

## Annex

# COVID-19 school closure arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School:

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**

**Date shared with staff: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**

## 1. Context

From 20<sup>th</sup> 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 cannot be safely cared for at home.

This addendum of the St Thomas More Child Protection and Safeguarding policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

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## Key contacts

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Email</b>
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<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Martin Bonner</b>	<b>01234 400222</b>	<a href="mailto:mbonner@stm.beds.sch.uk">mbonner@stm.beds.sch.uk</a>
<b>Safeguarding Governor</b>	<b>Ilona Bond</b>		<a href="mailto:ibond@bedfordcatholicschools.co.uk">ibond@bedfordcatholicschools.co.uk</a>
<b>Chair of LAC</b>	<b>Cathy Piotrowski</b>		<a href="mailto:cpiotrowski@bedfordcatholicschools.co.uk">cpiotrowski@bedfordcatholicschools.co.uk</a>

## 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 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.

St Thomas More 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 for this will be: John Hopkins

There is an expectation 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 school name will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, St Thomas More or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the

parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

St Thomas More will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

### **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.

St Thomas More and social workers will agree with parents/carers whether children in need should be attending school – St Thomas More will then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not. St Thomas More 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. This will be done by contacting the parent or carer directly to share that an expected student has not arrived at school and/or discuss why this has happened or there has been change to the previously agreed arrangements.

To support the above, St Thomas More 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, St Thomas More will notify their social worker and work in co-operation and collaboration with them to conduct welfare checks during the period of school closure.

### **4. Designated Safeguarding Lead**

St Thomas More School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: John Hopkins

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Carole Soraghan

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 will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to child protection information 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.

It is important that all St Thomas More staff 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 school Safeguarding Policy, this includes making a report using an electronic safeguarding concern form emailed to the DSL, Deputy DSL and Head Teacher, to 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 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:  
Cathy Piotrowski

## **6. 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 St Thomas More, 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 Trust, schools should seek assurance from the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) HR Manager 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, St Thomas More 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 St Thomas More 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.

St Thomas More 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.

St Thomas More 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, St Thomas More will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

## **8. Online safety in schools**

St Thomas More will continue to provide a safe environment, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.

## **9. Children and online safety away from school**

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. St Thomas More 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 digital learning resources:

- Staff must only use platforms provided by St Thomas More to communicate with pupils

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

St Thomas More 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, as should a record of contact have made.

The communication plans can include remote contact, phone contact, doorstep visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

St Thomas More 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. St Thomas More 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 school name need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

St Thomas More 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.

## **11. Supporting children in school**

St Thomas More is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its pupils.

St Thomas More 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.

St Thomas More 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.

St Thomas More 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.

## **12. Peer on Peer Abuse**

St Thomas More 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 multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person. Concerns and actions must be recorded and appropriate referrals made.