Some basic guidelines for safeguarding children during the school closures
Carolyn Eyre 19/03/20 – MIST schools

Reiterate key safeguarding messages to parents and pupils
- Discuss with parents the impact of closure on their ability to work / mental health
- Check if all parents have internet access and make alternative resource and information sharing arrangements for those who do not
- Share information about Early Help, Samaritans, Mind, Domestic abuse helplines and other support services that can help - the Safeguarding Hub includes links to almost every safeguarding service / organisation in England https://www.safeguardingresourcehub.co.uk/
- For pupils living in the same area as the school, provide parents with contact details for the local early help / children's social care services
- It is likely that children will spend more time online; re-share online safety advice and resources such as Thinkuknow, Safer Internet Centre and Digital Parenting
- Provide all parents with the Thinkuknow parent guide relevant to the age of their child/ren (embedded below)
- If not already done so, add a link to ParentInfo to your website – this DfE backed website provides parents with up to date information about a range of topics https://parentinfo.org/
- Children and young people are hearing about the Coronavirus too and may be feeling scared and anxious, particularly about the impact on exams / qualifications. Talking to children about their worries can help; Child Mind Institute, Beacon House, Young Minds, Special Needs Jungle have resources that can support you and can be shared with parents
- Ensure all contact details are up to date for staff, governors, children and families

DSL arrangements
- Ensure all staff know how to contact the DSL/DDSLs during the school closure
- Remind staff how to refer directly to MASH/social care if they have concerns about the immediate safety of a child out of hours
- Consider how the DSL/DDSLs will share the responsibilities for responding to alerts / logs on CPOMS / MyConcern quickly, and / or a chase system or similar for remaining available by phone and procedures to support this. If you do not have CPOMS / MyConcern, have a clear, secure system in place for staff to report concerns even if not on site
- Consider how sensitive and personal information will be accessed and kept securely; do you need to make any changes to current reporting / record keeping arrangements?
- Complete a safeguarding plan for each individual child where there are safeguarding or child protection concerns. Consider their individual risk and protective factors and what the impact of closure might be on each child
- For any child with a **CP plan** who is not in school, convene a (virtual) core group meeting without delay; DSLs are members of the core group and have an equal responsibility with partner agencies to discuss whether the CP plan needs to be amended to keep the child safe. Clarify how often the child will be seen and by whom. Record in the child's CP file the decision of the core group and any actions the school needs to take – minutes of meetings may be significantly delayed
- For every child on a **CIN / family support plan**, speak to the allocated social worker / lead person or their team manager as soon as possible to agree a safety plan; clarify how often the SW or lead person is going to visit the home / see the child/ren and record in the child's CP file your discussion and any actions the school needs to take

- If you have any pupil whose parent / family member is subject of a **MARAC**, speak to the lead worker or MARAC coordinator about whether the risk management plan needs to be amended; for example, does the child have and know how to use emergency contact numbers?
- Where there are safeguarding and child protection concerns for children living within travelling distance of the school, ensure children receive a home visit at least once a week where the child is seen and spoken to (in line with Covid-19 guidance on social contact) unless a different plan has been agreed with the allocated SW
- Frequency of contact should be informed by level of risk. **Work with other agencies to develop a co-ordinated response and to avoid duplication – be aware that the government emergency legislation proposes to lift some current statutory duties on social care so that they can prioritise the most vulnerable children.**
- Ensure staff conducting home visits to vulnerable children have received appropriate training and that systems and procedures are in place to ensure their safety and wellbeing
- Create scripts or a list of key questions that will help staff to have quality conversations when undertaking home visits e.g. asking parents and older children about changes to mood and risk
- Attend any multi agency meetings and/or reviews for children or agree alternative arrangements to contribute to multi-agency working e.g. online conferencing, Zoom etc
- Create kindness packages that can be sent to families where closure may impact on mental health to let them know you are thinking about them, this could include personalised messages, food and essentials, family activities such as jigsaws, mindful colouring activities, recipe ideas, letters from teachers etc.
- Record home visits and telephone communication using your existing record-keeping systems
- Keep in touch with your host local authority, find out what will remain available through the local offer for children with EHCPs, SEND and/or complex medical conditions
- Consider what outreach support can be offered to the most vulnerable children in line with government advice
- Consider how you can use this time effectively to review/ update staff training, peer supervision, policies and procedures
- Remember to keep yourselves and each other safe, ensure supervision and support is in place for **everyone**, including you.

Children for whom there are no known safeguarding concerns
- Each child or family should be allocated to a key member of staff for them to make contact if they are worried or need support during the closure period
- No personal information regarding children or their families is to be taken from the premises (paper copies etc)
- Any cause for concern must be recorded and reported in line with the school procedures unless there is an immediate danger/safety risk in which case they must call the named DSLs and/or the emergency services
- Schools should keep in touch with the pupils and students for whom we have a pastoral responsibility. Where facility exists, this may be via a scheduled weekly online tutor group, for example. The HoY or relevant pastoral lead should be included in these groups. A spreadsheet or other record of when contact has been made, and any issues arising for individual pupils, should be completed by tutors
- Some primary / junior schools and EY settings are aiming for weekly contact with every child / family, either by phone or doorstep visits. If you decide to do this, any home visits should be undertaken by 2 members of staff. Although these will be doorstep visits, the child/ren must be seen.

Wider considerations

- Remind staff of the staff code of conduct / safer working practice guidelines
- Can your school counsellors provide telephone support to individual children / staff?
- Let children and parents know how and when they can contact pastoral staff to ask any questions or reach out for support e.g. "*We will be available by telephone 10am – 2pm or email ……*"
- If you need or wish to use new volunteers, undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether an enhanced DBS certificate (without barred list) is appropriate / proportionate – you can find a risk assessment on the home page here https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/
- Perhaps unlikely but if you do need to recruit new staff / volunteers during this time, the DBS has issued temporary guidance on how to undertake ID checks remotely - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-standard-and-enhanced-id-checking-guidelines
- Create weekly newsletters for staff/parents to keep them up to date and promote regular communication
- The frequency of any required contact must be agreed with all staff, e.g., how often staff should check their work email account
- If you do have pupils on site, remind staff not to wear false nails, bracelets, watches or rings (although some may not be prepared to remove their wedding / commitment ring) – these can harbour germs and reduce the effectiveness of hand washing

Working remotely with pupils

- Existing policies (child protection, staff code of conduct, acceptable use agreement, etc) are still in operation. Staff should re-read these policies and ask a member of the Designated staff team if they have any questions or are unsure
- Staff must not communicate with pupils and students in a way which could cause alarm, distress or misunderstanding. There should be no room for ambiguity
- If staff are concerned about a comment made online by a pupil or the work they share, the staff member should take a screen shot and report it to the DSL via MyConcern / CPOMS or the school's existing protocol)
- Current guidelines for boarders skyping / facetiming family members are a sound basis for acceptable behaviour during online learning sessions using visuals; staff and pupils should be fully dressed and take into account the background / surroundings. Staff should use a communal area, think about anything in the background that could cause concern (e.g. art work) or would identify family members / personal information, and hang a sheet behind them if necessary
- The teacher should always act as moderator and be the responsible adult, especially where a pupil may need guidance to remove items from view. If a pupil is inappropriately dressed or in an unsuitable setting (e.g. a bedroom) they must be removed from the video call
- Using only audio is safer than live video feed. Using pre-recorded film clips or Youtube links or exam produced webinars, or other existing resources will also be preferable to a live video session
- Staff must not enter into one-to-one tuition voice or video call with an individual pupil or student. If there is a need for single pupil interaction, please ensure that a colleague is added to the call, or that a parent is present with the pupil
- If a staff member urgently needs to call a parent or pupil from their personal phone, the number must be withheld by dialling 141 first and a record of the call must made (e.g. an email to the HSM, DH or DSL to explain the purpose of the call and any actions taken as a result of it)

- Home filters may block different content at a different level to the school's filtering software; if this appears to be the case for one pupil in the group the teacher should revert to or suggest an alternative resource
- Take care that any material provided to students to watch is age appropriate. For instance, do not ask Year 9 pupils to watch a film with a 15 rating. Although this might be justified in a classroom setting (in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of senior leaders), it is not acceptable during remote learning activities
- Staff should model good online behaviour in all ways, including the language used to interact with pupils and colleagues, which should be respectful at all times
- School leaders should make clear to staff the operating times for online learning; no staff member should engage with or respond to any pupil outside these times

Guidelines for students connecting to a virtual classroom session
Pupils should be reminded of the following:
- Always use a communal space such as a dining room, and NEVER a bedroom or exclusively private space
- The location needs to be quiet and away from other distractions
- Personal appearance - always appropriately dressed, even if casual and, regardless of the time of day or night, NEVER in sleepwear or anything similar
- A clear background free from distractions or unwanted/inappropriate imagery. Ideally a blank wall - or hang a sheet behind yourself
- Always remove any personal items from any sight line that could identify other members of the family or other personal details
- Remember that mirrors could display items you are not expecting to be seen
- Check that the camera angle is straight ahead and stable
- Ensure you have a strong wi-fi connection to ensure quality video and audio
- Ensure you will not be interrupted – especially loudly or embarrassingly
- No staff member should try to have one to one contact with you – if you are concerned or uncomfortable, contact your Head of Year / pastoral lead / Designated safeguarding lead / the Head teacher

Virtual meetings between staff and parents
The same principles apply:

- In school use an office or one of the meeting rooms if possible. If not in a school location, always use a communal space such as a dining room, and NEVER a bedroom or exclusively private space.
- Personal appearance- always appropriately dressed, ideally work wear.
- A clear background free from distractions or unwanted/inappropriate imagery. Ideally a blank wall - or hang a sheet behind yourself.
- Always remove any personal items from any sight line that could identify other members of the family or other personal details.
- Remember that mirrors could display items you are not expecting to be seen.
- Check that the camera angle is straight ahead and stable.

In summary:
- All staff have a duty to report any safeguarding concerns about pupils to the DSL or a member of the Designated staff team in the normal way.

- We all need to look after ourselves and each other as much as possible. If a staff member feels that they need help, or that a colleague needs help, please let someone know as quickly as possible. This could be via the HOD/HSM, chaplain, HR or the DSL, for example.

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These guidance notes include elements from a range of examples shared online by my peers & contacts and with thanks to Janet Glass at KCC for letting me pinch some of her work.

Carolyn