

Bexley Grammar School Safeguarding Update January 2021

Coronavirus (Covid-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers January 2021

Background

This update follows the *BGS Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures During Partial Closure January 2021* addendum to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. As the national picture changes so will the interim guidance changes. It will be reviewed and updated as required.

Help and support

Staff should refer to the school's Risk Assessment and Action Plan in the first instance to address queries or concerns about the Covid-19 situation. The DfE coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions or queries - 0800 046 8687 (M-F 8am-6pm, 10am-4pm at weekends).

Role of the local authority

The school's Designated Safeguarding Leads have remained contactable throughout the school's partial closure and re-opening. However if you are unable to contact them for any reason and you have an urgent concern about a young person please contact Bexley Children's Services directly on 0208 303 7777 or Greenwich Children's Services on 020 8921 3172, or the relevant branch of the emergency services.

Keeping children safe in schools and colleges

All staff at BGS have read, and signed to acknowledge their understanding of the content of, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021. Staff continue to abide by the key principles during the reopening of school and period of remote learning. To summarise some of those:

- The named Designated Safeguarding Lead, Hugh Gilmore, and / or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead Stephen Elphick, are on site at all times
- The best interests of children continue to come first
- If anyone in or out of school has a safeguarding concern they should act on it immediately
- Only approved staff and visitors have access to the school site
- Parents have been well-informed of how to keep their children safe online via the school website and newsletter

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy January 2021

The school's existing Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy was updated with Covid 19 addendum in March 2020. This new addition takes into account some of the following consideration with children being absent from and then returning to school:

- Staff should be mindful that the lockdown period may have been a very difficult one for children and their families. There may be concerns around bereavement, anxiety, domestic violence and emotional or physical abuse. Staff should refer to the main

body of the policy on how to identify the signs and symptoms of these issues and respond following the usual school procedures

- The DSL and / or a Deputy DSL will be in school throughout the period and staff should promptly inform them of any concerns that they have.
- Parents / Carers have been regularly updated and informed of safeguarding advice and guidance via the school newsletter and website. Tutors are contacting all parents / carers of children to check on the wellbeing of the students.
- Students deemed to be vulnerable (part of a CIN/CP plan or on the edge of social care involvement) have been offered places at school. Those who have not taken up those places have been contacted weekly by the DSL.
- The DSL continues to be in regular contact with the Local Authority's appointed Safeguarding Lead, Joan Woodham, and appointed social workers.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

Hugh Gilmore remains the DSL for BGS with Vicky Ellis and Stephen Elphick the Deputy DSLs. On any given day one or more of the DSLs will be on site and available to speak to in person / by phone / email. The DSL has maintained contact with those students deemed to be vulnerable since the lockdown began and will continue to do so during the school's reopening. The DSL has also disseminated relevant information to staff and parents / carers and again will continue to do so during the summer term.

Vulnerable children

Students deemed to be vulnerable have been offered a school place alongside children of key workers. Some, but not all, of the criteria used to identify vulnerable children are as follows:

- Those assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 (including CIN, CP or LAC)
- Those who have an EHCP and following assessment it is deemed that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment
- Those who have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities and who could therefore benefit from continued attendance e.g. on the edge of children's services involvement, young carers

The DSL continues to work with Children's Services and social workers to support the above groups of students.

Attendance

The school has consistently worked with families of vulnerable children and external agencies to encourage their attendance at school. Where family members are shielding or clinically vulnerable the school has maintained contact with the family. Students with an EHCP not attending school have been in regular contact with the SEND team. The Attendance Office has maintained contact with students who are expected to return to school but have not. Daily returns of the Educational Setting Status form have been returned to the DfE by the Headteacher and a similar return is made daily to the LA.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

It is important that the impact of coronavirus does not allow our safeguarding procedures to be weakened. When Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 was released in September 2020, staff were given updated training on its content, particularly with regard to the link between mental health and safeguarding young people. This training will take place either in person or remotely. All new staff will have had a face to face induction day, including Safeguarding training, in July 2020.

Children moving schools and colleges

Steps have been taken to ensure a smooth transition for students coming to, and leaving, BGS. The DSL sent emails to all of the feeder schools for Year 7 requesting any safeguarding information to be sent via email or delivered to the school in person. The SEND team coordinated the transition of medical and SEND information from Year 6 schools. Where relevant, information for Year 11-12 students was passed on to their new school or college.

Staff recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

BGS has well-established and robust procedures for recruiting new staff and volunteers. These will continue to be followed in line with the relevant sections from part 3 of KCSIE 2021. The relevant guidance will also be applied to the recruitment of volunteers. Should the need arise the school will continue to follow their legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

Mental health

BGS has recently been awarded with the Wellbeing Award for Schools and the mental health of all members of the school community is at the forefront of our strategic and operational planning. We have two school counsellors and six Mental Health First Aiders on our staff. All staff have been given INSET on identifying and supporting mental health issues that may occur for staff and students. Given the current climate, and the impact that Covid 19 will have had on many students and their families, it will be essential for staff to refresh themselves with their training and flag up concerns that they have with pastoral teams and / or the DSL.

Online safety in schools and colleges

BGS continues to use the London Grid for Learning filters to stop students accessing inappropriate material. Securus software also enables the DSL and pastoral teams to track the network activity of any student in school. The Network Services team are aware of how and when to raise a concern with Google, who provide our email and drive services. Students and Parents / Carers have been signposted to a range of supporting services however these are worth reiterating:

- The UK Council for Internet Safety
- The UK Safer Internet Centre
- The NSPCC

Children and online safety away from school and college

Since September staff and students have been preparing to move to programme of virtual learning, including live lessons. Part of this training was to confirm the school's position on virtual learning with parents / carers, and encouraging good safeguarding practice for staff and the students who they interact with. Staff should refer to the school's Virtual Learning Contingency Plan and the expectations for students and parents / carers. Staff should also refer to the e-Safety policy and the BGS Professional Guidance policy, which also have Covid 19 related information and / or amendments.

Staff, students and Parents / Carers have been directed to a number of sources and resources to help keep children safe during the period of remote learning. Some of the most salient include:

- Childline
- CEOP
- Thinkuknow
- Childnet
- Net-aware
- Government guidance and support documents for parents to support children staying safe online

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>