



COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE DUE TO COVID-19

ANNEX TO AT2 ALPHA TRUST SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: 07 April 2020

POLICY REVIEWED: *Following advice from HM Government – 10 June 2020*

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During the period of partial re-opening, at all times during the school day a Designated Lead or Deputy Designated Lead will be on the school site. In addition there will always be access to a Designated Lead or Deputy (Level 3 trained) via telephone or email.

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1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is an addition to our existing Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to Covid-19.

This Child Protection Policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- the current Alpha Trust Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- CCHSG Student Code of Conduct;
- CCHSG Staff Code of Conduct;
- CCHSG IT Acceptable Use Policy
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Annex B of KCSIE)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

2. Current context / statutory framework

Schools have been instructed to close, although are required to offer a place to [vulnerable children](#) and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care plans (EHCP). Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that puts them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and agree an appropriate plan for that child.

We obviously want to support all our students during this time and will consider making a place available to other students with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.

3. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our students and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support students with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS INCLUDE:

- Welfare checks: These will include emails and telephone calls to families as required. For our most vulnerable students, direct contact will be made with the young person whilst adhering to CCHSG IT Acceptable Use Policy and CCHSG Staff Code of Conduct requirements.
- Risk assessments will be undertaken for all students with an EHCP or with a social worker.
- Plans have been put in place to enable us to offer weekday education to all vulnerable students. This is in addition to those children of key worker critical to the Covid-19 response.

For vulnerable children, existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet the identified needs. Vulnerable children will be risk assessed with other professionals to decide whether the student will be safer at home or in school and decisions will be made on individual cases. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care.

Children with an EHCP will be assessed in consultation with parents/carers, and the Local Authority when necessary, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. If it is felt they should remain at home, a plan will be agreed and this could include carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services where that is appropriate. It is recognised that many children with an EHCP can safely remain at home and that such visits may not be necessary.

During the closure period we will work with parents/carers and the Local Authority and to produce a personalised plan that includes:

- Short term interim targets that have been agreed with the student and parent/carers (if this is necessary and appropriate).
- Any agreed support to be provided by the team supporting the student (school, LA Education or SEND staff, Social Worker, Health professional).
- Regular reviews with the student and parent/carers as necessary.

As always, all staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected/actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- [Essex Effective Support](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and/or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the [Essex Effective Support](#) portal. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and/or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents/carers.

4. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented/sent to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the student file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school/educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have students from another school attending our site, or where our students may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

5. Interagency working

As before, it is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for students on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s)/carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

6. Staff conduct

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. Our policies already reflect the current arrangements to ensure they cover online/remote learning. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

7. Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of all our students is always a priority and it is recognised that, without the protective factor of attending school, some of our students may be more vulnerable. This is a worrying and challenging time for everyone and we understand that families will be placed under additional pressures and may be coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home all the time and bereavement.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents/carers to support the wellbeing of our students. Parents should share any concerns about the wellbeing of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

8. Online safety (for children away from school)

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability.

We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them to do this, and will keep staff, parents and students informed via the Weekly Bulletin delivered electronically.

Particularly useful websites are:

- [CEOP](#) (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- [Childnet](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Net Aware](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Parent Info](#)
- [Safer Internet](#)

Staff are aware that students are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.

It is important that parents make the school aware of any concerns they may have about the online activity of their child, or any particular vulnerability they may have in this respect.