

Annex 1



COVID-19 school closure arrangements for
Safeguarding and Child Protection at

Merley First School

Merley First School

Policy owner: Katharine Anstey

Date: 20.05.2020 (updated 8.1.2021)

Context

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked 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.

Schools and all childcare providers were asked to provide care for a limited number of children – children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. From 1st June, 2020, schools were asked to prepare for the wider reopening of the school, initially to those children in years R, 1, 6 and to prepare for some face to face contact for years 10 and 12.

From September, 2020, schools were open to all pupils and the usual safeguarding policy was applicable.

From 5th January, 2021, schools have once again been asked to close to all apart from children of critical workers and those deemed as vulnerable.

This addendum of the Merley First School Safeguarding, and Child Protection policy should be read in conjunction with the school's risk assessment and health and safety policy and contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

1. Context
2. Key Contacts
3. Vulnerable children
4. Attendance monitoring
5. Designated Safeguarding Lead
6. Reporting a concern
7. Safeguarding Training and induction
8. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff
9. Online safety in schools and colleges
10. Children and online safety away from school and college
11. Supporting children not in school
12. Supporting children in school
13. Mental Health Provision
14. Peer on Peer Abuse
15. Support from the Wimborne Academy Trust

Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact number	Email
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Katharine Anstey	07779 340 756	mrs.anstey@merleyfirstschool.net
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Carolyn Waldron	07873 373 190	mrs.waldron@merleyfirstschool.net
	Mike Wheeler	07917 005 042	mr.wheeler@merleyfirstschool.net
Headteacher	Katharine Anstey	07779 340 756	
Trust Safeguarding Officer	Kelly Overhill	07912 497713	koverhill@wimborneacademytrust.org
Chair of Academy Committee	Geoff Bates	07968 214 004	mr.bates@merleyfirstschool.net
Safeguarding Academy Committee Member	Geoff Bates	07968 214 004	mr.bates@merleyfirstschool.net

Vulnerable Children

Vulnerable children and young people include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
 - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
 - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
 - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')

- those living in temporary accommodation
- those who are young carers
- those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example, due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- other children and young people at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services.

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) know who our most vulnerable children are. They have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

Merley First School will continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children. The lead person for this will be: Katharine Anstey 01202 888455

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and Merley First School will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, Merley First School or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Merley First School will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend school, including remotely if needed.

Attendance Monitoring

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should **not** be marked in the register as code X if they are not in school (unless they are shielding, self isolating or quarantining). Merley First School will encourage vulnerable children to attend but, if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know that the pupil will not be attending. Merley First School will grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This will be recorded as a code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised code is more applicable.

Where a child has a social worker Merley First School and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – Merley First School will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend but who does not. Merley First School will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently does not attend.

HOW WILL THIS LOOK AT MERLEY FIRST SCHOOL ?

To support the above, Merley First School will, when communicating with parents/carers and carers, confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, Merley First School will notify their social worker.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Merley First School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and 2 Deputy DSLs.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Katharine Anstey 01202 888455

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are: Carolyn Waldron and Mike Wheeler 01202 888455

The optimal scenario is to have a trained DSL (or deputy) available on site. Where this is not the case a trained DSL (or deputy) will be available to be contacted via phone or online video – for example when working from home.

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.

This might include updating and managing access to child protection online management system, MyConcern and liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and, as required, liaising with children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school or college.

It is important that all Merley First School staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day, staff on site will be made aware of who that person is and how to speak to them – this will usually be the member of SLT on rota for that week but all other leads will be contactable via the usual channels.

The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings, which can be done remotely.

Reporting a Concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via MyConcern, which can be done remotely. This information is updated automatically and will appear instantly to the DSL and DDSL.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access their MyConcern from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher and the Trust Safeguarding Officer (Kelly Overhill). This will ensure that the concern is received.

The school (led by the DSL or deputy) will do all they reasonably can to ask parents and carers to advise them of any changes regarding welfare, health and wellbeing that they should be aware of before a child returns

Staff are reminded of the need to report ***any concern immediately and without delay***. Staff need to be aware that KCSiE 2020 is the statutory safeguarding guidance that schools and colleges should continue to have regard to as required by legislation. All concerns, no matter how small, should follow the procedures set out in KCSiE 2020. Staff should also be reminded of **Tell, Explain, Describe** if a disclosure is made.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should immediately report the concern to the Headteacher. If there is a requirement to make a notification to the Headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the Headteacher.

Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of the Academy Committee: Geoff Bates

Wimborne Academy Trust will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

Safeguarding Training and Induction

DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID 19 virus.

For the period COVID-19 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.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020). The DSL will communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter Merley First School they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another educational setting or children's workforce setting to our school, we will take into account the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability as long as the current employer confirms in writing that:-

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

For movement within Wimborne Academy Trust, schools should seek assurance from the HR Manager that the member of staff has received appropriate safeguarding training.

Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of the receiving setting's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

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 has concerns about the individual, they may obtain a new check in the usual way

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. When recruiting new staff, Merley First School will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) (KCSIE).

In response to COVID-19, 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.

Merley First School will avoid using volunteers but if Merley First School do utilise volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Merley First School will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

Merley First School will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral.

During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing
Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current National emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is 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. As such, Merley First School will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

Online Safety in School

Merley First School will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. 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 Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and, as required, the SSCT.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in Wimborne Academy Trust's code of conduct.

Merley First School will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Merley First School will do all that they reasonably can to keep all children safe when online and especially when working online at home.

Live lessons may be used where:

- School closure due to national lockdown.
- Whole classes/ bubbles of pupils are isolating at home. The teacher could be in school OR at home.
- Part of a class or individuals from a class are required to isolate. The teacher could be in school OR at home.

- The class is in school, but the teacher is required to isolate at home. (Additional staffing will be required in the room with the class)

Additional safeguarding measures will be employed when using live lessons alongside Merley First School IT/online learning policies.

- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background

Within School/ at home

- Ensure all live lessons are recorded.
- Ensure a clear timetable of each online session is completed, detailing:
 - The content of the live lesson
 - The time it started and finished
 - Any issues that arose during this session

The senior Leadership team should ensure online lessons are appropriate by;

- Being aware of the content
- Dropping into the classes throughout the day (unannounced)
- Viewing a cross section of recordings

Pupils at Home

The following expectations will be made explicit to pupils, parents and carers:

- The pupil is in a public area of the home
- The pupil should be appropriately dressed
- Pupils keep their camera on (unless they are not allowed to have their image shared publicly)
- Pupils keep their microphone off unless speaking
- Pupils should speak with a trusted adult if they come across content online that makes them uncomfortable.

All live lessons will be recorded and uploaded to Merley First School google drive/ google classrooms, deleting any local files.

Supporting Children Not in School

Merley First School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its Children and Young people.

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 or young person.

Details of this plan will be shared with staff and a record of contact is kept. MyConcern will signpost to those receiving support in this way.

Merley First School and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight) and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate. This will be done in conjunction with SLT and the pastoral team.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages.

Merley First School recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Teachers at Merley First School need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

Merley First School will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child.

Supporting children in school

Merley First School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

Merley First School will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Headteacher, in conjunction with SLT, will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety including first aid cover.

Merley First School 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 will be sent to all staff.

Where Merley First School has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – they will discuss the concerns immediately with Wimborne Academy Trust.

Mental Health Provision

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of children and their parents. Where the school has children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, the school will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Merley First School will identify children who might need additional support, and put this support in place. Merley First School staff will be reminded that 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. Support for pupils and students in the current circumstances will include existing provision in Merley First School (although this may be delivered in different ways, for example over the phone for those children still not attending provision) or from specialist staff or support services.

Teachers will be made 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 childrens' work.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Merley First School recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where a school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within the Child Protection Policy.

The school will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multi agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

Concerns and actions must be recorded on MyConcern and appropriate referrals made.

Support from Wimborne Academy Trust

Wimborne Academy Trust will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the DSL to carry out their role effectively.

This includes, remotely accessing Child Protection files for the purpose of quality assurance, support, guidance and direction.

Wimborne Academy Trust will also provide regular group calls to ensure protocol is followed and to follow up on any school supervision needs.