

Archway Learning Trust Temporary Policy Addendum:

COVID-19: Contingency arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection at Bluecoat Beechdale Academy

January 2022

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Policy Statement and Context

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of the virus.

The Prime Minister announced on 27th November 2021 the temporary introduction of new measures as a result of the Omicron variant, and on 8th December 2021, Plan B was enacted.

In the Education sector, Plan B means that proportionate safety measures were introduced into schools, colleges, and universities to help reduce the transmission of the virus, including increased ventilation and good hygiene, with older students and staff wearing face coverings.

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with, and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains.

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy will continue to have regard to the statutory safeguarding guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)'¹ and will take advice and work with the local safeguarding partners.

We expect all pupils to attend school and will ensure that appropriate support is in place for them.

The purpose of this policy addendum is to serve as a contingency framework for providing support for vulnerable children and young people in the event of a partial or complete school closure. In the event of document conflict, the school Child Protection Policy will take precedence.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954314/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2020_-_Update_-_January_2021.pdf

1. Key contacts

Remain as per the School Child Protection Policy.

2. Vulnerable children

Vulnerable² children and young people include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance. This might include:
 - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services or who have previously received support from children's social care services (as identified by local authorities)
 - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
 - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
 - those living in temporary accommodation
 - those who are young carers
 - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
 - care leavers
 - children and young people in a family circumstance presenting challenges for them, such as drug and alcohol misuse, parental offending, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
 - others at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy 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: Matt Wainwright

² As identified in the Government Guidance for Schools, issued on 2nd January 2022: [\Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings](#)

3. Attendance monitoring

We expect all pupils to attend school.

In circumstances where a parent is hesitant about or does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and Bluecoat Beechdale Academy will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, Bluecoat Beechdale Academy or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy will encourage all pupils to attend school.

Parents or carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of the illness and inform us of the reason for absence so that the correct attendance codes can be used in every case of absence. We expect parents or carers to make contact to make us aware of the status of any COVID-19 tests that have become necessary and update the school on the pupil's welfare.

We will record attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) for all pupils.

Some pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- have been instructed to isolate by NHS Track and Trace.

Where pupils cannot attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.

4. Reporting a concern

Where staff are concerned about a child who is remote learning or isolating, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school Safeguarding Policy; this includes making a report via the safeguarding recording system which can be done remotely.

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

5. Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

When recruiting new staff, Bluecoat Beechdale Academy will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting, including, as appropriate, pertinent sections of part 3 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)'.

Where Bluecoat Beechdale Academy utilises volunteers (such as for testing), we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)'.

Under no circumstances will a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Where Bluecoat Beechdale Academy use supply teachers, the school will follow the process outlined in part 3. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)'

6. Children and online safety away from school and college

It is vital that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look 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.

Online teaching should follow the same principles set out in the Trust code of conduct.

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy 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 if there are virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only.
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms, and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family from 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Staff must only use platforms specified by senior managers and approved by our IT network manager/provider to communicate with pupils.
- Staff should record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

7. Support for Children and Young People

8.1 Supporting children in school

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

Beechdale Beechdale Academy will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish.

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy recognises the anxieties that children caused by the pandemic and will ensure that appropriate support is offered to all students concerning their mental health.

Where it's appropriate to do so, children and young people will be communicated with about the consideration of closing a class group or the school.

8.2 Supporting children not in school as they are following clinical or public health advice related to COVID-19

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support or who would typically 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 on Archway Protect, as should a record of contact made.

The communication plans can include remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits.

Bluecoat Beechdale and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan.

This plan must be reviewed regularly, and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy 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 Bluecoat Beechdale Academy need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

8.3 Vulnerable children in school

At Bluecoat Beechdale Academy in all circumstances, priority will be given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers (as defined below) to attend full time.

Where a class is asked to learn remotely due to staff shortages or due to a Public Health directed closure, the school will establish a provision for vulnerable children to continue attending school.

This may include where safe to do so, placing vulnerable children into different learning groups, hosting a specific class for vulnerable children to learn in. In extreme cases, it may include providing supervision whilst children engage in the remote learning provided for their peers.

Pastoral support will be provided to vulnerable children who remain in school.

8.3 Vulnerable Children who are not in school

Whilst the school will prioritise the full-time attendance of Vulnerable children, on occasions such as the need to isolate following a positive test, a vulnerable child may not be able to attend school.

The principles set out in section 8.2 will apply to vulnerable children who cannot attend school.

As outlined in section 3. Bluecoat Beechdale Academy 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.

8. Contingency planning

Bluecoat Beechdale Academy will continue to operate as normally as possible. In the event that restrictions in schools are needed to help contain the spread of the virus, we will refer to the contingency framework³, which has been updated and outlines how schools should operate in the event of any restrictions.

9.1 Staffing

Principals should assess staffing levels each day. Where the number of staff in the school is such that pupil safety and supervision and/or the continuity of education cannot be maintained, Principals should discuss this with the Regional Director/CEO, who will provide support the academy with any decision making.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-contingency-framework-for-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings-excluding-universities>

All reasonable steps will be taken to avoid closing classes or a school. Where a school or class is forced to close, priority will be given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers (as defined below) to attend full time.

School leaders should consider the staffing of their safeguarding teams. If the operational functionality of the safeguarding team is compromised through illness, the Principal should discuss this with the Head of Safeguarding.

9. Support from the Multi-Academy Trust

The Multi-Academy Trust will provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the designated safeguarding lead to carry out their role effectively.

This includes remotely accessing child protection files for quality assurance, support, guidance and direction.

The Head of Safeguarding will ensure that as children return to school, leaders provide both the designated safeguarding lead and their deputies, time to:

- support staff and pupils with new safeguarding and welfare concerns
- handle referrals to children's social care and other agencies where appropriate