

**COVID-19 Academy Closure
Arrangements for Safeguarding
and Child Protection Policy
Addendum
Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust**

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1. 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 who cannot be safely cared for at home.

From September 1st 2020, all FMAT academies reopened as determined by government guidance.

The key features of safeguarding remain the same:

- the best interests of children must always come first;
- if anyone in the academy has a safeguarding concern about any child they should act immediately;
- a DSL or deputy should be available;
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children;
- children should be protected when they are online.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust is following government COVID-19 guidance on school closures, maintaining education provision with local authorities and for education settings, all of which are frequently updated.

This addendum to the **FMAT School Safeguarding policy** (October 2020) which contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements as listed in the contents page.

Key contacts

Each academy has its own 'Safeguarding contacts' page on its website

2. 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 and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered an academy 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead (and the deputy designated safeguarding leads), 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.

Safeguarding teams across our academies 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 in each academy for this will be the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSL).

There is an expectation across Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, 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 the designated safeguarding team in the respective academy will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, the respective Academy safeguarding lead or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England at the time.

All Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academies will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

3. Attendance monitoring

In the event of nationwide school closures due to COVID-19, Local authorities and education settings may not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance, dependent of governmental advice.

All Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust safeguarding teams and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – the respective academy will then follow up on any student that they were expecting to attend. The respective academy 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.



To support this, the respective academy will, when communicating with parents/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, the respective academy will notify their social worker.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

Detail of the Trust Designated Safeguarding Leads for an academy is listed in their 'Safeguarding contacts' document on their website.

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 designated safeguarding lead) 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 coordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to 'My Concern' online management system 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 employees of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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.

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

5. Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the academy's Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report via 'My Concern', which can be done remotely from any internet connected device.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access their 'My Concern' from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Principal. This will ensure that the concern is received. Staff also have details of how to raise an urgent concern directly with Birmingham CASS (Children's Advice and Support Services) or Solihull MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and the police.

Staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay.



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

Concerns around an academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be directed to the respective Principal.

If the concern relates to a Principal or a member of the Central Team, it must be reported immediately to the CEO (or in the absence of a CEO, the Director of Education) via email: safeguarding@fmat.co.uk or phone 0121 378 1288 ext. 3653. If the concern relates to the CEO, it must be reported to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

6. Safeguarding Training and induction

DSL training may not 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 FMAT staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020). The DSL 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 or new volunteers any Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academy, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our academies, we will consider 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 the Trust, academies should seek assurance from the Principal 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.



7. 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, Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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.

Where the academy is utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 183 to 187 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer, who has not been checked, be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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 131 of KCSIE.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 143 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 academy is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the academy, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academies will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 164 to 171 in KCSIE.

8. Online safety in academies

All Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academies will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system.

Where students are using computers in the academy appropriate supervision will be in place.



9. Children and online safety away from Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academies

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 **FMAT Child Protection Policy** and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the **FMAT Code of Conduct**.

The academy senior leaders, along with the Trust's Data Protection Officer (DPO) will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

10. Key expectations for safe interaction between teachers and students on line:

Most online learning will be led and taught via teachers using Microsoft Teams.

Below are some things to consider if staff are delivering virtual live lessons, especially where webcams are involved (Note: any such lessons would need to be approved beforehand by the Principal):

- No 1:1s, groups only.
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms provided by Fairfax MAT to communicate with students.
- Staff should record which students attend via TEAMS; time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

Staff and student relationships: the same expectations for respectful student and staff behaviour and communication apply online as in the classroom. It is not appropriate for children to call teachers by their first names.

Communication between staff and students will be carried out through safe and well checks to the phone number of the parent or carer only and **not** a child's personal phone number. Any electronic communication will be done through school email addresses only.

The use of social media: staff should not be communicating with children via social media.

The academy ensures that any use of online learning tools and systems comply with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.



11. Supporting children not in school

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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 the academy, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person.

Details of this plan must be recorded on 'My Concern', as should a record that contact was made.

The respective academy and its DSL 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 DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

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

Academies recognise that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of students and their parents/carers. Teachers across Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust need to be aware of this in setting expectations of students' work where they are at home.

Academies 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 'My Concern'.

12. Supporting children in school

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to student ratio numbers are appropriate to maximise safety.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust 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 'My Concern' where appropriate.

Where the academy has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our



Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – leaders will discuss them immediately with the Trust's Executive Team.

13. Peer on Peer Abuse

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust recognises that during closures due to COVID-19, a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where an academy 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. There is also Trust Peer on Peer Abuse Guidance on each academy's website.

The academy 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 'My Concern' and appropriate referrals made.

