicting advice and duplication of practice.

The schools must collaborate with the local authority on their arrangements for the processing of referrals and facilitating meetings in accordance with statutory guidance. Multi-Agency Children's Hubs will continue to be the mechanism for making referrals, unless otherwise stated. Schools must ensure contact details within their child protection policy and on their website are current.

Child protection conferences, core group meetings and other meetings with social workers will continue through either conference call or video link. Schools must act as they would normally and complete the information required by the local authority. The school must report on all means of communication that they have undertaken to ensure the child's welfare whilst not in school. When preparing a report the DSL should ensure they have contact with the Trust

Attendance Manager allocated to their school, for any information held on the child from the support the central team have provided.

The local authority continues to be responsible for statutory intervention and the management of cases. Where there is an allocated social worker, they are the main point of contact for the case, or if a looked after child, it is the Virtual School Head.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The pathways in school for reporting any concerns about a child remain unchanged and this must always be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their Deputies. Where the DSL is not on site, they should be contactable by telephone.

It is important that all school staff have access to trained DSL or Deputy and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them. Where there is difficulty contacting the DSL or Deputy, the Trust Head of Attendance and Welfare must be informed.

Where staff are assisting in schools other than their own, it is the responsibility of the DSL at the receiving school to ensure that new staff are inducted on safeguarding processes.

The DSL also has a responsibility to ensure that staff are made aware of any changes to local safeguarding reporting structures. DSL posters in school, must be amended and displayed with the term, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19)'. This will ensure that all staff are assured of the current arrangements for reporting concerns and that there is updated photograph identification of any additional staff with safeguarding responsibilities.

The Peer on Peer Abuse policy must be revised to ensure that there are effective reporting mechanisms in place for children attending school to report any concerns. This may include incidents occurring on social media. Staff must be appraised on the process for dealing with concerns in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

The DSL must ensure that there is a dismissal process in place at the end of the school day, whereby children are only collected from school by the parent or other authorised person. This must be shared with all staff and be part of any new staff induction.

Where there is an Operation Encompass call made to the school the DSL must notify the Head of Attendance and Welfare and discuss the safeguarding arrangements for the child.

## **Home Visits**

In these unprecedented times, the Trust Attendance Strategy has been set aside and the Trust has issued a home visit protocol that must be undertaken by schools in visiting our most vulnerable pupils that have a social worker or any other child where there is an immediate safeguarding concern. As far as is practicable, the central attendance team will assist schools in their safeguarding responsibilities and undertaking home visits. It is for schools to triage where the support is needed and the frequency of the visit. The Trust recommendation is for a home visit to take place at least every 3 days. Where an external agency, such as a social worker, advises differently on the frequency of a home visit, this must be put in writing. There must never be an agreement for no home visits to take place.

For all home visits, there must not be any direct contact with the child or parent. It is imperative that social distancing measures, as advised by the government, are undertaken at all times.

It is the Trust position that the social worker must be contacted after a home visit has been made. Social Worker contact details are available through the school. To ensure there is accuracy of information, this must be passed first hand by the person making the visit.

All home visits undertaken must be collated on the spreadsheet allocated to the school. This information will be shared by the Trust with local authorities to assist in arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable pupils. Information must also be uploaded to CPOMS.

## **Communication**

All NPCAT schools will remain open as a means of contact for our children and their families. School websites must be updated with the school mobile numbers and the emergency contact numbers, through the Trust.

Schools must ensure there is weekly telephone contact with the parent of every child and endeavour to speak with the child. Where the child is vulnerable and has a social worker, this contact must be more frequent; where practicable, daily.

It is important that schools update contact lists. Where parental contact cannot be established there must be communication with all additional persons listed as a contact for the child.

## **Vulnerable children**

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected must be a top priority for schools.

A vulnerable child is defined as:

- being at a threshold of need where there is a social worker assigned to the child, or where the child is under assessment,
- a looked after child,
- having an Education, Health and Care Plan.

There is an expectation that children assigned a social worker will attend school, unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.

Where a child is expected to attend school and does not, the school must follow up on the reasons for the child not being in attendance. Where there is resistance from a parent to send their child to school, the school should ensure there is discussion with the parent to reduce any anxieties they may have and follow up on this matter with the social worker. It is important to ensure there is transparency with the parent around the reason for visiting, which must be explained as a requirement of the school's safeguarding practice in ensuring the children remain safe and supported.

If the Trust moves to an arrangement where children can move between schools, it is the responsibility of the DSL to ensure that any information relating to the vulnerability of the child is shared with the receiving school. A risk assessment in relation to the child's needs must be undertaken by the receiving school.

If a child transfers school, the same arrangements must take place in relation to the transfer of information, using CPOMS, or by recorded postal delivery. In all cases, the DSL must have contact with the receiving school to ensure that the child is on roll. There must be liaison with the local authority and social worker.

CPOMS must continue to be used for recording information.

## **Safer Recruitment & Volunteers**

Safer recruitment practice must continue to be in accordance with the Trust expectations. The Trust HR Team will continue to support schools and must be informed of any newly recruited personnel.

Staff induction and probationary periods will continue. It remains essential that people unsuitable to work with children are identified through the recruitment process and prohibited to enter the NPCAT workforce. The suitability of staff through the enhanced DBS identification checks must be undertaken in accordance with the revised government guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines>

Schools should not be recruiting volunteers. This will ensure that the risks are reduced to our children, where a volunteer who has not been checked is left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

If the Trust moves to a position where a member of staff from within the Trust temporarily moves to another school to support the care of a child, the receiving school must risk assess that member of staff in the setting. There is no expectation for a new DBS to be obtained.

### **Single Central Record/Contractors**

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that on any given day that the school is aware of the staff that are on their site. As such, the SCR must continue to be updated.

This is particularly important where contractors are being used for any work required on site, as usual contractors may not be available. In all instances of work being carried out, the appropriate checks of persons must be completed. Where there is contracted work taking place, the Trust Estates and Compliance Manager must be notified.

### **Allegations of Abuse Against Staff**

The provisions of the NPCAT Allegations of Abuse Against Staff and Volunteers Policy must continue.

The Head of Attendance and Welfare must be advised in all cases where an allegation has been made.

During the COVID-19 period all referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency should be made by emailing, [Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk). The TRA will continue to process cases but will not schedule any hearings at the current time.

### **Safer Places**

Schools must continue to comply with guidance in ensuring that children that are attending school are kept safe. This includes:

- ensuring staff continue to wear identification badges with the appropriate coloured lanyards (green DBS check/red no DBS),
- if there are visitors to school, they are signed in and out,
- visitors that are not DBS checked must be accompanied at all times, subject to social distancing measures,
- hot drinks are not consumed in areas where children are present.

Accident and near miss reporting must continue in accordance with the school procedure.

There is an expectation that staff will continue to be vigilant with all health and safety requirements. In particular, adopting practice that minimises the risk of infection through coronavirus must continue, with facilities available for regular handwashing and surfaces to be wiped down after use.

## **Online Safety/Social Networking**

Children must be reminded of the rules around keeping safe online. The school must ensure that websites are updated with the appropriate guidance, including an appropriate link for help and guidance for parents. Children and their parents must know how to report any abuse.

When parents are contacted weekly by the school, staff must ensure that parents are advised of the requirement to keep their children safe online and be provided with the opportunity to discuss any concerns.

Where a concern is reported to a member of staff this must be escalated immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher.

The following links are recommended by GOV.UK:

[Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)

[Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

[Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

[LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

[Net-aware](#) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)

It is important that staff adhere to strict practice around social networking and do not leave themselves open to allegations of misconduct. This includes not sharing personal contact details with children or their families.

At all times, staff must continue to have regard to the Trust Staff Code of Conduct.

## **Mental Health**

During this time, children may be feeling frustrated or lonely. They may also feel low, worried, anxious, or be concerned about their health or that of those close to them. The government has provided guidance around *Mental Health and*

*WellBeing aspects of coronavirus.* Schools must include information on their website for children to access.

Communication with children is essential to their mental health and wellbeing. Schools must ensure that at least a weekly call is made to the parent and the child. Where there is concern around a child's mental health, this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will assess for the appropriate action to be taken. Increasing the frequency of calls may be helpful to allaying any fears that the child may have.

Information must be recorded on CPOMS.