



COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection

Step by Step School

This policy was adopted on 30.3.20

This policy will be reviewed weekly and updated based on government guidance

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 continue 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.

This sub-section of the Step by Step School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

Context	2
Vulnerable children	3
Critical workers	4
Attendance monitoring.....	4
Designated Safeguarding Lead	5
Reporting a concern	5
Safeguarding Training and induction	5
Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff.....	6
Online safety in schools and colleges	6
Children and online safety away from school and college.....	7
Staff working from home	7
Supporting children not in school.....	8
Supporting children in school.....	8
Peer on Peer Abuse.....	8

Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Faye Palmer	fpalmer@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Deputy DSL	Olivia Kurzeja	okurzeja@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Designated Safeguarding Person	Clare Eastwood	ceastwood@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Headteacher	Gayle Adam	gadam@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Safeguarding governor	Daniel Horan	dhoran@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Chair of Governors	Stuart King	sking@stepbystepschool.org.uk
Referrals into Early Help and Social Care	Single Point of Advice	01323 464222 0-19.SPoA@eastsussex.gov.uk
	Emergency Duty Service – after hours, weekends and public holidays	01273 335906 01273 335905

Vulnerable children

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 (EHC) plans.

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.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority (LA) 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. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

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

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

Step by Step 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: Faye Palmer

To enable Step by Step School to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils, they have categorised pupils into vulnerability groups and determined the level of contact necessary if the pupil is not attending school:

Group	Risk Level	Action
Blue (not under review by SG team)	Low risk	Weekly emails to parents check in on pupil and offer support
Amber (social worker and/or under review by SG team)	Medium risk	Weekly emails and a fortnightly phone call/video call to parents
Red (Frequently reviewed by SG team, high levels of CB and input from social services, LAC)	High risk	Weekly phone call/video calls to parents

Critical workers

Although HM Government is clear that children should be at home wherever possible, schools and other educational settings have been asked to provide care for the child/ren of any critical workers who need this support. If our school cannot remain open, due to staff illness or self-isolation, we will notify the relevant placing authorities who are responsible for arranging for the child/ren to be cared for in an alternative setting that can meet their needs.

The HM Government guidance for educational settings regarding critical workers can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers#critical-workers>

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.

If Step by Step School has any children in attendance (e.g. because they are vulnerable, the children of critical workers we will submit the daily attendance sheet to the DfE by 12 noon -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings>

If the school has closed, we will complete the return once as requested by the DfE.

Step by Step school will keep a day by day record of which staff and pupils are onsite each day

Step by Step School and social workers will agree with families whether children in need should be attending school – Step by Step School will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Step by Step School will also follow up with any ‘critical worker’ parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) but the child(ren) subsequently do(es) not attend.

To support the above, Step by Step will, when communicating with parents, carers and allocated social workers / placing authorities, 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, Step by Step will notify their social worker.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Step by Step school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a Safeguarding team – these are named on the front sheet.

We will endeavour to have a trained DSL or deputy available at all times. Where it is not possible for them to be onsite, 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. The allocated senior leader will ensure that all information is shared with the DSL/DDSL.

This might include updating and managing access to the child protection online management system on School Pod, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and, if 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

Whatever the scenario, it is important that all Step by Step School staff have access to a trained DSL or deputy.

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 School Pod which can be done remotely.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff has a concern about a child but cannot access the recording system, they should telephone the Designated Safeguarding Lead and / or a deputy DSL. This will ensure that the concern is received. Staff must not just leave an answerphone message.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay. If they are unable to contact the DSL/DDSL for any reason they should contact the child's social worker or Early Help (please see contact information above)

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should report the concern to the headteacher immediately. If there is cause to make a notification to the headteacher whilst away from school, this should be done by telephone. Staff must not just leave an answerphone message. If the headteacher is not contactable, the member of staff should contact either the DSL or the DDSL.

Concerns about the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

Safeguarding Training and induction

DSL training is very unlikely to take place during this period.

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 at least part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The Designated Safeguarding Lead should 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 by Step by Step school, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

Safer recruitment 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, Step by Step School will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of 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 – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines>

If staff are deployed from another education 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 (and / or adult barred list check where relevant)
- there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children (or adults at risk, where relevant)
- there is no ongoing disciplinary investigation relating to that individual

Step by Step School will continue to comply with 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.

Step by Step 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 environment, 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, Step by Step 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 schools and colleges

Step by Step School will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online monitoring and filtering system.

Where children are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

Children and online safety away from school and college

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 police.

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

Senior Leaders and Class Leaders may need to contact parents/pupils via video call to check in and offer support and advice. Below are some simple things to consider when using webcams to communicate:

- Staff must wear suitable clothing.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred or hidden.
- Language must be professional and appropriate
- Staff must only use platforms agreed with senior leaders and the IT / network manager to communicate with pupils
- Staff should ideally try to see the child when meeting with parents
- Staff should record the length, time, date and details of any meetings held.
- Any Safeguarding concerns that occur should be reported immediately to the DSL/DDSL, and contact made with Early Help/police if needs be

Staff working from home

When staff are working offsite they should:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that work devices are secure and password-protected when using them outside school
- Keep all data securely stored in accordance with the acceptable use agreement and the school's data protection policy.
- Seek advice from the ICT manager if there are any concerns over the security of their device.
- Ensure access to confidential information about children and their families is kept confidential at all times.
- Ensure confidential records are only shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to see them.

Supporting children not in school

Step by Step School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for each child, their parent(s) / carers and the allocated social worker or placing authority.

Details of this communication plan must be recorded on School Pod, as should a record of any contact made.

The communication plan may include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

When phoning parents/pupils staff members will use work phones or ensure their number is kept hidden by dialling 141 before the number

Step by Step School and its Designated Safeguarding Lead will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider any referrals as appropriate, taking into account the local criteria for action.

In addition, the school will share safeguarding messages via email and on its website.

Step by Step School recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances have a significant potential to affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Teachers and pastoral staff at Step by Step School will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

Step by Step School will ensure that if we are unable to care for the child/ren of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will liaise with the placing local authority and the parent / carer to find a suitable alternative; e.g, via a multi-disciplinary package of support. In that situation, the DSL will ensure that the DSL / lead practitioner is made aware of any relevant safeguarding information relating to a child.

Supporting children in school

Step by Step School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

Step by Step School will continue to be a safe space 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, maximising safety.

Step by Step 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 coronavirus.

Step by Step 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 and recorded on their pastoral or safeguarding record as appropriate.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Step by Step 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 school's safeguarding & child protection policy.

The school will listen carefully, and work with the young person, family and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

All concerns and actions taken must be recorded on School Pod and appropriate referrals made.

Policy	COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection
Statutory requirement?	Yes
Approved	March 2020
Responsible Officer	FP/GA
Responsible Governor/s	DH
Date of previous version	N/A
Frequency of Review	Weekly or reviewed based on updated government guidance