



COVID-19 Update September 2020

Safeguarding and Child Protection at Houghton Conquest Lower School

1. Context

This addendum applies from the start of the Autumn term 2020. It sets out changes to the schools normal Child Protection policy in response to coronavirus.

This addendum does not replace the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and should be read in conjunction with the main policy.

Schools and colleges should, as far as is reasonably possible, take a whole institution approach to safeguarding. This will allow them to satisfy themselves that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 are not weakening their approach to safeguarding or undermining their child protection policy.

The way schools and colleges are currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID19) is fundamentally near to normal, however and a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in a school or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and 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 continue to be protected when they are online

Key Information

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| School | Houghton Conquest Lower School |
| LA | Central Bedfordshire Council |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead: | Miss J Heaslip |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: | Mr J Hetherington |
| Designated Safeguarding Governor: | Dr S Burton |
| Designated Prevent Lead: | Miss J Heaslip |
| On-line Safety Officer | Mrs A Allen |
| Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) | Central Bedfordshire Local Safeguarding Board Contact Number: 0300 300 43319 |
| Designated teacher for Looked After Children | Miss J Heaslip |

Safeguarding partners

As of Monday 23rd March 2020, Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Services are convening Virtual Initial and Review Child Protection case conferences. All professionals must submit reports to the chair and, wherever possible, be available for conference calls or a video call via Microsoft teams. The Conference and review Service will contact you prior to the conference and provide you with the details as to how each conference will take place and the details on how to join. On the exceptional occasions that professional attendance at the conference is not quorate, the child protection chair will determine whether a child should be subject to a Child Protection plan based on all of the information provided.

This approach will enable Initial and Review case conferences to take place in line with the Council guidance regarding Covid-19.

The guidance for [re-opening](#) of schools highlights processes and guidance for September and the months thereafter.

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 a child in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The Senior Leaders, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputies know who the most vulnerable children are. The 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 staff member responsible for this is Miss J Heaslip.

Attendance monitoring (During a national or local lockdown)

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.

Houghton Conquest Lower School and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – Houghton Conquest Lower School will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Houghton Conquest Lower School 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 Houghton Conquest Lower School will, when communicating with parents/carers, will confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and up to date.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, Houghton Conquest Lower School will notify their social worker.

There is an expectation that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time, when deemed appropriate by the Department of Education.

- Houghton Conquest Lower School acknowledge that mandatory attendance rules apply for attending school when announced by the government – CME and EWO processes will be explored as normal regarding nonattendance.
- Houghton Conquest Lower School has agreed with families that children should be attending their education provision.
- Houghton Conquest Lower School will take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to 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 college, or discontinues, the school/college will notify their social worker.

Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy. Staff must report any concern immediately and without delay.

Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children, they should continue to follow the school policy.

Safeguarding Training and induction

All existing school 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 enter the school, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

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.

- Where schools are recruiting new members of staff, they should continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of KCSIE 2020. 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 schools and colleges are utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 183 to 188 of KCSIE 2020. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.
- The school 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.
- Schools should continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) 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. All referrals received by the TRA will continue to be considered. Where referrals on serious safeguarding matters are received and it is deemed that there is a public interest in doing so consideration will be given as to whether an interim prohibition order (IPO) should be put in place. The TRA will continue to progress all cases but will not schedule any hearings at the current time.

- Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school or college 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, schools and colleges must continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 164 to 171 in KCSIE 2020.

Online safety in school

Houghton Conquest Lower School will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems (read [guidance on what “appropriate” looks like](#)) are in place to protect children when they are online on the school’s IT systems or recommended resources.

Houghton Conquest Lower School will consider who in their institution has the technical knowledge to maintain safe IT arrangements – in school this is Mrs A Allen and Partnership Education as our commissioned ICT advisory and support services.

Houghton Conquest Lower School pay due regard to experiences children may have been exposed to during the period of partial closure in relation to online activity – appropriate referral methods remain in place should this become apparent or known.

Please see the following links for further advice:

[UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards and proprietors assure themselves](#)

[UK Safer Internet Centre’s professional online safety helpline.](#)

Children and online safety away from school

It is important that all staff who interacts 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.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the Staff code of conduct.

Houghton Conquest Lower School 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.
- 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 provided by the school to communicate with pupils.
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

DSL operations

DSLs and schools should have a heightened awareness of the possibility of disclosure or behaviour changes that may present themselves after a long period of partial closure. All schools should ensure that DSLs have dedicated time to manage safeguarding related matters on children's return. Appropriate supervision should take place thereafter and case load discussions should continue.

Domestic Abuse

Where a child is known to be experiencing domestic abuse at home or a disclosure is made, it is important that children and their parents and carers are asked directly about whether any further incidents have taken place and how safe they are feeling at home. Where there is escalation of abuse or any incidents of physical assault the child's social worker should be notified or where they are not known, a referral should be made to the Children's Safeguarding Hub. A DASH risk assessment should be completed with the victim to assess the level of risk and, where appropriate a referral made to MARAC.

Further guidance and information for this can be found here; <https://bedsdv.org.uk/marac/> It is important that families experiencing domestic abuse are signposted to appropriate support services following the easing of restrictions.