

# THE GOWER SCHOOL

## COVID-19 School Closure Arrangements

### Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for Schools

**based on Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

*N.B. This addendum aims to reflect the new safeguarding arrangements for schools and colleges in relation to COVID-19. As such, it is a framework and should be seen as a starting point for development to fit The Gower School's individual context*

## The Gower School's Child Protection Policy

### **Key Safeguarding Contacts:**

The Proprietor, who has overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection is Emma Gowers. She is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for child protection.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Joey Haigh, Sandra Talton, Laura Jones (Primary site) Jacqui Chittoi, Sandra Talton, Laura Gethin (Nursery site)

The Designated member of staff for children looked after/previously looked after (CLA) is Joey Haigh

The Designated Manager for Allegations against Staff and Volunteers are Jacqui Chittoi and Joey Haigh

**This policy was reviewed and adopted by The Gower School on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020. It will be reviewed following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.**

**This is a core policy that forms part of the induction for all staff and it is a requirement that all members of staff have access to this policy. This policy was shared with all staff on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020.**

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This addendum of The Gower School’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy contains details of our individual safeguarding arrangements in the following areas:

### 1. Context

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the UK government has asked parents to keep their children at home wherever possible. Schools, and all childcare providers, are, however, being 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 who cannot be safely cared for at home.

The key principles of our existing Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy still apply as follows;

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- a DSL or deputy will be available at all times the school is open and a rota for this will be displayed in school/nursery
- if anyone in a school or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act immediately and inform the DSL/Deputy DSL
- unsuitable people will not be allowed to enter our workforce and/or gain access to children
- children will continue to be protected when they are online

We will ensure that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 will not weaken our approach to safeguarding or undermine this policy.

### 2. Vulnerable Children

Current guidance<sup>1</sup> defines vulnerable children as “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 (CP) 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.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

In line with the current guidance, we will risk assess (using Islington's risk assessment tool) those children with an EHC plan in consultation with the local authority (LA) 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 with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and especially our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their deputies 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.

The Gower School will 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. Our Designated Teacher for this is Joey Haigh.

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, and will continue to encourage to our vulnerable children to attend school, including remotely if needed.

In circumstances where parents do not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and The Gower School will explore the reasons for this directly with the parents. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, The Gower School or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent following the advice set out by Public Health England.

### **3. Designated Safeguarding Leads**

The Gower School aims to have our DSL (or at least one deputy) available on site as far as is possible in current COVID-19 circumstances in line with statutory guidance<sup>2</sup>. Where this is not possible the DSL (or deputy) will be available via phone, Skype or online video - for example when working from home. Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, in addition to the above, another member of the SLT will assume responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

This might include updating and managing access to paper child protection records or online management system child protection records on the school's servers<sup>2</sup> and liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school or college. All staff on-site will be notified whether the DSL, deputy DSL [or which member of the SLT] is on site each day and the process for speaking to them. The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and co-ordinate remote attendance of case holding staff at all multi-agency meetings.

### **4. Reporting A Concern**

Where staff have a concern about a child, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, this includes making a report using our usual process. When people are working remotely they should contact the DSL by email, and follow up with a secure Qwil message to ensure that the information has been received. The DSL will then ring you or arrange a Zoom call as a matter of urgency to discuss.

All 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 Principal as soon as possible. This should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the Principal within 24

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<sup>2</sup> Keeping Children Safe in Education, Jan 2021.

hours. Concerns around the Principal should be directed to the LADO who should be informed directly at [lado@islington.gov.uk](mailto:lado@islington.gov.uk)

Advice may also be sought from the Principal Officer Safeguarding in Education on 0207 527 5595.

## **5. Attendance Monitoring**

Current guidance states that local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. However, we will continue to be aware of all children and young people's visibility through our Zoom virtual and online teaching and learning processes. In relation to vulnerable children, we will liaise with social workers and family support workers to agree with parents whether children subject to child protection plans or child-in-need (CIN) plans should be attending school and will follow up on any pupil expected to attend and does not using our usual first day absence processes. Parents are asked to continue to report sickness absence by email via the school office.

Administration will then inform class teachers of children's absence and this will be recorded on Engage (Primary) and MMC (Nursery for children attending provision) in the usual way. We will also follow up with parents who have arranged care for their child/ren but the children do not then attend. Attendance registers will be saved on the shared drive in Google Classroom and should be sent to the School office to collate (using Engage/spreadsheets) and this should be checked by the class teacher. Class teachers will discuss absence with their line manager, and this will be communicated to the member of the office team on duty to take further.

If children are unexpectedly missing virtual school, the action would be the same, in that the school office contacts the family to check up on the child.

The Gower School will, when communicating with parents, 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 stops attending without prior agreement and notification, The Gower School will notify their social worker.**

## **6. Safeguarding Training and Induction**

During the period that COVID-19 measures are in place, our DSL (and deputies) who are all 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 January (2021). The DSL will 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 join The Gower School, 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 their current employer confirms in writing that the member of staff/volunteer:

- has been subject to Safer Recruitment checks including an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
- has received appropriate safeguarding training
- is not currently subject to an ongoing disciplinary investigation, and;
- that there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children

Upon arrival at The Gower School they will be given a copy of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, including this addendum and our local processes and including confirmation of DSL arrangements for that day and subsequent days.

## **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, The Gower School will continue to follow safer recruitment processes, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education Jan (2021) (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. If we are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE, 2021. Under **no circumstances** will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

We 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. (Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE). We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE, 2021 and the TRA's teacher misconduct advice for making a referral 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, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. We will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE, 2021.

## **8. Online Safety in Schools**

The Gower School will continue to provide a safe environment for all our pupils, 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 of harm or neglect. Any such concerns should be dealt with in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and if required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the school's code of conduct.

We will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements. All staff are made aware of the following considerations when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- 1:1s/small group/whole teaching when arranged in advance by the school
- Teaching to take place within normal school hours (8am to 6pm)
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household
- Any computers used should be in with a suitably plain background as much as possible
- SLT/SMT have the ability to drop in and join all live classes
- Live classes should be kept to the timetable as issued by the school
- Language must be professional and appropriate, as would be expected at school
- Contact with other family members during live teaching times should be avoided if at all possible
- Staff must only use platforms provided by and approved by The Gower School to communicate with pupils (Zoom, Qwil Messenger, TGS email via school office, digital learning platform)

- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held. SLT can request Zoom logs from any member of staff to check this.
- The potential for safeguarding issues to arise, whether due to poor technical understanding, an intention to abuse, weak online security or for any other reason:

“Zoombombing”

In which an uninvited guest uses Zoom’s screen-sharing feature to broadcast unwanted videos. The school has addressed this by only allowing hosts to share their screens, and by using Waiting Rooms and passwords.

Virus / Malware

In which unwanted files are shared that could contain computer viruses or malware. The school has addressed this by disabling "file transfer" to prevent any malware being shared.

Unwanted Attendees to Zoom Meetings

In which unwanted or uninvited guests join meetings. This is particularly problematic when sharing links via social media, which our school does not do. The chances of guessing a meeting number randomly are 10 to the power of 10, or 1 chance in 10 billion. The school has also now required the use of Waiting Rooms, and passwords, to ensure only approved people are accessing the meetings.

In addition, the option to “Allow removed participants to rejoin” set to OFF.

Unwanted Communications by Participants

The school has disabled the ability for participants to use the private chat feature.

**All staff hosting Zoom meetings should make themselves aware of the features to record meetings, as well as to disconnect/remove someone from the meeting. You may need to use these tools if there is any chance that the children will be exposed to anything inappropriate including irate or unpleasant parents, poor behaviour etc.**

## 10. Supporting Children Not in School

The Gower School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils. 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. Details of this plan must be recorded on The Gower School’s Safeguarding Chronology Template by way of detailed observation as well as a record of any contact made with the child and/or their family.

The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded. The Gower School and our DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan, which will be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight). Where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The school may share safeguarding messages on its website and Google Classroom about who to talk to if they need help.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for children, and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Our teaching staff are aware of this and will take this into account when setting work for pupils and also in relation to their expectations of the quantity and quality of pupils’ work whilst they are at home.

## **11. Supporting Children in School**

The Gower School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students and we will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

We 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 COVID-19.

We 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 and recorded in line with our normal procedures.

Where The Gower School has concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – we will discuss them immediately with the local authority.

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

The Gower School recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of peer on peer abuse and supporting victims. Where we receive a report of peer on peer abuse, we will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE, 2021 and of those outlined within our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. We will listen and work with children and young people, parents and multi-agency partners to ensure the safety and security of the child concerned. All concerns and actions will be recorded in line with our normal safeguarding processes and appropriate referrals made.

## **13. Online Teaching/Virtual School During COVID-19**

The Gower School has established which staff are able to work remotely, and has provided IT equipment and server access as needed, all agreed by DSL in advance.

All teaching is to be carried out live, with exceptions agreed with the DSL (eg sports, where the teacher wishes to talk over a film of the exercises, or for example recording the specific teaching steps/instructions to complete a maths assignment, which children can then access to help their home learning). Teachers may continue to use pre-recorded film clips as teaching aids as usual.

The school has established domain name email accounts for all staff, which are used to set up TGS Zoom accounts for online learning. Staff are using Zoom under a TGS Zoom User Protocol/Policy, which includes all settings, using Waiting Rooms, security, helpful tips, and addresses safety concerns.

The school is establishing Qwil Messenger as a GDPR compliant, secure messaging system for all staff and primary school parents to communicate. This is monitored by SLT.

Leading on remote teaching and online learning are:

- Emma Gowers (DSL and Principal)
- Brandy Williams (Technology – researching, implementing and staff training)
- Rebecca Falloon (Timetabling, curriculum, monitoring of quality of education and safeguarding within the digital environments)
- Ellie Fieldsend, Emma Rutter, Tara Kieran (Lower School and Upper School timetabling and monitoring)
- EYFS: Charlotte Bedford (Reception timetabling and monitoring)
- Jacqui Chitoi (Head of Nursery, DSL, nursery timetabling)
- Lisa Smyth (Senior Montessori Teacher – staff support and quality control)

During COVID-19 closure, the primary school Years 1-6 is operating a full timetable with group lessons, small group lessons and 1:1 check in/tutoring sessions. This is all timetabled in advance, and the school office sends out the schedules directly to parents, with each teacher's private Zoom code for the meetings. Parents log their children in to the sessions from home, and usually are present or are at home whilst the calls take place. Staff should not contact parents directly unless authorised to do so by a member of SLT, all sessions are set up through the office. All communication should be via school accounts eg Zoom, Qwil messenger or school email. Staff should not have to ring up parents directly. All parent group chats also contain a member of the office team as an additional safeguard.

EYFS at present offers a reduced timetable of live specialist classes together with keypersons checking in to individual or small groups of children, reading stories etc, all pre-arranged via the school office.

All teachers are expected to continue to check all their resources including film clips in advance of each lesson, and not to show students anything that has not been checked in advance (this is good teaching practice).

Points for online calls:

Remember, it may be informal but please ensure you are wearing appropriate clothing. Look presentable and please avoid wearing unsuitable clothing such as strappy tops.

Tell the people you are living with that you are in a meeting. You do not want to be interrupted. There should be no family members, children or friends in the room.

As much as you able, consider the background of your video. We understand that people have limited space and sometimes multiple people in the house who are working from home. Just keep in mind what people are seeing when they look into your home.

Silence your alerts on your device. Remove any other devices from the room such as your phone, as this will prove to be a distraction during your meeting.

#### **14. Support from Islington Council**

In Islington, the following services will continue to provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the DSL to carry out their role effectively:

- Head of the Virtual School: 0207 527 3993 or [matthew.blood@islington.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.blood@islington.gov.uk)
- Principal Officer Safeguarding in Education: 0207 527 5595 or [michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk)
- Children's Services Contact Team: 0207 527 7400 for urgent child protection referrals and [csct@islington.gov.uk](mailto:csct@islington.gov.uk) for all other queries and CIN and Targeted Family Support Referrals
- LADO: 0207 527 8102 or [lado@islington.gov.uk](mailto:lado@islington.gov.uk)