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| **SEND POLICY**  **COVID 19 ADDENDUM** | |
| **PHASE** | **JUNIOR & SECONDARY** |
| **POLICY LEAD** | **CHERYL BARQUERO**  **(ACET INCLUSION LEAD)** |
| **DATE OF APPROVAL**  **BY TRUSTEES** |  |
| **FREQUENCY DATE** |  |

From 20th March 2020, parents/carers were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for academies and schools to continue to provide care for a limited number of children: those who are vulnerable, children whose parents/carers are critical to the COVID-19 response, who absolutely need to attend, and who cannot be safely cared for at home. ‘Vulnerable children’ includes those supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs (including those on child protection and child in need plans), children who are ‘looked after’, and those with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

From June 2020, primary academies and schools were encouraged to welcome some children back, focusing on specific year groups being education in small ‘bubbles’. Academies and schools remained open to vulnerable children and children whose parents were critical to the COVID-19 response during this time. During this period, attendance at school was not compulsory and no parent was penalised or sanctioned if they chose to keep their child at home (off school) during that time.

From September 2020, the Government expectations changed. **All children are now expected to be in school.**

This addendum of the SEND Policy contains details of our individual arrangements and changes to our usual mode of working in the following areas:

* vulnerable children
* safeguarding, attendance and remote learning
* arrangements for consulting parents/carers of, and young people with, SEND
* arrangements for assessing and reviewing children’s progress
* arrangements for supporting children in moving between phases of education
* transition periods within each academy
* the approach to teaching children with SEND
* support for emotional and social development
* working alongside other professionals

Please note: This addendum should be read in tandem with the ACET COVID-19 Safeguarding Policy addendum.

# PURPOSE

This is an addendum to the SEND Policy (inclusive of the SEN Information Report), setting out the arrangements in place to support our children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities on return to education from September 2020.

**Vulnerable Children**

From September 2020, the Government expected the majority of pupils to return to school. This includes all children previously identified as ‘vulnerable’ and those who were clinically vulnerable and shielding.

Shielding advice for clinically vulnerable children and adults was paused nationally on 1st August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who remain on the shielded patient list are expected to return to school, as are those who have family members who were shielding.

Children with an EHC plan are also expected to attend school with a focus on working with the Local Authority, Health and Social Care partners to restore full provision for all children with an EHC plan within the safety measures outlined in the academy’s risk assessment of re-opening with COVID-19 Measures.

Academies continue to work with their respective Local Authorities to contribute to EHC needs assessments and annual reviews of EHC plans and are aware that temporary changes to the law on the timescales for EHC needs assessments and plans expired on 25 September 2020.

Academies also continue to work closely with Social care partners to meet the needs of children identified as vulnerable through having a social worker or being looked after by their local authority.

**Safeguarding, attendance and remote learning**

ACET continues in its commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its children whilst opening with COVID-19 measures.

Academies continue to ensure a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. Principals and leadership teams work alongside the SENDCo to ensure that appropriate staff, facilities and provision are available to secure a safe, appropriate and positive school experience for all children.

ACET 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: this is reflected in the Risk assesment

From September 2020, the Government expectations changed and all children are now expected to be in school. The usual rules on school attendance apply including:

* parents/carers’ duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school, where the child is a registered pupil and when the child is of compulsory school age
* schools’ responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence
* the availability to issue sanctions including fixed penalty notices in line with policy

Where a child is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, the academy will provide them access to education, including remote education.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents and carers are following clinical or public health advice, for example, self-isolation or family isolation, absence will not be penalised.

Academies are aware that some pupils, parents/carers and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19).

If parents/carers of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, they are encouraged to discuss their concerns at the earliest opportunity with the academy. Each academy will provide concerned parents/carers with details of the measures being put in place to reduce the risk in the academy. Where necessary, a personalised approach can be agreed between the academy and parents/carers to support a child’s gradual reintegration into the academy.

# Arrangements for consulting parents/carers of, and children with, SEND

Working in partnership with children with SEND and their parents/carers continues to be central to ACET policies and practice. The views of parents/carers and children will be considered in determining whether children with EHC plans take up an eligible place in the academy, as detailed in this addendum. Academy staff will also be mindful of the availability of support and resources when setting accessible home learning for children with SEND. The academy website will include contact details so that, should parents/carers of children with SEND need to contact a member of academy staff for additional support or guidance for home learning, they can do so. Where statutory processes relating to SEND are in action, the academy will continue to maintain communication with parents/carers of, and children with, SEND so that their views are actively sought, considered and promoted.

# Arrangements for assessing and reviewing children’s progress

ACET are fully committed to ensuring that assessments and reviews of children’s progress will continue during this period of COVID-19 measures, including for the purpose of statutory assessment and review for new or existing EHC plans and for other assessments being completed by external professionals, for example community paediatricians. Where this is needed, key academy staff will maintain communication with parents/carers and relevant professionals to share, with necessary consents, the most current assessment information and professional observations that the academy holds. Where children’s EHC plans are due for review within the period of COVID-19 measures, the academy will discuss arrangements with parents/carers, children, the Local Authority and professionals involved in the plan to decide whether arrangements for a ‘remote review’ should be made, or whether reviews can be, in part, face to face, ensuring that all risk assessments are adhered to. The SENDCo will make the necessary arrangements following this discussion.

# Arrangements for supporting children in moving between phases of education

For children who have moved between phases of education at the end of 2019-2020 academic year, academy staff will continue to liaise with new settings to share necessary information to ensure children’s transitions are sustained and successful. The SENDCo will be in contact with SENDCos in the new settings to share information on SEND needs.

For children transferring between classes the SENDCo will continue to inform the new class teacher of the pupil's needs using electronic folders and meetings where appropriate. Additional transition work will be used where necessary to relieve any worries and doubt. New class social stories may be sent home to support with the changes where possible. Any consultations that the academy receives during this time will be responded to within the designated timescales unless illness prevents this.

# The approach to teaching children with SEND

Each academy will ensure that appropriate support is made available for pupils with SEND, through a strong ‘universal offer’ of a coherently planned and sequences curriculum. Children are being taught in year group ‘bubbles’. Children must stay in their ‘bubble’ at all times. The class ‘bubble’ has a designated classroom and outdoor space. Time in communal areas such as corridors, sports halls and dining halls is minimised. SEND interventions and support can only take place in spaces designated specifically for the class ‘bubble’ of which the child/ren are part. In other words, interventions that would usually involve children from several classes cannot be run whilst the school is operating with COVID-19 opening measures in place. Most adults supporting children within the classroom may only work directly with pupils in one bubble per day. This is to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Deployment of adults within the school to facilitate school opening with COVID-19 measures has involved careful consideration and planning to support children with SEND i.e. the school is satisfied that adults supporting individual children with SEND have the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out their role. Where a child has an EHC plan, they continue to receive the statutory hours of support specified in their EHC plan.

Where a child’s individual behaviour risk assessment has identified the importance of regular movement breaks of a ‘change of face’ of staff these can only be provided within the safety measures set out in the school’s re-opening with COVID-19 Measures risk assessment.

ACET recognises that children with SEND need access to home learning resources and activities which take account of their strengths and needs. For children with SEND, but without an EHC plan, signposts will be included on the website to support them in accessing appropriate learning activities. Academy staff will also be mindful of the availability of support and resources when setting accessible home learning for children with SEND. In addition to electronic home learning programmes, families can request paper copies of resources to support the change of timetable and routine, sensory activities and key websites personalised to the needs of each child

The school website contains the contact details for the SENDCo, so that, should parents of children with SEND need to contact a member of school staff for additional support or guidance, they can do so.

Where statutory processes relating to SEND are in action, the school will continue to maintain communication with parents of, and children with, SEND so that their views are actively sought, considered and promoted.

# Support for social and emotional development

ACET understands that children’s social and emotional development is particularly at risk within the current national climate and period of academy and school re-opening with COVID-19 measures. Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. We recognise that some children may need support to re-adjust to school, others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return, a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to, and engage with, school.

In preparation for school re-opening following the COVID-19 closures, staff across ACET have participated in staff training and CPD to further develop their understanding of effective support for children who may find returning to school difficult. This has included the development of ‘scripts’, therapeutic stories, links to short-films and ideas for class activities that may help pupils to reconnect with each other and with school.

We know that children need to feel safe and happy at school in order to make progress in their lessons and to fulfil their potential. However Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and other traumatic events interrupt emotional development and can lead to lifelong mental and physical health issues without the appropriate support.

Regular contact between academy staff and parents/carers and children will be central to identifying when additional support may be needed. Where concerns are raised or are apparent within these communications, the child’s situation will be reviewed by key academy staff and appropriate action and onward referrals considered. For all parents/carers, key contact details are available on the academy’s website so that they are always able to reach academy staff for support if needed.

Staff will signpost parents/carers to other professionals who may be able to support them and their children at this time, particularly the Educational Psychology Service. The academy will also share parent/carer and child friendly information with links to mental health and wellbeing support strategies and agencies.

As always, each academy will draw on external support where necessary and possible, for example referring to CAMHS or working with parents to complete an ‘Early Help Assessment’ where necessary.

# Working alongside other professionals

ACET will continue to maintain contact with other professionals during this period of opening with COVID-19 measure. This will particularly include liaison with ACET commissioned services including the Educational Psychology Service, Learning Support Service and Autism Communication Team within the Local Authorities our children reside in. These services will be sharing resources which may be of use to parents/carers and professionals during this time, and we will be adding such links to our academy websites.

The SENDCo for each academy holds contact details for external professionals already working with children with SEND including health and social care staff and will maintain both planned contacts and referrals of arising need. Contact details for the SENDCo and key academy staff are available via the academy website should professionals need to make contact. ACET academies will signpost parents/carers to appropriate external professionals as needed and will continue to fulfil authorised requests for information for assessment or review purposes.

Professionals may visit academies to fulfil the requirements of their involvement. In such circumstances the visits will be agreed to be in the best interests of the child by all involved, risk assessed and strict guidelines adhered to.

# Review

This addendum to the policy (inclusive of SEN information report) will be reviewed in light of new government guidance as and when it is published.