



Robert Carre Trust

Annex to Safeguarding Policy

Edition 5: Covid-19 Recovery Post-Restrictions (Sept 2021)

The main safeguarding policy remains active but this annex sets out the Trust's response to circumstances arising from the post-restriction recovery period not envisaged by the current safeguarding policy.

The Trust also recognises that whilst most restrictions on daily life have been lifted the detrimental impact of Covid-19 on the physical and mental wellbeing of our school community will continue for many months to come. This edition of the Safeguarding Annex seeks to address these ongoing risks.

1. Delivering Education

All staff will be working in school unless required to self-isolate as part of NHS Test and Trace. However, remote-working protocols in place during closure would still apply where staff self-isolating are able to work from home.

2. Safeguarding of Vulnerable Students

The Trust recognises that safeguarding students in the face of the Coronavirus measures has presented and continues to present its schools with a challenge they have not faced before. Each Trust school has identified students who will have faced additional risk to their wellbeing and safety as a result of having to study at home. Such students received enhanced support during closure and will continue to have access to an enhanced level of support when the school returns in September. This support will vary dependent on the identified need and in the first instance will be provided by the pastoral teams at the Trust schools. Those teams will review and adjust that support as required and will make referrals to external agencies as deemed appropriate.

2.1 Monitoring Safeguarding & Wellbeing during periods of Self-Isolation

Covid-19 regulations may require student members of the school community to self-isolate for up to 10 days and there may still be a need for remote monitoring of wellbeing and learning for vulnerable students. Staff will continue to use the communication protocols established during school closure to maintain contact with vulnerable students. All staff will also be able to access key safeguarding staff out-of-hours should there be a need to report a safeguarding concern.

3. Support for the Mental Wellbeing of Students

Nobody has been immune to the emotional impact of the pandemic but whilst we may "all be in this together" it is clear that everybody has not had an identical experience of the emotional impact of the pandemic. The Trust recognises that the pandemic will have impacted on families and communities in many different ways: social, economic and emotional. The economic cost of Covid-19 is likely to continue beyond the lifting of restrictions with people facing job loss and all of the associated

detriment to living standards and wellbeing. Whilst the successful vaccination programme has alleviated anxiety for many, some families and young people may remain anxious about the risks of contracting Covid.

3.1 Identified Risk Factors for Anxiety-related Attendance Issues

It is highly probable that supporting mental wellbeing will be a key characteristic of the Trust schools' response during this ongoing Covid-19 recovery period. The following risk factors (some generic and some pandemic related) have been identified as potential sources of significant anxiety that might be a barrier to attendance. The list is by no means exhaustive but Trust staff will need to be aware of the breadth and depth of the impact of the pandemic in the daily lives of our school community.

3.1.i School Risk Factors:

- Bullying (the most common in “normal” circumstances)
- Difficulties in a specific subject
- Transition to secondary, key stage or new school
- Mock exams after the disruption to education over two school years
- Academic demands / high pressure
- Journey to school
- Relationships issues, with peers or staff
- Gaps in learning from limited engagement in remote learning
- Pressure to “catch-up”
- Worries about the impact of pandemic on future aspirations

3.1.ii Family Risk factors:

- Separation or divorce or change in family dynamic
- Parent physical or mental health problem – Covid 19 has impacted on access to critical treatment
- Over-protective parenting style
- Being the youngest child
- Loss and bereavement
- High levels of family stress
- Being a young carer
- Family history of school avoidance
- Unable to access support network due to lockdown
- Living in a household where there is domestic abuse
- Families facing pandemic related financial pressure and/or job loss
- Financial pressure putting family home at risk

3.1.iii Child Risk Factors:

- Personality factors – quiet, withdrawn, introverted
- Fear of failure / low self confidence
- Age (11-12 / 13-14)

- SEND / ASD
- Experience of trauma
- Separation anxiety
- History of poor mental health/anxiety
- Rural isolation & limited broadband capability

3.2 Support for Mental Wellbeing

The Trust schools will draw in the first instance on in-house expertise to support students struggling with their mental health or Covid related anxiety. Depending on the level of need identified, this may take the form of one-to-one work or the opportunity to participate in small group sessions. Where the level of need is beyond the expertise of in-house provision students will be referred to appropriate external agencies.

Heads of Year and Tutors will also support mental wellbeing through targeted form and year group activities, drawing on the wealth of materials available from multiple reputable agencies and support groups. Student Wellbeing Ambassadors, in place for the September return, will also promote and support positive wellbeing.

4. Impact of Remote Learning on Progress and Wellbeing

Some students were able to take remote learning in their stride but for others it proved to be a significant challenge. For some students with additional needs it proved to be an insurmountable challenge. The Trust also acknowledges that parents/carers have faced genuine and varied challenges with supporting remote learning not least of which has been achieving a balance between their own work commitments and supporting often more than one child with their school work.

The schools remain committed to supporting the wellbeing of their students and wellbeing will continue to be monitored as part of the wider support mechanisms already in place. Teachers in contact with the students when they are in-school will be sensitive to the potential risk factors detailed in section 3.2 that may affect our students.

4.1 Students with SEND and/or Additional Needs

For students with SEND and their parents home learning may have produced heightened levels of anxiety that impacted negatively on family relationships and learning outcomes. Their progress and wellbeing may have suffered some detriment where the usual support measures that ensure best progress may not have been present in the remote learning environment. Teachers will provide appropriate support where significant gaps are identified.

4.2 Safeguarding Progress and Aspirations

The Trust is committed to safeguarding the educational opportunities and aspirations for all students and recognises that the enforced school closure may have put some of those opportunities and aspirations at risk for some students. The Trust school is committed to ensuring that students are not

disadvantaged in pursuing the post-16 courses that align with their future aspirations as a result of the pandemic. In accordance with established practice, Trust schools will also support students seeking to secure university places for the next stage of their education.

Where a student is identified as having multiple gaps in their learning, support plans will prioritise core subjects and those subjects that safeguard a student's educational aspirations. Where the risk to progress and aspiration is high, consideration may be given as to whether a reduction in curriculum offer will enable students to maintain a balance between closing the gaps and pursuing current learning without detriment to their mental wellbeing.

5. Safeguarding Physical Wellbeing & Transmission Controls

5.1 Hygiene and Distancing Measures

Students will be encouraged to maintain regular hand sanitising. Classrooms remain configured to be front-facing and students will continue to be required to follow the one-way system to move between lessons to minimise the risk of transmission. Year designated recreation areas will remain in place and will be reviewed as the year progresses.

5.2 Mass Testing

As means of identifying any asymptomatic cases, every student will be offered two Lateral Flow tests in the first two weeks of returning to school in September. Thereafter, students will be provided with home kits to carry out the testing at home and will be encouraged to self-test twice weekly. Trust schools would look to facilitate this taking place in school if this were in the best interests of specific students

5.3 Masks

Teachers and students are no longer required to wear face coverings in lessons or where social distancing measures are not possible. However, the Trust would be supportive of those students and staff who may still choose to wear a face covering in such circumstances.

5.4 Social Bubbles

The requirement for social bubbles has ceased but in the interests of continuing to minimise the risk of transmission, year groups will continue to be allocated a designated space outdoors for breaks.

5.5 Extra-Curricular Activities & Sports Teams

These will take place in-line with the current government guidance. Access to the Learning Resource Centre will be managed on a rota basis to ensure the number of students using the facility can be safely managed.

6. Supporting Attendance

Students are now expected to return to full-time on-site education. The expectation is that students will achieve the target of 95% attendance and that school staff will be actively working with students

and parents to achieve this. Where attendance falls below 90% this will be considered to be persistent absence and as such puts the educational future of the student at risk. Following an attendance review, measures would be put in place to improve attendance. However, the Trust recognises that for some students, especially those with known additional needs, a more individualised approach to attendance support might be required such as a phased return or a flexible learning agreement that works incrementally towards full re-integration.

6.1 Self-Isolation

Attendance will continue to be affected by the requirement to self-isolate under the NHS Test and Trace system. Attendance codes have been amended to authorise absence on these grounds. However, as with any absence, school staff should seek formal notification from parents to ensure that students are where their parents expect them to be and genuinely being required to self-isolate.

For those students for whom school is viewed as a “safe place” a period of enforced isolation at home may increase the risk of harm they face. For some parents, managing the learning at home for their son/daughter could be extremely challenging and could place both them and the student at risk of harm. For such students, Student Support and/or Form Tutors would endeavour to maintain contact in accordance with the protocols established during school closure.

6.2 Home Visits

Should a visit to the home of a student be deemed necessary to address safeguarding concerns, staff will adhere to the following protocols:

- Staff should provide **at least 24 hours’ notice** to the family of the intention to visit
 - The visit protocols will be shared with the family in advance to avoid any misunderstandings
 - Staff will **visit in pairs** and at least one staff member will be known to the family
 - Staff should **ascertain if the family have pets** and ask that pets are kept away during the visit
 - Staff will **require to physically see and speak** to the student
 - Staff will exercise appropriate Covid precautions when visiting
 - Staff should not enter homes where there are known cases of Covid
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- Where unreasonable obstacles to a visit are persistently put forward by a family, staff should in the first instance refer the matter to the DSL who will review the safeguarding risk and consider whether it is appropriate to ask the police to do a safe and well check or refer the concerns to children’s services.

7. TAC and CIN Meetings

Where practicably possible staff should try to conduct these meetings via online platforms or phone conferencing. If this is not possible, then meetings may take place within school with due consideration given to minimising the potential risk of transmission.

8.Contact with Students Learning at Home due to Self-Isolation

Where students are required to self-isolate learning guidance will be provided via TEAMS in accordance with the protocols communicated to parents. Teachers will not be expected to deliver live lessons via TEAMS but, where feasible, may choose to include isolating students via TEAMS.

To safeguard both staff and students the protocols outlined below should be adhered to.

8.1 Email Contact

Where appropriate, staff will look to maintain contact with individual students via the usual school email system. Private email accounts should not be used for communication between staff and students by either party.

Student Support will continue to be available to provide support via the relevant email account: studentsupport@carres.uk (Carre's) or StudentSupportTeam@kshs.uk (Kesteven & Sleaford High School). The Support team staff monitor these inboxes on a regular basis.

Staff are not expected to respond to emails outside of the agreed school closure working hours unless they are dealing with a live safeguarding case.

8.2 Phone Contact

Where possible staff should use a school landline/mobile or the 3CX app to phone students and their parents/carers. Where staff do not have access to these they should ensure that their number is shielded from the recipient by inserting 141 before the number dialed. Staff should not contact students on a student's personal mobile unless this has been agreed with their parent/carer or the school's safeguarding lead. Where possible, staff are advised to contact a student via a parent's mobile so that parents are aware of the contact and can give informed consent to any subsequent contact with the student. Staff should keep a record of the phone call. Calls using a school landline or the 3CX app will be recorded as part of our normal phone call protocols.

9. Live-Streaming of Teaching (Microsoft TEAMS)

The use of Microsoft TEAMS remains the school approved platform for live streaming. Teachers are not expected to deliver live lessons via TEAMS for isolating students but may choose to include them via TEAMS where feasible and appropriate.

Teachers should remain mindful of student access to online resources when setting work for remote learning during isolation. Teachers should also be aware that live-streamed sessions use a huge amount of data and this might have cost implications if students are joining via mobile phones.

9.1 Protocols for Students accessing lessons via TEAMS

1. **For live-streamed sessions staff should only use the Microsoft Teams platform.**
2. **The Trust's Acceptable Use Policy** continues to apply and students should be reminded of this if participation is not compliant
3. **Students should be appropriately dressed** i.e. as they would be dressed as on a standard non-uniform day. (Pyjamas are not appropriate dress.)

4. **Students should participate from a communal area in their home wherever possible OR where this is not possible should participate in audio only**
5. **Where video participation is available students can choose to join via audio only.**
6. **Classroom expectations with regard to language and behaviour apply.**
7. **Session etiquette** – teachers should ensure that they have set up appropriate control levels when including isolating students via TEAMS

10. Identifying Safeguarding Concerns Post-Lockdown

Schools continue to navigate uncharted waters as our community and lives recover from the impact of lockdown restrictions. Restrictions might have been lifted but, members of our school community may still be impacted by the repercussions of the pandemic. Staff should be cognisant that some students may be at greater risk because of those repercussions. Key risk factors are outlined in section 3.2.

11. Transition to Secondary School or to Sleaford Joint Sixth Form

Trust student support teams are aware that transition may be more challenging for some students as a result of their personal experiences of lockdown and, where students are struggling to settle, appropriate support will be offered.

12. Support for Students with SEND

For students with SEND the return to school in September may still present additional challenge. They may struggle to return to normal school routine at the same pace as their peers. They may be at greater risk of a deficit in learning because they were unable to access in-lesson support in the same way as they would have done in lessons in school. They may also find it more difficult to manage the emotional impact of lockdown and the return to social interaction. The SENCO or key worker will ensure that support is enhanced during the early days of the return.

13. Staff Wellbeing

The Trust recognises that Trust staff are not immune from the impact of Covid-19 and the attendant restrictions. It remains committed to supporting the mental wellbeing of its staff as a professional community and as individuals. Positive wellbeing remains a primary focus in the Trust schools' development planning.

Parent Consultation Evenings will continue to take place virtually as this was found to effectively support work-life balance and positive wellbeing.

14. Meetings in School

In order to continue to minimise the risk of transmission, parents will be discouraged from coming into school without an appointment. Where possible meetings with parents and support agencies will take place via online platforms. Where it is deemed appropriate for a meeting to take place in school, meetings will take place with due regard for minimising the risk of transmission.