Appendix to Child Protection Policy
COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy
27 March 2020

Response to COVID-19

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak. Many young people are now at home and staffing is likely to be significantly affected through illness and self-isolation.

Despite the changes, the school's Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: **children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DSL in line with our established safeguarding procedure**.

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the school and following advice from government and local agencies.

The current school position and local advice

Arrangements for children's social care

The following measures were implemented in children's social care with immediate effect following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 23rd March 2020.

Social care work will now focus on the following priorities:

• Children at risk of significant harm or where safeguarding issues are raised

• Children whose placement is at risk of breakdown (this includes home, care, independent or supported living)

Children's Services staff from areas which do not provide services solely within the priority categories above are, where possible, supporting work in those priority areas. Staff at NAS (Northumberland Adolescent Services) are providing a range of support to vulnerable young people within the priority groups.

Following a national direction, children's centres are now closed and universal youth provision has ceased.

While it is crucially important that the LA supports family time for children who are looked after, given the inherent risks in direct face to face contact, this is now being facilitated through the use of technology such as Skype and Facetime. The temporary ceasing of face to face contact has been supported by our local family court. This change in practice may impact on some young people's emotional wellbeing and schools should be mindful of the changes.

The LA and NSSP will make further adjustments and changes to the working arrangements of all staff to ensure priority areas of work are covered. Schools will be kept up to date with changes through social workers and on a case by case basis.

From 24th March all face to face Child Protection Conferences and looked after reviews have been suspended. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) will be using technology to hold virtual meetings with Google Meet or Hangout. The meetings will be led by the IROs and joining instructions will be sent prior to the conference either

by the admin team or the conference Chair. If these fail the Chair will undertake a call round to gather the views of everyone and the information will be recorded and distributed accordingly.

Reporting arrangements

The school arrangements continue in line with our child protection policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: **Nicki Mathewson, 01669 620283, nicola.mathewson@rothburyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk**

The Deputy DSLs are: **Cheryl Brotherton, 01669 620283, cheryl.brotherton@rothburyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk and Helen Duffield, 01669 620283, helen.duffield@rothburyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk**

In the event of an emergency the following colleagues from neighbouring schools can also be contacted to provide advice

The Designated Safeguarding Lead at Dr Thomlinson's C of E Middle School is: **Liam Murtagh, 01669 620287, dtms@the3rivers.net**

The school's approach ensures the DSL or a deputy is always available while the school is open. In the unusual circumstance this is not possible the DSL or Deputy DSL will be contactable and the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will email all staff by 9am to advise they are acting in an on-site safeguarding role together with contact details for the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Staff will continue to follow the Child Protection procedure and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

Children's services may be affected by the impact of the virus on staff and an increased demand for services. Where a child is at risk of significant harm there may be a need to be persistent in referring concerns to the local authority. The arrangements for contacting children's services are:

Reporting your concerns to OneCall in the usual way – 01670 536400

Should a child, in the school's view, be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the school will immediately follow the safeguarding children partnership escalation procedure, available here:

Escalation Procedures

Identifying Vulnerability

Based on our knowledge of the children and young people in school and their individual vulnerabilities we have identified the most vulnerable children.

We have put in place specific arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Looked After Children – weekly telephone contact
- Previously Looked After Children – monthly telephone contact
- Children subject to a child protection plan – twice-weekly telephone contact
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker – weekly telephone contact. There is an expectation that children with a social worker **must** attend school (or another school by arrangement), unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.
- Children with an EHCP – weekly telephone contact
- Children on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker – weekly telephone contact. Where required these children will be offered a place at school (or another school by arrangement).
- Other children the school considers vulnerable. More children may be added to this group in response to concerns raised with the DSL. These children can be offered care at school if required.

Each of these children has an individual plan which has been shared with other agencies involved in their care, including where appropriate their social worker and the Virtual School Head for Looked After and previously Looked After Children.

In addition, the following groups have specific arrangements around contact and support from the school.

- Children of key workers who may attend school – contact via ParentMail, email and face-to-face on days that the child attends school.
- Children at home – contact via ParentMail and the School360 portal. Parents may use email to directly contact the Headteacher or School Secretary if so wished.

The plans in respect of each child in these groups should state how often they are to be reviewed.

Holiday arrangements

Rothbury First School is continuing to provide places for children over the Easter break as required.

Attendance

The school is following the attendance guidance issued by the government. Where a child is expected and does not arrive, the school will follow our attendance procedure and make contact with the family. If contact is not possible by 9:30am the DSL must be informed. The DSL will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent and, if necessary, arrange a home visit by the school or another appropriate agency. A risk assessment will be undertaken to consider and manage the implications of

COVID-19 alongside other risks perceived to the child. The risk of COVID-19 **does not override** the duty on the school to ensure children and young people are safe.

Guidance from the LA suggests the following should be carried out as a minimum:

On a daily basis DSLs should:

- Make sure they know which children on their school roll/AP register have a social work and/or and EHCP
- Know who to expect at school/provision each day
- If an expected child doesn't arrive then contact home - parent/carer (ie carry out the usual reasonable checks for CME)
- If you can't make contact then contact the social worker and education welfare (educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk)

If you have significant concerns about a child who is either expected to attend or who is currently at home, then you should contact OneCall in the usual way – 01670 536400.

Staff will be aware of increased risk

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty, and financial or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning – see below). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns.

Peer on peer abuse

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a school closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer on peer abuse, including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other schools as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between learners.

Peer on peer abuse - given the very different circumstances schools and colleges are operating in, a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims (the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE should continue to inform any revised approach).

Risk online

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. The school may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other online risks and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the school.

- The school continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- Our governing body will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate

- The school has taken on board guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium. We have reviewed the code of conduct and information sharing policy accordingly - information will only be shared with school staff as necessary for the setting of work. It is felt that live lessons are inappropriate for our pupls at the current time. Staff/pupil communication through School 360/Google Classroom is asynchronous and is visible to all staff.
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the school's code of conduct and importance of using school systems to communicate with children and their families.
- Staff have read the 20 safeguarding considerations for livestreaming. It should be noted that school will not be delivering any live-streamed sessions.
- Children and young people accessing remote learning receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the school, Childline, the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEOP. Links to the CEOP learning package will be made available to parents though our school social media channels.
- Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the school, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. We have set out the school's approach, including the sites children will be asked to access and set out who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online. Parents have been offered the following links:
    - Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
    - London Grid for Learning - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
    - Net-aware - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
    - Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
    - Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
    - UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers

- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre.

Allegations or concerns about staff

With such different arrangements young people could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

Any staff or volunteers from outside our setting will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of the risks and know how to take action if they are concerned.

We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authority remain unchanged

Adam Hall
Independent Reviewing Officer (LADO)
Direct Line: 01670 623979
General Line: 01670 624888
Email: - adam.hall01@northumberland.gov.uk

If necessary, the school will continue to follow the duty to refer to DBS any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, and to the Teacher Regulation Agency in line with paragraph 166 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 using the address Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk.

New staff or volunteers

New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the DSL or a deputy. They must read the school child protection policy, the behaviour policy, the whistleblowing policy and the code of conduct. The DSL or deputy will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a child and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

If staff or volunteers are transferring in from other registered education or childcare settings for a temporary period to support the care of children, we will seek evidence from their setting that:

- the member of staff has completed relevant safeguarding training in line with other similar staff or volunteers
- they have read Part I and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and
- where the role involves regulated activity and the appropriate DBS check has been undertaken by that setting we will undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether a new DBS would need to be undertaken. It may be in these exceptional times we can rely on the DBS undertaken by their setting.

Our child protection procedures hold strong:

- Volunteers may not be left unsupervised with children until suitable checks have been undertaken. People supervising volunteers must be themselves in regulated activity, able to provide regular, day to day supervision and reasonable in all circumstances to protect the children.
- The school will undertake a written risk assessment on the specific role of each volunteer to decide whether to obtain an enhanced DBS check (with barred list information) for all staff and volunteers new to working in regulated activity in line with DBS guidance.
- When undertaking ID checks on documents for the DBS it is reasonable to initially check these documents online through a live video link and to accept scanned images of documents for the purpose of applying for the check. The actual documents will then be checked against the scanned images when the employee or volunteer arrives for their first day.
- The school will update the Single Central Record of all staff and volunteers working in the school, including those from other settings. This will include the

risk assessment around the DBS. A record will be kept by the Headteacher (or delegate) of who is working in the school each day.

New children at the school

Where children join our school from other settings we will require confirmation from the DSL whether they have a Safeguarding File or SEN statement/EHCP. This file must be provided securely **before** the child begins at our school and a call made from our DSL or a deputy to the placing school's DSL to discuss how best to keep the child safe. In some unusual circumstances this may not be possible. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker and where relevant for the Virtual School Head. Safeguarding information about children placed in our school will be recorded on our safeguarding system, will be securely copied to the placing school DSL and will be securely returned to the placing school on completion of the child's placement with us so there is a continuous safeguarding record for the child.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information. This will be recorded on our safeguarding recording system.

It remains the responsibility of the Governing Body or its equivalent to ensure that the school has a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place that are in accordance with Local Authority guidance and/or locally agreed inter-agency procedures approved by the Local Safeguarding Partnership and this addendum has been ratified by the governing body remotely

2.4.20

Names of Governors who ratified this appendix: R. Hamilton, D. Pringle