



## Riverside Bridge School

### Safeguarding during the COVID-19 measures

#### Annex to the Safeguarding Policy – version 1.1 June 2020

#### Context

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual. Most children are no longer in a school setting and staff numbers have been affected by the outbreak.

Schools have been asked to open to a wider group of pupils. The government guidance differs for special schools and states:

*“special schools ... to work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups and informed by risk assessments”*

This Annex to our Safeguarding policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

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#### Version control and dissemination

This is version 1.1 of this annex. It will be reviewed by our DSL or a deputy DSL on a weekly basis as circumstances continue to evolve or following updated Department for Education advice or guidance. It is available on the school website here

<http://www.riversidecampus.com/bridge/>.

## **Safeguarding priority**

During these challenging times the safeguarding of all children at our school – whether they are currently at home or in attendance – continues to be our priority. The following fundamental safeguarding principles remain the same:

- the best interests of children continue to come first
- if anyone in our school has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
- a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available
- no unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online.

## **Current school position**

Riverside Bridge School will be closed during the Summer break and will re-open on the Riverside Campus on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 for staff and Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 for all pupils.

## **Safeguarding partners' advice**

We continue to work closely with our safeguarding partners, and we will ensure this annex is consistent with their advice. This will include expectations for supporting children with education, health and care (EHC) plans, the local authority designated officer and children's social care, reporting mechanisms, referral thresholds and children in need.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in our school remain in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL will always be available during the school day.

### Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Ms C O'Keefe (Designated Safeguarding Lead)  
chke@riverside.bardaglea.org.uk

### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

- Mrs K Cerri(Headteacher)
- Ms L Amri (Deputy Headteacher)
- Ms J Hughes (Safeguarding and Welfare Officer)

## **Vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children with 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend school, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Where a parent does not want their child to attend school, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will discuss this with the social worker and explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

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 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.

We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

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

We will continue to work with children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

### **Increased vulnerability or risk**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Staff will be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Our staff will be aware of the mental health of children and their parents and carers and will contact the DSL or a deputy if they have any concerns.

### **Attendance**

Where a child is expected but does not arrive at school, we will follow our attendance procedure and attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the DSL or a deputy DSL will be informed.

The DSL or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents or contact a relative in the first instance. If contact cannot be made or if the DSL or a deputy DSL deems it necessary, we will follow safeguarding procedures and consider outside referral.

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

### **Reporting concerns about children or staff**

The importance of all staff acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff will continue to follow our Safeguarding procedures and advise the DSL of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending school.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff or volunteers. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff attending our school are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently. Any such concerns should be reported directly to the Headteacher.

### **Staff training and induction**

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DSL and deputy DSLs are unlikely to receive their refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training.

All current school staff have received safeguarding training and have read Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education. When new staff are recruited they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our induction process.

If staff from another setting attend the school site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm that:

- the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern
- there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
- the individual remains suitable to work with children.

### **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, we will continue to follow our Safer Recruitment policy.

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.

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff are on our school site and that the appropriate checks have been carried

out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain our single central record (SCR) during these measures to ensure we have this awareness.

### **Peer on peer abuse**

We recognise that children can abuse their peers and our staff are clear about the school's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We also recognise that abuse can still occur during a school closure or partial closure and between those children who do attend the school site during these measures.

Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse and will follow the process set out in our Safeguarding Policy.

### **Online safety**

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. Our staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and our filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children.

If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will follow the approach set out in this annex and report that concern to the DSL or to a deputy DSL.

### **New children at the school**

Children may join our school from other settings. When they do, we will seek from those settings the relevant welfare and child protection information. This is relevant for all children that join us, but it will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

For vulnerable children we will ensure we understand the reasons for the vulnerability and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum we will seek access to that child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is).

Ideally this will happen before a child arrives but where that is not possible it will happen as soon as reasonably practicable.

Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs co-ordinators/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with EHC plans.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment based on the information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know the information.

## **Supporting children not in school**

The staff at Riverside Bridge School will be making telephone calls home to all pupils not attending school. This will be at least once per week and can be as much as daily where it is deemed that the child or family is at significant risk due to the current government guidance. All calls are recorded on a 'Weekly Keeping in touch tracker'.

Should the Safeguarding team feel that any pupil is at significant risk a full risk assessment will be completed and advice taken from external professionals in order to make a decision if a placement should be offered.

Where possible the staff and leadership team at Riverside Bridge School will support the pupils and families remotely before we are able to offer a placement. Following government guidance that everyone (children included) remain the safest at home, away from the risk of any infection of Covid-19.

## **Infection Control**

All children and staff are encouraged to wash their hands more often than usual and for at least 20 seconds. Children are supported by hand over hand, verbal or physical prompting to wash their hands.

Following government guidance PPE is not commonly worn by staff in school unless taking care of personal hygiene needs.

Social distancing is difficult to maintain in our setting due to the nature of the children that attend Riverside Bridge School. However, we do try to encourage safe distance working between staff where possible.

## **Free School Meal Entitlement**

Those pupils which qualify for free school meals will be provided with a fortnightly voucher via the government scheme. This arrangement will continue throughout the summer break.

The voucher system will cease on the return of all pupils to school in September 2020.