



### COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy

31st 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

At St John's we are following advice from Solihull LA and are regularly updating our guidelines. This covers any updated advice received from the local safeguarding partners regarding children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care regarding referral thresholds and children in need.

#### Reporting arrangements

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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: **Mr I Gallagher**

The Deputy DSLs are: **Ms S Clarke & Mrs H Dixon**

The school's approach ensures the DSL or a deputy is always on site 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 have advised 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 by contacting on 0121 788 4300.

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, by referring to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) using the MASH referral form or 0121 788 4300.

## **Identifying vulnerability**

Government guidelines have asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response - who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools remain safe places for children, but the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable children and have put in place specific arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Looked After Children
- Previously Looked After Children
- Children subject to a child protection plan
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker – There is an expectation that children with a social worker must 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.
- Children with an EHCP
- Children on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker. Where required these children will be offered a place at school.
- 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 group has specific arrangements around contact and support from the school.

- Children of key workers who may attend school if they are unable to be looked after at home due to both parents working

## Holiday arrangements

We are continuing to provide places for children over the Easter break however we are closed on Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday.

## Attendance

The school is following the [attendance guidance issued by government](#). Where a child is expected and does not arrive the school will follow our attendance procedure and make contact with the family. A risk assessment will be undertaken to consider 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.

## 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.

## 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 risks online](#) 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.
- 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](#).
- 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 careers 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.

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

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.

This policy has been remotely approved by Governors and is available on the school website at <https://www.sjb.solihull.sch.uk/>