



**COVID-19 school re-opening  
arrangements for**

# **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Addendum to 2019 Policy)**

**May 2020**

## Context

From 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, schools were asked to prepare for wider re-opening for priority groups. This included early years, year 1 and year 6 children. This is in addition to the children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response and children who are vulnerable.

This addendum of the James Montgomery Academy Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our safeguarding arrangements as a Trust in this time of national emergency.

## Our responsibility

As some children in designated year groups begin a phased return to school, and whilst acknowledging the pressure that schools are under, it remains essential that school continues to be a safe place for children. To this end, JMAT schools remain committed to the safeguarding principles laid down in the JMAT Safeguarding Policy, which protect all children from harm and abuse. Additionally, all JMAT schools will have due regard to the following:

- that staff members may identify new safeguarding concerns about individual children as they see them in person following partial school closures
- that staff are aware of the what to do if they have any concerns about a child, including new concerns where children are returning
- the continued importance of all staff acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns, including new concerns where children are returning

JMAT schools should ensure that any safeguarding and welfare information held on all children (including returning children) remains accurate and up to date. Updating this information may be through parents, social care or early help as appropriate.

Staff will need to identify and support any vulnerable children and parents that return to settings, for example, by signposting them to appropriate local services such as health visitors, mental health services, and domestic or substance abuse services, and school nurses where applicable.

## Risk assessment

Each school must carry out a JMAT risk assessment prior to opening. The assessment should directly address risks associated with coronavirus, so that sensible measures can be put in place to control those risks for children, parents and staff. The risk assessment has taken into account employees views and concerns around health and safety ascertained from the JMAT staff survey.

## Attendance monitoring

No-one with any symptoms of coronavirus should attend school for any reason.

Parents and carers of eligible year groups, and critical workers/parents and carers of vulnerable children, are strongly encouraged to bring in their children, **but they will not face fines or other sanctions if they don't.**

Vulnerable children are expected to attend school from 1<sup>st</sup> June, where it is appropriate for them (that is, where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household, and/or following a risk assessment for children with an EHC plan), so that they can gain the educational and

wellbeing benefits of attending. Vulnerable children – regardless of year group – that have not been attending in the recent period are expected to return to school where this would now be appropriate for them to do so. School staff are expected to work with and support the relevant families and pupils to return to school or college, where attendance is appropriate. A brief summary of attendance expectations across the different groups of vulnerable children is as follows:

- for vulnerable children who have a social worker, attendance is expected unless the child/household is shielding or clinically vulnerable (see the advice set out by Public Health England on [households with possible coronavirus infection](#) and [shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable](#))
- for vulnerable children who have an education health and care (EHC) plan, attendance is expected where it is determined, following risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment
- for vulnerable children who are deemed otherwise vulnerable, at the school's discretion, attendance is expected unless the child/household is shielding or clinically vulnerable (see the advice set out by Public Health England on [households with possible coronavirus infection](#) and [shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable](#))

Schools should continue to be in communication with social workers where children with a social worker do not attend. They should also continue to follow up with any parent or carer whose child has been expected to attend and doesn't. All communication, such as reason for non-attendance should be recorded on Safeguard.

Schools should resume taking their attendance register from 1 June and continue to complete the required documents from the LA, which gives the Department for Education daily updates on how many children and staff are attending.

To support the above, schools should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

## **Staff workload and wellbeing**

The JMAT management team and school leaders are conscious of the wellbeing of all staff, including senior leaders themselves, and the need to implement flexible working practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance and supports teaching/support staff and leaders.

Workload should be carefully managed and schools should assess whether staff who are having to stay at home due to health conditions are able to support remote education, while others focus on face-to-face provision.

## **Supporting children not in school**

Now that primary schools will be opening more widely, larger numbers of staff will be needed to provide face-to-face teaching at school. This means that it may be more difficult to maintain the same level of remote education provision for pupils in the year groups who are not eligible to attend, or for those pupils in year groups who are eligible to attend but who themselves cannot.

It is expected that school staff continue to have regular contact with the children in their class to support home learning. If they have any concerns about lack of contact, response to home

learning or any other safeguarding concerns, they should log their concern on Safeguard for the safeguarding team to follow up.

Where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate. Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child.

## **Contact with vulnerable children not in school**

Where applicable, and when a child has a social care provision, the social worker must be informed that the child(ren) is not attending school.

School contact with vulnerable children should continue to be weekly, and continue to follow the plan that has previously been in place during temporary closure. All contact should continue to be logged on Safeguard.

## **Supporting children in school**

The JMAT is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff, and will continue to provide as safe a space as possible for all children to attend and flourish. The Headteacher will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

All schools, with detailed guidance from JMAT, will implement the protective measures stipulated in the DfE [protective measures guidance](#). This includes reduced class sizes, classes operating in 'bubbles' (which will remain separated during the school day), social distancing measures, as well as special arrangements for hygiene, cleaning, infection control and use of PPE.

## **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

As schools open to wider groups of children, all JMAT schools will now operate their own provision. Each JMAT school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL present. Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

The DSLs in each JMAT school will continue to engage with social workers and attend all multi-agency meetings if required. This can be done remotely.

The DSL (or deputy) should provide support to teachers and pastoral staff to ensure that contact is maintained with children (and their families) who are not yet returning to school or college. Where possible staff should try and speak directly to children to help identify any concerns. Staff should be encouraged (where possible) to make calls from school via school phones. Where staff use personal phones to make calls, they should withhold their personal number.

DSL training is unlikely to take place during this period (although the option of online training can be explored). For the period coronavirus 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 their refresher training.

DSLs (and deputies) should continue to do what they reasonably can to keep up to date with safeguarding developments, such as via safeguarding partners, newsletters and professional advice groups.

Every JMAT school will face unique challenges at this time, including as they welcome back more children. Where reasonably possible and where relevant, the DSL (or deputy) should consider these challenges in a child protection context and reflect them in the child protection procedures as appropriate.

## **Reporting a concern**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the JMAT Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via Safeguard. This also applies when interacting/communicating remotely with pupils for home learning.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access Safeguard, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy or Headteacher. This will ensure that the concern is received.

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

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors of that school. The JMAT will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

## **Safeguarding Training and induction**

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The important thing for these staff will be awareness of any new local arrangements, especially if these are being reviewed/changed as a result of more children returning, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child. All new additions to policy will be uploaded onto Safeguard as a 'must read' document. DSLs within school must monitor that staff have read and understood all new guidance.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter the school or college, they should continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. An up to date child protection policy (described above) will support this process as will part 1 of [KCSIE](#).

## **Safeguarding and Year 6 transition**

It is important for school to do whatever they reasonably can to provide the receiving secondary school with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable. For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the virtual school head with responsibility for the child. The receiving school should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them.

As a minimum the receiving school should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible virtual school head is). This should ideally happen before a child arrives and, where that is not possible as soon as reasonably practicable. Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between SENCOs. However, it is acknowledged this

may not always be possible, due to staff shielding, etc. Where this is the case senior leaders should take responsibility.

Whilst schools must continue to have appropriate regard to data protection law, that does not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Further advice about information sharing can be found in [KCSIE](#).

## **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. Schools in the JMAT should use their judgement on whether recruitment is needed and how this can best be done given the circumstances and in consultation with trust central management. All JMAT schools will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes.

In response to coronavirus, 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. The Home Office and Immigration Enforcement have also temporarily adjusted the right to work checks due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Where schools and colleges are utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in [KCSIE](#). Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

There is no requirement to obtain a new DBS check for returning staff who have continued to be employed but have not been working in regulated activity during partial school closures. If for any reason the school or college have concerns about the individual, they may obtain a new check in the usual way.

JMAT schools will continue to follow their legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, and will make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as required by [KCSIE](#).

## **Single Central Record**

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that school aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. This will be more important than ever as more children and staff return. As such, schools and colleges must continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in [KCSIE](#).

## **Mental health**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of children and their parents. Where there are children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, and/or more children returning to school from 1 June onwards, JMAT schools should ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

The coronavirus outbreak may also have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties for some children. School staff will need to consider how to support:

- individual children who have found the long period at home hard to manage
- those who have developed anxieties related to the virus

- those about whom there are safeguarding concerns
- those who may make safeguarding disclosures once they are back in schools

Some children may also have experienced bereavements in their immediate family or wider circle of friends or family or had increased/new caring responsibilities.

Staff may wish to provide:

- opportunities for children to talk about their experiences of the past few weeks
- opportunities for one-to-one conversations with trusted adults where this may be supportive
- some refocussed lessons on relevant topics, for example, mental wellbeing or staying safe
- pastoral activity, such as positive opportunities to renew and develop friendships and peer groups

The different experiences all pupils will have had at home will play a large part in how easily they re-adapt to attending school and its routines, therefore JMAT staff will need to strike an appropriate balance between reintegrating pupils into a reassuring and familiar work ethic and identifying and taking time to address explicitly individual concerns or problems.

DfE guidance '[mental health and behaviour in schools](#)' can help schools to identify children who might need additional support, and to put this support in place. The guidance sets out how mental health issues can bring about changes in a child's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, all of which could be an indication of an underlying problem. This can include for example being fearful or withdrawn; aggressive or oppositional; or excessive clinginess.

Teachers should be aware of the impact the current circumstances can have on the mental health of those /pupils (and their parents) who are continuing to work from home, including when setting expectations of children's' work.

## **Online safety in schools**

The JMAT and its schools will continue to provide a safe environment, including online, in line with the Digital Safeguarding Policy. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

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

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the JMAT Safeguarding Policy, using the Safeguard electronic recording system. Where appropriate, referrals should still be made to children's social care and, as required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the JMAT Digital Safeguarding Policy and the JMAT Code of Conduct.

## **Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

Where a school receives a report of peer-on-peer abuse, they will follow the procedure outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. Concerns and actions must be recorded on Safeguard and appropriate referrals made. The JMAT recognises that there are still a number of children who will remain at

home for the next few weeks, however the same procedure should also be followed for those children.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The current COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation. Thus, this addendum will be regularly monitored and reviewed. Any updates will then be communicated with school staff via Designated Safeguarding Leads and Headteachers.

**Date of Addendum: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020**