



Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust

# Child Protection Policy during school closure for COVID-19

This policy is a mandatory policy for all Vine schools and must be implemented with no amendments. All schools will need their own Appendix to this policy.

**"I am the vine; you are the branches.  
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit"  
(John 15:5)**

The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust	
Approved by:	The Vine Schools Trust
Signature:	Tim Rose Chairman
Date:	6 April 2020

Policy Reference:	A23B
Version No:	March 2020
Next review date:	September 2020



Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust

## Vision & Values

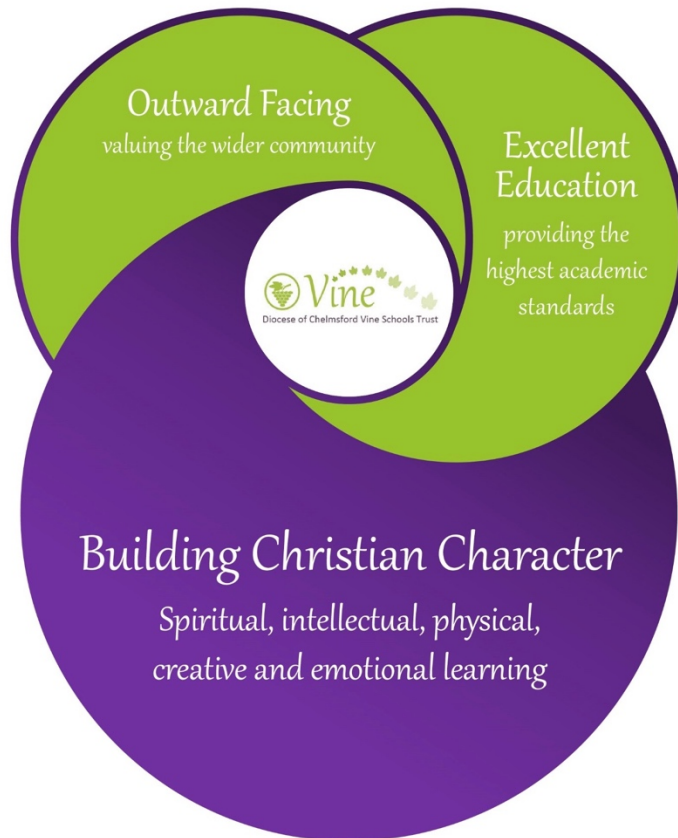
**V**  
**I**  
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**E**

**Valuing every person**

**Inspiring great teaching**

**Nurturing academic excellence and Christian Character**

**Excelling, unlocking great potential**



## CONTENTS

PAGE NO:

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Context .....	5
3. Attendance monitoring .....	6
4. Designated Safeguarding Lead .....	7
5. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period.....	7
6. Records and information sharing .....	9
7. Interagency working.....	9
8. Safeguarding Training and induction.....	10
9. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff.....	10
10. Staff conduct.....	11
11. Online safety in schools and colleges.....	11
12. Children and online safety away from school and college .....	11
13. Supporting children not in school .....	12
14. Mental Health and Wellbeing .....	13
15. Peer on Peer Abuse.....	14
16. Support from the Vine Schools Trust .....	14

## 1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children and, in conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding children during the current emergency arrangements. This policy is an addition to our existing Child Protection Policy and has been produced to cover arrangements in place during school closure due to Covid-19.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- the current Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- the school Behaviour policy;
- the school Staff Code of Conduct;
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex B of KCSIE)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

## 2. Context

From 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Schools have been instructed to close, although are required to offer a place to [vulnerable children](#) and children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. 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.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want their child to attend, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will explore (with the social worker) the reasons for this and to agree an appropriate plan for that child.

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. 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 deputy) 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.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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 for looked-after and previously looked-after children. The lead person for this will be the headteacher.

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

Vine Schools Trust schools want to support all our children during this time and will consider making a place available to other children with vulnerabilities, although this will be in discussion with other professionals involved and based on a risk assessment process.

### **3. 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. They will submit their daily online attendance of the children of key workers and vulnerable children as required by the DfE.

Vine Schools Trust schools and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend.

To support the above, the 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, the school will notify their social worker.

## 4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

All Vine Schools Trust schools have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL. Their names can be found in the Appendix 'Key Contacts' attached.

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 or appointed member of staff will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to child protection online management system, recorded on the schools safeguarding 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 Vine Schools Trust staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL (or deputy). On each day staff on site will be made aware of 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. Safeguarding procedures during the closure period

Clearly, we are working very differently during this period of closure. However, the principles within our existing Child Protection Policy still apply, as does the duty on all staff to safeguard children.

We have assessed the needs of all our pupils and put in place plans to support them and their families during this period of closure. These plans include an education offer (details of which have been shared separately with parents for their child) and arrangements to support pupils with their safety and wellbeing. These plans may include actions and interventions from other agencies, as we continue to work with partners to provide an appropriate level of support.

For vulnerable children, existing plans will be reviewed in conjunction with other relevant agencies and updated to ensure they reflect the current situation and meet need. Vulnerable children will be risk assessed with other professionals to decide whether children will be safer at home or in school and decisions will be made on individual cases. The school will work with the Virtual School Headteacher to support our children in care.

Children with an EHC plan will be assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. If it is felt they should remain at home, a plan will be agreed and this could include carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. It is recognised that many children with EHC plans

can safely remain at home. During the closure period we will work with the local authority and parents / carers to produce a personalised plan that includes:

- Short term interim targets that have been agreed with the child and parent / carers
- Any agreed support to be provided by the team supporting the child (school, LA Education or SEND staff, Social Worker, Health professional)
- Regular reviews with the child and parent / carers

As always, all staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (or, in their absence, the deputy designated safeguarding lead). This includes making a report via recorded on the schools safeguarding system, which can be done remotely.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access their recorded on the schools safeguarding system from home, they should email the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Headteacher. This will ensure that the concern is received.

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 school, they should use a yellow form to 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 Governors.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2019)
- [Essex Effective Support](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2019)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2017)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the [Essex Effective Support](#) portal. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers



The Vine Schools Trust will continue to offer support in the process of managing allegations.

## **6. Records and information sharing**

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. The Vine Schools Trust is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

During this period, there may be occasions where we have children from another school attending our site, or where our pupils may have to attend another school. In these circumstances, relevant information will be shared between schools to ensure there is knowledge and an understanding of any safeguarding issues so that appropriate measures can be put in place to keep children safe. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis.

## **7. Interagency working**

As before, it is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the Academy is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. During this closure period, there are temporary arrangements in place and meetings will take place virtually (online).

## 8. 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 (2019). 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 enter a Vine Schools Trust school they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

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
- 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 Vine Schools Trust, schools should seek assurance from the Vine HR Officer 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.

## 9. 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, all Vine Schools Trust schools 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 (2019) (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 a Vine Schools Trust school is utilising 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.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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](mailto: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, all Vine Schools Trust schools will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

## 10. Staff conduct

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct and the principles in our Staff Code of Conduct still apply during this emergency period. All our current policies are to be read as reflecting the current arrangements and therefore cover online/remote learning. The usual processes for reporting concerns about a member of staff apply.

## 11. Online safety in schools and colleges

Vine Schools Trust schools will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system.

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

## 12. Children and online safety away from school

We recognise that the majority of children will not be physically attending school and that it is likely they will be spending longer periods of time online, which may increase their vulnerability. We have provided parents with information on how to keep their children safe online and resources to support them to do this. Particularly useful websites are:

- [CEOP](#) (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
- [Childnet](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Net Aware](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Parent Info](#)

- [Safer Internet](#)

Staff are aware that children are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way.

It is important that parents make the school aware of any concerns they may have about the online activity of their child, or any particular vulnerability they may have in this respect.

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.

### **Staff use of online learning tools**

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the Vine Schools Trust code of conduct.

Vine Schools Trust schools will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- 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 where possible.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms approved by Vine Schools Trust to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

## **13. Supporting children not in school**

Vine Schools 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 school, 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 the schools safeguarding system, as should a record of contact have made.

The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits (observing social distancing rules). Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

Vine Schools Trust 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.

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

Vine Schools Trust 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 all Vine Schools Trust schools need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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 the schools safeguarding system.

## **14. Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Vine Schools Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils. This is a worrying and challenging time for everyone and we understand that families will be placed under additional pressures and may be coping with issues such as increased anxiety, financial difficulties, caring for children at home all the time and bereavement.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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, to maximise safety.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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.

Vine Schools Trust schools 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 the schools safeguarding system.

Where Vine Schools Trust schools have concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – they will discuss them immediately with the Vine Schools Trust CEO.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

## **15. Peer on Peer Abuse**

Vine Schools Trust 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 of 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 recorded on the schools safeguarding system and appropriate referrals made.

## **16. Support from the Vine Schools Trust**

The Vine Schools Trust CEO will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the DSL to carry out their role effectively.

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

The Vine Schools Trust schools will also provide regular group and individual supervision sessions as necessary. This will take the form of an online meeting.