

COVID-19 forced school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at Thomas Hickman School

Context

Thomas Hickman School has an effective child protection policy in place reflecting business as usual. This addendum summarises key COVID-19 related changes which are in effect while THS is in forced closure.

Despite this unprecedented situation, and the extra pressure that we find ourselves under, it remains our priority that Thomas Hickman School continues to be a safe place for children. We continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE.

The way Thomas Hickman School is currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always come first
- if anyone at Thomas Hickman School has a safeguarding concern about any child they should act immediately
- a DSL or deputy will be available at all times on site whenever possible or remotely when this is not possible due to personal or family ill-health
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to gain access to children
- we will continue to do all we can to protect children when they are online

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked to keep their children at home wherever possible. Schools were asked to provide care for a limited number of children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and therefore they cannot be safely cared for at home. At Thomas Hickman School, this has led to the creation of:

- Mini-School which offers emergency childcare to children of Keyworkers Monday – Friday 8:30 – 6:00pm;
- Care Club which offers childcare provision to children identified as vulnerable on Mondays and Fridays from 10am – 2pm

This addendum of the Thomas Hickman School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas in response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Vulnerable children

1.1. Vulnerable children include

- those who have a social worker
- those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

1.2. Those who have a social worker include children who

- have a Child Protection Plan
 - those who are looked after by the Local Authority.
- 1.3. 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.
 - 1.4. 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. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.
 - 1.5. Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.
 - 1.6. Senior leaders, especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) know who our most vulnerable children are. We have the flexibility to offer a place to children on the periphery of receiving children's social care support for example, those who have recently received support from the school's pastoral team or those currently undergoing a Child & Family assessment or having support from Family Support Service.
 - 1.7. There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend Care Club, 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 Care Club, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and DSL team will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.
 - 1.8. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, Thomas Hickman School or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

2. Designated Safeguarding Lead

- 2.1. Thomas Hickman School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a team of Deputy DSLs.
 - The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Pippa Brand-Benee
 - The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are: Sarah Brew, Fay Jeffs, Lisa Khan, Abi Manly
- 2.2. 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 or via email (pastoral@thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk) - for example when working from home due to self-isolation.
- 2.3. Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, a senior leader will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site; this might include updating and managing access to Behaviour Watch and liaising with an 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.
- 2.4. The DSL team will continue to engage with social workers, and attend all multi-agency meetings which can be done remotely and will record all communication on Behaviour Watch.

3. Reporting a concern

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

and that if a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, or a crime is being committed, they should call 999.

- 3.2. Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a verbal report to the DSL (or deputy) as necessary and recording a report via Behaviour Watch, which can be done remotely.
- 3.3. Staff will ensure that the concern is received. In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access Behaviour Watch from home, they should contact, via phone, Sarah Brew (Safeguarding Lead).
- 3.4. Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should 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 orally and followed up with an email to the Headteacher. In the event that the Headteacher is unavailable the contact should be to the Deputy Headteacher.
- 3.5. Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors: Alan Sherwell via his email: cog@thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk

4. Supporting children in school (Mini-school and Care Club)

- 4.1. Thomas Hickman School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.
- 4.2. Thomas Hickman School will continue to be a safe space for children who fit the eligibility criteria to attend. The Headteacher will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and that staff to pupil ratios are appropriate to maximise safety while being mindful of the need for social distancing.
- 4.3. Thomas Hickman School 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.
- 4.4. Thomas Hickman School 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 include the attendance of additional DSLs for Care Club sessions, health permitting.
- 4.5. If the Headteacher has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders or safety ratios– she will discuss them immediately with the Chair of Governors

5. Supporting children not in school

- 5.1. Thomas Hickman School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children.
- 5.2. Where the DSL team has identified a child to be on the periphery of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral support in school, they will make regular phone calls to the family to maintain contact and keep lines of communication open, as well as to enquire on the welfare of the child. This contact will be recorded on Behaviour Watch.
- 5.3. The pastoral team will hold regular ‘hatch’ meetings by remote means during forced closure to discuss our vulnerable children and any other children whom we have reason to be concerned for, including, but not limited to, any child for whom Children’s Services have received a referral. If these children are then deemed to be vulnerable, they will be offered a place in Care Club.

6. Attendance monitoring

- 6.1. Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance.
- 6.2. Thomas Hickman School and social workers will agree with parents and carers whether children in need should be attending Care Club. Thomas Hickman School DSL team will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Thomas Hickman School will also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) at Mini-school if the child(ren) subsequently do not attend. The process for this will be as follows:
 - On the day of their first attendance at Mini-school or Care Club, parents will be asked for up-to-date emergency contacts
 - THS staff on site will inform Sarah Brew remotely of any Mini-school children who do not turn up each day when expected so SB can follow-up with parents and ensure the safety of the children
- 6.3. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at Care Club, or discontinues, Thomas Hickman School DSL team will notify their social worker and ensure that this is followed up to identify the reason for non-attendance.

7. Mental Health

- 4.1 At Thomas Hickman School, we recognise that school is a protective factor and that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. We continue to be mindful of this when setting expectations of pupils' work when they are at home and in ongoing communication with parents and children.
- 4.2 For children attending Mini-school and Care Club, there is a variety of activities for them to participate in including physical activities and crafts as we recognise the benefits of both of these on mental wellbeing. During these sessions, staff will continue to be mindful of the guidance on Social Distancing.
- 4.3 Our therapist, Abi Manly, has provided guidance for all families on mental health and well-being during this time and will continue to provide advice, guidance and suggested wellbeing activities throughout the Forced School Closure period. Abi is available to listen to concerns from staff regarding children, parents or staff during this time and can be contacted via the email address: pastoral@thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk

8. Online safety in schools

- 8.1. Thomas Hickman School will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the continued use of an online filtering system.
- 8.2. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.
- 8.3. Children will not be allowed to bring any technology devices into mini-school or Care Club, including mobile phones (these won't be necessary for safety as children will be dropped off and collected by an adult).

9. Children and online safety away from school

- 9.1. 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.

- 9.2. Teachers will ensure that they have verified any links before they provide them to Lauren to be made available on the school website
- 9.3. Additional guidance, in the form of links to appropriate bodies, will be available from the school's website homepage with a message encouraging parents to be vigilant regarding their children's online usage
- 9.4. Staff communication with parents and carers during this time should be primarily through the dl@thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk email account. If this requires follow-up by phone, this should be arranged via email so the communication is transparent
- 9.5. While we recognise that many children will want, and benefit from, messages from their teachers, this should always be done through the parent's or carer's email via the dl@thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk email address
- 9.6. Teachers will post weekly messages on the school website to let families know we are still here for them and thinking of them but no personal videos will be sent without specific permission from the Headteacher (or Deputy Head in her absence)
- 9.7. Staff should continue to adhere to the Thomas Hickman School Code of Conduct and should not engage in any Social Media contact with parents, carers or children of THS. The only exception to this is for safeguarding purposes when the DSL team engage in face time calls to check on the welfare of a child.

10. Peer on Peer Abuse

10.1 Section 18 of the Child Protection Policy is still relevant during this time. However, Thomas Hickman School recognises that during the forced school closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims so to ensure continuity of the philosophy behind protecting children from Peer on Peer abuse the following has been considered by THS:

- At mini-school and Care Club, our BIRDS charter will still be very much in evidence. It is imperative during this time of uncertainty that our children are given structure and guidance on how to manage their behaviour appropriately
- While there will not be explicit PSHE lessons, staff will continue to model the expectations of behaviour including how we treat other people and will address any inappropriate behaviour in an age-appropriate way.
- Ratios will be such that there is opportunity for children to share worries or concerns in private with a member of staff who they know will listen to them.
- Where a member of staff 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
- Thomas Hickman School staff will listen to 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 and appropriate referrals made.

11. Safeguarding Training and induction

- 11.1. DSL training is very unlikely to take place whilst there remains a threat of the COVID 19 virus.
- 11.2. 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.

- 11.3. All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The DSL team will communicate with all staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.
- 11.4. Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter Thomas Hickman School, they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction by the DSL (or deputy) on site or remotely from Fay Jeffs (deputy DSL).
- 11.5. 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
- 11.6. Upon arrival, they will be given a copy of Thomas Hickman School's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements, including names and current contact details of the DSL and deputy DSLs.

12. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

- 12.1. It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. If it becomes necessary to recruit new staff during forced school closure, Thomas Hickman School 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).
- 12.2. 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.
- 12.3. Where Thomas Hickman School are 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.
- 12.4. Thomas Hickman 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. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.
- 12.5. Thomas Hickman School 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'.
- 12.6. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk
- 12.7. Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current National emergency, Thomas Hickman School continues to believe that it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, Thomas Hickman School will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

13. Safeguarding and clusters

13.1. Where schools and colleges collaborate and children and/or staff from multiple settings are clustered in one place, the principles in [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\)](#) and this guidance continue to apply. In particular, the school or college that is acting as the hub in the cluster should continue to provide a safe environment, keep children safe and ensure staff and volunteers have been appropriately checked and risk assessments carried out as required. Additional advice on clusters and safeguarding will be provided in due course and further amendments and updates to this document may be made if it becomes necessary to move to this model of providing childcare.