



**Walsall Council**

# **Working Together in Response to COVID-19**

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## Securing your own safety and wellbeing

Just as in the case when aircraft cabin crew tell us to secure our own oxygen mask before helping others it is important that we protect our own health and wellbeing and that of our staff as well as supporting the children and young people, families and communities our schools serve across Walsall.

The national guidance in terms of staff in schools is that those **with serious underlying health conditions**, which put them at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, should rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. **Staff that are in this position must not attend work.** Staff that fall into this category will include those that are:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
  - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
  - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
  - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
  - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
  - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
  - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary (COPD).
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as Severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

**Staff with other conditions** that mean they are at increased risk of serious illness as a result of COVID-19 **should work from home where possible**, and education and childcare settings should endeavour to support this.

If a member of staff **lives with someone in a vulnerable health group**, including those who are pregnant, **they can attend their education or childcare setting.**

If a member of staff **lives in a household with someone who is in the most vulnerable health groups**, as set out in the [guidance on shielding](#), they **should only attend work if**



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**stringent social distancing can be adhered to. Settings should allow staff who live with someone in the most vulnerable health groups to work from home where possible.**



## Introduction & Statutory Responsibilities

This guidance has been developed for schools and education settings and local authority services working with those settings. It is designed to clarify the advice and guidance that has been issued nationally and locally and develop a common consensus as to how collectively we can best meet the needs of the children and young people across Walsall. This document is designed in sections as an easy to access guide to key information. It does not need to be read from cover to cover but rather as a toolkit to support specific decisions you and your leadership teams will be taking on a daily basis during these unprecedented times.

Given the unprecedented times we are living through it is essential that Walsall Council and schools and wider education providers work together to meet the needs of children and young people across the Borough at this time. We won't get every decision right first time. This is about us working and learning together to build a stronger partnership to the benefit of the children and young people we all serve.

In terms of national legislation the respective roles are defined as follows<sup>1</sup>:

### **What are schools responsible for?**

*Schools are responsible for providing places to vulnerable children, and children of workers critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response, while schools are closed due to the outbreak. It may be that not all schools can remain open. Schools should work with local authorities to agree the provision needed locally to support the needs identified.*

### **What are local authorities responsible for?**

*Local authorities are responsible for co-ordinating a response to the new arrangements. Working with educational settings (including academies and the independent sector), they should use the critical worker list, and the definition of vulnerable children, to support schools and trusts to ensure that there is sufficiency of places for children of critical workers and vulnerable children.*

*Local authorities are also responsible for monitoring demand and capacity. This may involve working with schools to provide places in alternative settings if necessary, and supporting residential special schools, alternative provision, and other special settings to remain open, wherever possible.*

*They are also responsible for supporting academy trusts and schools to assess the risks for children and young people whose education, health and care (EHC) plans they maintain, and ensuring those children are safely cared for whether at school/college or at home.*

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance for Schools on Temporary Closure – DfE (9 April 2020)



## Schools/ nurseries and education settings

- Safeguard all pupils on roll by facilitating places in school/ via a hub setting for those most at risk/ children of key workers and undertaking safe and well checks for those whose parents/ carers have chosen to keep their children at home
- Provide free school meals/ vouchers to those pupils that are entitled
- Provide online/ physical resources to pupils not attending school to enable them to continue their education
- Ensure the safety of staff by following national guidance around social distancing enabling staff where possible to work from home if they have an underlying condition or meet shielding criteria
- Support the emotional wellbeing of staff at an unprecedented time
- Review teaching and learning plans to support the transition of pupils back into school when lockdown requirements are eased
- Ensure key data returns are made to the DfE and Council as requested



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- Work with the Department for Education to ensure effective local provision is in place to meet the needs of local communities and provide reassurances to the DfE about local provision
- Ensure those pupils without a named school receive safe and well checks to safeguard them during lockdown
- Engage with schools to ensure appropriate and timely safe and well checks are being undertaken for those pupils that are looked after, SEND or are children in need and not currently accessing school provision through the choice of their parents/ carers.
- Work with schools to provide hub provision for vulnerable and key worker pupils where schools have had to close due to staff capacity.
- Take action following investigations into children being at risk of harm.
- Taking children into care as a consequence of a care order
- Suitable home to school transport arrangements
- Provision of sufficient school places and admissions
- Drawing up EHCP's for pupils with SEND
- Commissioning services for SEND pupils
- Ensuring the wellbeing and education of children looked after



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Given the current unprecedented circumstances this guidance tries to define the respective roles and responsibilities of education settings and Walsall Council at this time on a temporary basis until such time as the lockdown is ended and life returns to “normal”.

Following discussions with the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner it has been agreed that the Local Authority will be the co-ordinating body locally for all education settings (including academies and private settings) whilst the COVID-19 regulations and guidance are in place. Both bodies have requested the escalation to them of schools or settings whose actions are detrimental to supporting children and young people who are vulnerable or whose parents/ carers are key workers. The local authority has no intention of escalating matters without extensive dialogue and engagement to try to resolve matters with the school(s) concerned.



Level 1: Maintain

Level 2: Support

Level 3: Hub  
Resilience

<b>Level 1: Maintain</b>	The school where the child or young person is registered <b>maintains cohort appropriate education</b> provision through remote access (electronic/ paper based material that can be accessed via web portals/ school reception/ post).
<b>Level 2: Support</b>	<b>Focussed in school support</b> for those pupils that are registered in that school and are vulnerable or for whom their parents are key workers.  Free school meal provision provided to those that are entitled.
<b>Level 3: Hub resilience</b>	Schools collaborate together creating <b>hub schools</b> which cater for vulnerable pupils and pupils whose parents are key workers, with resources and staff pooled to maintain provision.  Free school meal provision provided to those that are entitled.

In Walsall, schools and the local authority are working together to respond decisively and flexibly to the unprecedented circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government guidance is clear that parents and carers are being asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible and that schools should only remain open to those children that absolutely need to attend. Schools are therefore being asked to continue to provide care for





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a limited number children – children who are vulnerable and children whose parents/ carers are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

The collaborative tiered approach being adopted in Walsall is designed to maximise the support offer for parents/ carers of pupils who are vulnerable or are key workers essential to maintaining the effective running of the country. It also seeks to protect the safety and wellbeing of school staff who themselves are facing the exact same uncertainties and struggles as every family in terms of potentially falling into a vulnerable group or have caring responsibilities for those that do.

This guidance is based on the principles that:

- The local authority, schools, other public services and parents and carers must work together and support each other to meet the unprecedented circumstances we face at this time.
- Highly qualified school professionals are not childminders. There are however vulnerable children and young people in Walsall for which we all have a moral duty to support and protect.
- If at all possible children are best cared for in the family environment by their parents/ carers.
- Parents and carers should not rely upon those people who may fall into one of the more stringent social distancing categories such as elderly grandparents, relatives or friends that have an underlying health condition.
- If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is classified as critical worker, then schools and the local authority will work together to facilitate such support, subject to verification of their role and the dates that they will require this child care on a weekly basis.

This toolkit has been designed to offer guidance to school leaders and local authority colleagues to as best as possible ensure effective support to those most at risk from the current national pandemic.

## **Level 1: Maintain**

Maintain is the means by which all pupils continue to receive some form of education to meet their needs when schools have been re-prioritised to support the most vulnerable and children of key workers. Provision has been made for pupils sitting exams this year in terms of how grades will be predicted and issued. Next year however, if a degree of normality resumes then pupils may be faced with sitting exams having missed weeks, potentially months of face to face education. We risk a generation of pupils that may miss out on key education opportunities over a protracted period.

Level 1 is where schools deliver education opportunities to all registered pupils within their schools either via existing web portals/ online education provision or through physical work books printed on site and issued to parents/ carers.

Through existing curriculum planning it will be possible to determine the key elements of the curriculum each year group are due to learn over the coming weeks and the summer term. When planning remote curriculum delivery:

- Try as much as possible to differentiate work according to the ability of different cohorts.



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- Ensure accessibility online and through traditional paper based formats so as not to disadvantage those without access to a computer or internet.
- Agree internally how paper based material will be distributed to keep staff safe (e.g. parents/ carers to collect from reception without interaction with staff or posted).
- Whilst staffing levels may not permit the marking of work as would traditionally be the case consider how feedback could be provided on key elements of work either individually or collectively.
- Link pupils to materials they may be able to access online or via their phones which has educational content linked to the topics being taught.
- Consider a central e-mail address which is frequently checked by staff where questions and queries can be posted by pupils.

Whilst some staff will be off sick, some may be self-isolating whilst not sick and may be able to work with colleagues to develop and update this material remotely without a greater risk to themselves.

## **Level 2: Support**

This is focussed in school support for those pupils that are registered in that school and are vulnerable or for whom their parents are key workers. Provision will be provided to pupils that meet this criteria. Whilst there is likely to be some educational content to this provision this will be delivered flexibly and structured around the number of pupils on site, staff capacity and sensible precautions needed to ensure social distancing.

School leaders will be best placed to identify what provision will be put in place with the flexibility to refine this according to need.

Where possible individual schools are encouraged to remain open and deliver provision for all vulnerable pupils and those whose parents/ carers have at least one key worker. In this context:

- Schools should not be operating 'waiting lists' for key worker or vulnerable children for a place at their setting.
- Schools should not be declining/refusing places to vulnerable or key worker children.
- If your school has concerns around its capacity to deliver the entitlement then please contact the local authority.

This entitlement does not extend to free school meal pupils. They are only entitled to access to lunch provision only, not wider support.

Wherever possible schools are encouraged to remain open and deliver on site provision. Many of your most vulnerable pupils will benefit from retaining a regular routine of attending the school that is familiar to them and staff that they know and who know them. There will however be times when staffing levels don't permit this hence the need then to escalate to Level 3.



## **Level 3: Hub Resilience**

There will come a time for reasons of health and safety and staff capacity where individual schools will have to close and support to vulnerable pupils and those of key workers has to be pooled within hub schools where collaborative leadership and staffing is drawn from a number of schools in a locality.

These hub schools will be agreed amongst head teachers in a locality. The local authority may negotiate the development of hub schools where there are gaps in provision in specific localities.

Like level 2 schools they will provide a flexible programme of activities to meet the needs of pupils on a week by week basis. In terms of the leadership and management of a hub school it is recommended that responsibilities are as follows:

- The head teacher of the hub school remains lead professional (unless off ill) alongside the head teachers of the other schools in the hub.
- The senior leadership team of the hub school remain responsible for management of the premises, cleaning and safeguarding although safeguarding duties may be shared with other DSLs on a rota basis.
- Individual schools remain responsible for setting work for their registered pupils at level 1. The hub school is solely focussed on wider support and activities to meet the needs of pupils that are vulnerable or the children of key workers.
- The school where the pupil is registered remains responsible for contact and safe and well checks with vulnerable pupils not attending the hub school.
- The leadership team of the hub school is responsible for ensuring that all staff onsite have the appropriate DBS clearances to work with children and young people.



## Daily Returns

During this period schools are being asked to respond to 2 data returns on a daily basis. These are:

- The DfE's daily statutory return
- Walsall Council's Daily Tracker

### Statutory returns to Department for Education

The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society. The data request from the DfE helps build a national picture of educational provision so that they can focus support more effectively, monitor the impact of the virus, and ensure children are safe. This collection is for attendance only in your school. This data request is separate to Walsall Council's daily tracker of vulnerable children (see below).

If your setting is closed you need to complete the form once so the Department for Education is aware of the closure. If your educational setting reopens you should start completing the form daily from the date of re-opening.

The form should be completed by **12 noon every working day**. This ensures the DfE can use information gathered on the same day. If it is not possible to meet the midday deadline, forms should be submitted at the earliest opportunity but the data may not be included in the Department's daily figures.

After completed the attendance record, it will automatically calculate a series of totals. These are:

- 1) Number of children in attendance
- 2) Number of children of critical workers in attendance
- 3) Number of children of critical workers in attendance on an EHCP
- 4) Number of children of critical workers with a social worker in attendance
- 5) Number of vulnerable children in attendance
- 6) Number of vulnerable children on an EHCP in attendance
- 7) Number of vulnerable children with a social worker in attendance

\*Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining education provision contains information on who are key workers and vulnerable children <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Walsall Council has sought to gain access to this data and have reviewed whether it duplicates the request being made by the LA. The data the LA is able to pull from the DfE data is aggregated however and doesn't permit analysis of vulnerable cohorts or where there are only small number of pupils in attendance.



## Walsall Council Daily Tracker Return

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has a statutory duty to assess the extent to which education providers are fulfilling their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Section 175 requires school governing bodies, local education authorities and further education institutions to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Such arrangements will have to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Similar requirements are in place for proprietors of Independent Schools under Section 157 of the Education Act 2002.

The Local Authority needs to make certain that Walsall vulnerable pupils, who have opted out of a place at a school/ setting, are safe and well, and that the necessary checks have been carried out.

It is important that all Walsall schools complete and return the LA daily tracker as this enables track the vulnerable children in Walsall, respond to any concerns raised, support escalation and agree plans to keep children safe.

Walsall Council is acutely aware of the potential calls on time that data requests create. As a consequence the Council is using one single database of vulnerable pupils across all services to deliver a co-ordinated and joined up approach to support. The daily tracker will be used by a number of services (Early Help, Access and Achievement, Virtual School etc.) to co-ordinate support rather than overburden schools and families with multiple contacts and requests.

This single list will enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties and most importantly facilitate the tracking of the most vulnerable families in Walsall. It will also co-ordinate contact with families, reducing duplication of effort and multiple contacts of families which risks further disengagement from families at a time where all families are suffering from a heightened period of stress and uncertainty.

### Completion of the Daily Tracker

Copy and paste your data from the DfE attendance recording form into the tab titled 'Attendance Sheet', including school details and today's date.

For each pupil, please complete the relevant columns highlighted in blue (columns K to V), choosing 'Yes' or 'No' from the available dropdown. Free text has been enabled for questions regarding EHCP children.

It is important that if any concerns raised have been escalated, that you provide further details in the comments box.

Once completed, please return, via email, to [performancedata@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:performancedata@walsall.gov.uk)

If you are completing a safe and well contact for your vulnerable children within your assessed period of time; whether it be Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday please can you ensure that you put YES in column K for the whole week, this column is to seek assurance that the vulnerable children are being contacted as opposed to when.



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If you are unable to make contact and your concerns mean that you escalate to MASH, Police, Walsall Escalation Procedures etc. then column **L** should be completed, but still enter **YES** in **K**.



## Risk escalation guidance for schools

This is designed to support schools in completing safe and well checks for children who are vulnerable.

In line with government guidance, schools are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children in terms of those that are vulnerable (and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response) and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Whilst these are unprecedented times, everybody is still bound by the duty to safeguard children and young people in Walsall. Circumstances where families are confined together in their homes perpetuates the risks to children and young people that are already vulnerable. To that end, it is essential that effective contact and support is provided to all vulnerable children and young people and that nobody falls between agencies at this challenging time.

The government and the local authority have clear expectations that vulnerable children will continue to be supported at this challenging time. In terms of where responsibility sits for checking on the wellbeing of children and young people the guidance is as follows:

Vulnerable Group	Lead Professional Responsible for Maintaining Contact and Escalating Concerns
Those known to Early Help or with a named Social Worker	School's Safeguarding Team in discussion with the named Social Worker.
A Looked After Child	School's Safeguarding Team in discussion with the Walsall Virtual Head
A child or young person missing from education	Walsall Admissions Team
A child/ young person with an EHCP	The school's Safeguarding Team which is named in their EHCP in discussion with the LA's SEND team.
A child that is vulnerable but without a named Social Worker	The safeguarding team of the school at which the child is registered

Guidance issued by the Department for Education on the 19 April 2020<sup>2</sup> clarifies that first and foremost it is the education providers' responsibility to follow up on the safe and well checks for pupils on roll who are not currently attending provision. As is the case during "normal" circumstances the school will know the child and the family better than most agencies and will have an established working relationship.

<sup>2</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>



This includes children that have a social worker, children with an EHC Plan and children that are deemed vulnerable due to their circumstances. *The guidance states that “education providers should follow up with the parent or carer – and social worker/local authority, where appropriate – to explore reasons for absence. Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or college or discontinues, the provider should notify their social worker. Where appropriate, they should keep in contact with the family”.*

The school will have a well-established relationship with the child and their parents/ carers. It is crucial that those well established relationships do not deteriorate given the unprecedented circumstances or are left more fragile as and when things return to some degree of normality. As such schools remain the key conduit of engagement with families.

Where multiple agencies or services are involved with a family then there is a need to co-ordinate engagement with families so as not to bombard already fragile family units at a time of extreme stress. Some children will be known to multiple partners, for example:-

- Schools
- Alternative education providers
- Social Workers
- Early Help professionals
- Post 16 education providers
- Youth Justice Service
- Adult Social Care
- Access Team (Education Welfare Services)
- Virtual School
- SEN teams

***In such cases key professionals should map out a schedule for contact with an agreement for information sharing. Potentially a family could be contacted in excess of 5 times during a day by different professionals, this could lead to a reluctance by the family to communicate. Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.***

In terms of risk rating this is defined as:

<b>Red</b>	A child or young person whose safety and wellbeing is at imminent risk and for which contact/ engagement with the child/ young person or their family/ carers is being hindered due to a lack of response/ direct communication with the family.
<b>Amber</b>	A child/ young person whose safety and wellbeing has been/ is at risk but where the child/ young person and their parents/ carers are engaging with the school/ key agencies and dialogue is being maintained.





<b>Green</b>	A child/ young person whose safety and wellbeing has been/ could be at risk if engagement with the child/ young person and their parents/ carers is not maintained and risks are not mitigated but for which there is no imminent risk.
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Whilst it is appreciated that with staff self-isolating, ill or in a vulnerable group that capacity might be stretched it remains imperative that safe and well checks are made via phone or virtual contact on a regular basis. If capacity is an issue then you may consider RAG rating the risk to individual children and young people.

In these circumstances, the following is recommended:

Risk	Frequency of contact (minimum)
Red	Every 48 hours
Amber	Every 72 hours
Green	Once a week

These are minimum suggested standards. You will use your professional judgement and your knowledge of the families as to whether these need to be reduced or extended for particular children and young people as appropriate. **Where there is not a named Social Worker or lead professional then it is the schools/ settings responsibility to maintain safe and well checks.**

In consultation with other agencies involved with the family and following a risk assessment an alternative timeframe for contact may be determined. As professionals it is for you to make that judgement. Such decisions should however be recorded on the child/ young person's file to facilitate an effective audit trail.

Safe and well checks should be undertaken using works phone, school email account or suitable media such as Skype/ Face time etc. to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements.

For some schools you may be closed to pupils but you should still ensure there are staff in place to undertake safe and well checks as appropriate together with reserve staff members should key staff be forced to self-isolate or become ill.

1. Remember that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners, or your information governance lead, if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.



4. Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
5. Consider safety and well-being: base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles).
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

## **Maintaining Contact with EHCP Pupils and their Families**

As part of the Coronavirus (COVID 19): guidance on vulnerable children and young people (updated 25 March 2020) sections 20 and 21 schools, colleges and other training providers need to consider the needs of all children and young people with an EHC plan alongside the views of their parents.

Schools, colleges and providers' SENCOs or senior leaders must talk to EHCP parents and are responsible for maintaining an audit trail of decisions made, discussions and information collected.

They need to make a risk assessment for each of the EHCP children and young people with parents considering:

- Health risks, with advice from appropriate health professionals where required
- Risks if some of the elements of their EHC plan cannot be delivered
- The ability of individual parents to ensure that health and care needs can be met safely
- Assess whether the children or young peoples' needs can be met at home
- The potential impact to the individual's wellbeing on changes to routine or the way in which provision is delivered

**It is important to note that for parents who consent to changes or reductions in their child's provision are not agreeing to permanent changes in EHC plans.**



## Escalation to other professionals

The escalation process for any concerns regarding a child or young person should be in accordance with the principles set out in Walsall Safeguarding Partnership's [Right Help Right Time](#) guidance.

Safeguarding is a joint responsibility. You should use existing escalation procedures where you have a significant concern. If you believe that a pupil is subject to abuse and at risk of significant harm, then you should alert MASH. We would ask that such escalation be used prudently given the level of demand currently being experienced. The flow diagram below should also be applied if you are unable to make contact with the family and children.

Consider:-

- Checking with the Safeguarding in Education Coordinator to risk assess needs
- Checking with other schools where siblings attend to assess whether they have made contact and have concerns
- Speaking to all other professionals involved in the child's life
- Various means of communicating with families and children
- Seeking assurance that all contact details you have for families are up to date
- Families routines may have significantly changed and they are not available to speak at 9 am

If you deem that a physical safe and well check is required please follow advice as below.

### **What is a safe and well check?**

It is clear that Walsall schools are vigilant in maintaining contact with vulnerable children and their families. We have outlined below the content for safe and well checks.

It is important that all school staff who are completing safe and well checks virtually are adhering to requirements as defined within schools safeguarding policies which include:-

- Child protection and Safeguarding policy
- Staff behaviour policy (sometimes known as Codes of Conduct). Are all staff aware that they must avoid, and be seen to avoid, any act or omission which could call their professionalism into question or otherwise place them in a compromising position
- Acceptable use policy/Safe use of Technology policy
- E Safety policy
- Lone visit policy
- Information Sharing policy and guidance



Information to discuss during a safe and well contact:-

- Speak to the parent/carer and check on general wellbeing
- Encourage all vulnerable families to send their children to your education provision
- Speak to the child (wherever possible) to check on general wellbeing
- Known contextual concerns
- Are the family able to access food/shopping essentials, signpost to local food banks
- Are the parents checking that their children are using technology safely and aware of online safety, signpost family to suitable websites for support
- Engagement with education, signpost to suitable education resources
- Consent for Early Help if deemed necessary
- Signposting to bereavement support organisations if the family have suffered a loss
- Signposting to medical support if required
- Signposting to utilities support if required (gas/electric/water etc.)
- Assess families understanding of social distancing and isolation if required



## Walsall Escalation Procedures

Children's Services remind all agencies that the correct application of [Right Help Right Time](#) guidance needs to be applied despite the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves.

The escalation procedure is purposeful therefore if partners opt to contact Heads of Service and Directors before Group managers and team managers the case will be directed back to the process.

Clear steps are defined below.

### STEPS:-

1. **Contact MASH for details of MASH and Initial Response Service (IRS) team managers if a dispute is not resolved with a social worker.**

**Contact Safeguarding & Family Support Service (SFSS - Essington Lodge) for details of the team managers if a dispute is not resolved with a social worker.**

**Contact Children with Disabilities team manager if a dispute is not resolved with a social worker.**

2. Contact Rebecca Warren (Group Manager) [rebecca.warren@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.warren@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved with team managers for MASH and IRS cases.**

Contact Claire Dainty (Group Manager) [claire.dainty@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:claire.dainty@walsall.gov.uk) **if dispute is not resolved with Team Managers for cases held in Central & South Teams or East Teams**

Contact Rita Homer (Group Managers) [rita.homer@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:rita.homer@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved with team managers for cases held by North Teams.**

Contact Deon Prescod (Group Manager) [deon.prescod@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:deon.prescod@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved regarding cases held by the Children with Disabilities team or the South Teams**

Contact Debbie Silvester (Group Manager) [Debbie.silvester@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie.silvester@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved regarding child protection conference decisions (The Hollies).**

Contact Julie Jones (Group Manager) [Julie.jones@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.jones@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved regarding cases held at early help (if the dispute is not resolved with Locality Team Managers)**

Contact Deon Prescod (Group Manager) [deon.prescod@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:deon.prescod@walsall.gov.uk) **if the dispute is not resolved regarding cases held within the Children with Disabilities team**

3. Contact Adele Ellis - Head of Service, Help and Protection or Carol Boughton – Head of Strategic Safeguarding **if the dispute is not resolved with Group Managers** [adele.ellis@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:adele.ellis@walsall.gov.uk) or [carol.boughton@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:carol.boughton@walsall.gov.uk)

4. Contact Colleen Male, Director – Social Care **if the dispute is not resolved with Head of Service** [colleen.male@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:colleen.male@walsall.gov.uk)

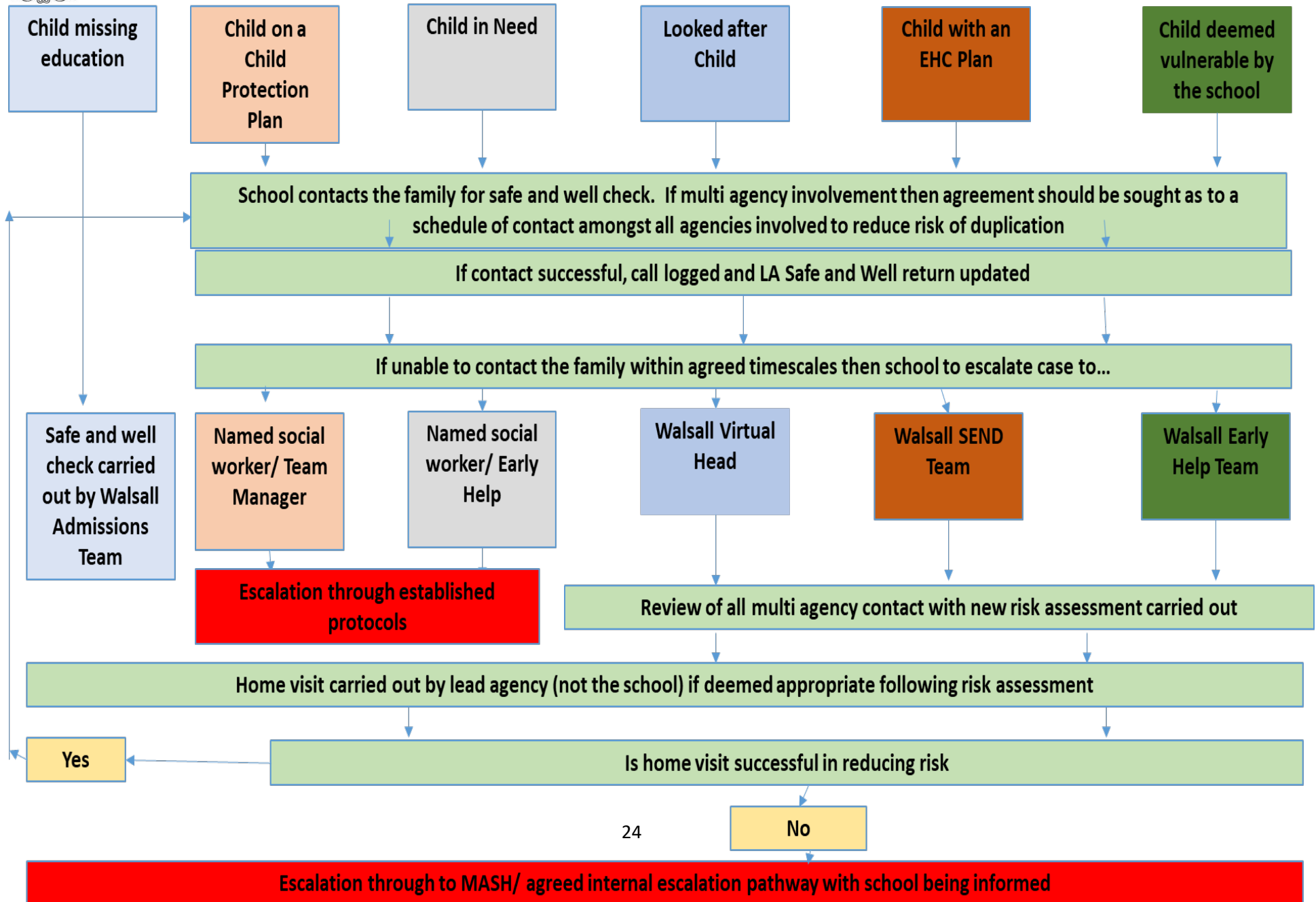


# Walsall Council

5. Contact Sally Rowe - Director of Children's Services **if the dispute is not resolved with the Director** [sally.rowe@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:sally.rowe@walsall.gov.uk)



# Walsall Council





## Guidance for home visits

At this time, physical home visits should be undertaken where there is clearly identified need to see a child or young person at home in order to safeguard them and address significant unmet needs, and this cannot be done without a physical visit to the family. The timescales for these visits will vary in line with specific safeguarding concerns and circumstances for individual children and young people.

Consider:-

- Decisions to make physical visits should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.
- “Should this visit be made by a social worker or someone else trained for and specialising in home visiting?”
- If you are planning a visit where families are self-isolating or a family member has symptoms of Covid-19 - only undertake visits in these circumstances where not to do so would leave a child at immediate risk of significant harm
- Consider how safe 2m physical distancing can be observed throughout the visit, this should be managed by talking at the front or side of the house.
- Avoid any physical contact with any surfaces etc. if you can.
- Whether the visit should be conducted unannounced or pre-arranged with a parent
- How many members of staff should be present at the check
- Are staff provided with all relevant information on particular pupils, their medical needs and any aggressive tendencies, as well as the background of parents/carers, including any aggressive tendencies, which can help prevent violent incidents occurring
- Carry, and keep switched on, a mobile phone so that your staff are contactable at all times
- Can your staff receive a pre-arranged telephone call from a responsible contact approximately ten minutes into any visit at an address to check all is well, and that a code word has been determined beforehand which can be used to summon assistance should this be required
- Do staff have forms for reporting incidents?
- What questions the person conducting the check should ask (see safe and well checks above)





<b>COVID 19 Risk assessment</b>		
<b>Home visits</b>		
<b>Is there a confirmed case of COVID19 in the family home?</b>	Yes	No
<b>If yes give details:</b>		
<b>Are the family self-isolating due to showing symptoms?</b>	Yes	No
<b>If yes, detail reason:</b>		
<b>Are the family social distancing?</b>	Yes	No
<b>If yes, detail reason:</b>		
<b>If the family are self-isolating/ social distancing do the they have support to get food/ medication etc.:</b>	Yes	No



<b>If no, what support can be provided:</b>		
<b>Aggressive or violent parent, pupil or family member</b>	Yes	No
<b>Valid car insurance for undertaking home visits</b>	Yes	No
<b>Potential attack by dog or another animal</b>	Yes	No
COVID 19 – Guidance for staff completing home visits Your manager should have discussed with you depending on the level of risk, what families still require a home visit during this period.		
<b>If a home visit is agreed please follow this guidance:</b>		



- Prior to visit contact family to check if anything has changed e.g. symptoms.
- Upon arrival at the home do not enter until you have made observations of presentation e.g. any visible signs of symptoms.
- If agreement has been made that a visit will be completed where the family are self-isolating due to symptoms please make use of the PPE; face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser.
- For each visit, wash/ sanitise hands prior to entering the property. Avoid direct contact and as much as possible keep safe distanced (at least 2 metres)
- Wash/ sanitise hands after upon leaving the property.
- Shower and change clothing as soon as you get home.



## Assessing risks

**When assessing safeguarding concerns and needs for children and young people please consider:-**

Domestic abuse and violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This will be a time of significant strain for families, and may lead to an increase in domestic abuse and violence incidents, and the seriousness and impact of incidents may be increased</li><li>• The impact of current Covid-19 policies on people's capacity to take protective actions in abusive relationships</li><li>• Power and relationships dynamics need to be considered when planning and undertaking physical and electronic visits, especially where children, young people and victims of abuse may experience coercion and control</li></ul>
Alcohol and substance misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is likely that alcohol and substance misuse will increase at this time, and the impact of this on children and young people may be increased</li><li>• Parents who receive scripts will be in receipt of these for extended periods and this will need to be managed, including safe storage</li><li>• Existing safety plans may be ineffective where all family members at home</li></ul>
Mental health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This will be time of increased stress and anxiety for everyone, but will particularly effect people with existing mental health problems, and there may be significant reductions in service provision in community mental health services</li><li>• Where mental health problems are connected to and exacerbate problems in family relationships and parenting, the impact of this will be increased</li><li>• Children and young people who experience mental health problems may also experience significant stress and distress with the current circumstances</li></ul>
Sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where there are concerns that a child or young person is being sexually abused, the current situation with Covid-19 will increase risks and challenges in engaging families, especially when they self-isolate or refuse visits</li><li>• Concerns about sexual abuse will need to be carefully managed, and visits conducted in a way that still enables professionals to safeguard and speak to children and young people in a safe way where there are significant risks</li></ul>
Exploitation and missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There may be increased risks for children and young people who are at risk of exploitation and go missing due to reductions</li></ul>



	<p>in services, limited police capacity and response from family and communities, and abusers using the current circumstances to further exploit children and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and young people may ignore guidance about staying at home and not gathering in groups, and therefore risks around them contacting Covid-19 need to be considered as part of risk assessments</li><li>• There will be an increased risk of children and young people experiencing online exploitation through the even higher volume of activity with social media and online platforms</li></ul>
Disabled children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Due to the particular vulnerabilities and needs of disabled children, the risks of physical visiting need clear analysis balanced against safeguarding concerns</li><li>• Parents are likely to experience significant challenges for disabled children given the stresses of whole families being at home, disruption to routines, and behaviour management</li><li>• It will be especially difficult to conduct visits to understand disabled children's voices and needs at this time, and this may further increase their vulnerability to harm and abuse.</li></ul>
Combinations of risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where there are combinations of risk and vulnerability factors, the potential impact of these may be even more significant at this time</li><li>• There are likely to be a number of circumstances that increase family stress and breakdown of relationships</li></ul>



## Defining Vulnerable Children and Young People

Within the context of the COVID-9 pandemic vulnerable children are being defined as those children and young people who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans. This includes those on a child protection plan and those that are looked after by the local authority.

The guidance states that those with an EHC Plan should be risk assessed in dialogue with the local authority and parents/ carers as to whether needs are best met through a school place or at home.

Head teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads will know which other pupils may also be at risk and for which additional support may be appropriate. School staff and social workers should work together to ensure regular and appropriate contact with pupils whose parents/ carers choose not to put them into school but for which risk still needs to be managed..

For those with an EHC Plan or other vulnerabilities then familiar routine and relationships may be very important. Every attempt should be made to maintain these routines but at some point it may be necessary to move vulnerable pupils to hub schools with a different environment and staff. This should be managed as sensitively as possible.

The government define two categories of EHC pupils:

- **children and young people who would be at significant risk if their education, health and care provision and placement did not continue, namely those who could not safely be supported at home.** This may include those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and those receiving significant levels of personal care support. Local authorities will need to work with the individual's educational setting – especially residential special schools and colleges – as well as local health partners, to ensure they are able to remain open wherever possible. This may mean deploying staff from other schools, to keep staffing ratios safe
- **children and young people whose needs can be met at home, namely those who are not receiving personal care from their educational setting, or whose limited need for personal care can be met in their family home.** As part of the government's emergency powers, we will modify the statutory duties on local authorities to maintain the precise provision in EHC plans and will expect educational settings and local authorities to use their reasonable endeavours to support these children and their families

Government are clear that where a local authority is unable to put in place stated provision, they will need to use their reasonable endeavours to do this, but won't be penalised for failing to meet the existing duty in the 2014 Act.



## Definition of a Key Worker

In response to the national announcements regarding the closure of schools and provision for vulnerable pupils and the pupils of key workers, the categories of jobs that fall into the definition of key workers is as follows:

Employees that work for:

1. The National Health Service
2. The Armed forces
3. Teachers, school staff and childcare staff
4. Care home workers
5. Social workers
6. Pharmacists/Pharmacy Workers
7. Police officers, community support officers & civilian staff working for the Police
8. Prison officer or other probation staff
9. Firefighters
10. All Local authority officers
11. Environmental health officers
12. Highway Agency traffic officers
13. Supermarket staff and supermarket delivery drivers
14. Employees of key infrastructure industries such as Gas / Electricity / Water

*If a parent / carer in a household falls into one of these categories and they don't have any suitable childcare, then they should contact the school to discuss the ability to opt into the support offer being provided by the school. National guidance is clear that it applies to only one parent/ carer in the family not both.*

This list may be updated as more information is released from the DfE.



## Effective personal hygiene

The most effective means of reducing the spread of infection is implementing effective infection prevention and control measures. This includes:

1. Reiterating to pupils and staff the **importance of handwashing**. Handwashing is one of the most important ways to control the spread of infection, especially those infections that lead to diarrhoea or vomiting (D&V). Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels are a simple yet effective means of reducing the risk of infection. Hand sanitisers in key areas such as reception is also beneficial.
2. **Maintaining social distancing guidelines**. This includes sitting children at desks that are far apart as possible, ensuring everyone queues and eats further apart than normal, keeping apart when in the playground or doing any physical exercise visiting the toilet one after the other, staggering break times, putting guidelines on the floor in corridors and avoiding unnecessary staff gatherings
3. **Cleaning of the environment** should be methodical and regular. Milton detergent is a simple and cost effective means of cleaning school premises and reduce the risk of infection. In an outbreak situation, specialist providers should be considered in terms of deep cleaning the school. Public Health England (PHE) will advise where this is relevant. For further information use the link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities> (chapter 6 and appendix 3)
4. Non-attendance of pupils or staff that are infected. All those at risk of infection should follow the government guidance on self-isolation.

Should the school require a deep clean then please contact the local authority. This service is being prioritised to meet the high demand being placed on the service.





## The Role of Governors

Governors are likely to be in the position of cancelling Governing Board meetings to reduce the risk of the spread of coronavirus and to free up head teachers to plan for the changed circumstances faced by the school.

As the strategic leaders of the school however it is important that governors continue to function as a Governing Board at this time not least in their role of ensuring the health and wellbeing of the headteacher and staff. Now that we are in the summer term most Governing Boards should be looking to meet virtually.

It is for the Chair of Governors/ Chair of the Board, in consultation with the Head teacher/ Principal to determine the frequency and scope of meetings. The advice is that Governing Board meetings take place virtually in accordance with your schools virtual meeting policy.

### **For maintained schools**

Maintained schools Governing Board decisions cannot be undertaken via e-mail, text or any messaging/ proxy voting.

There is the ability for the Governing Board to approve decisions virtually using teleconferencing or video conferencing facilities with the agreement of the Board, an approval of a virtual meetings policy. This can be approved by the Chair of Governors under Chairs action or at the start of the first virtual meeting prior to other matters being considered.

In terms of key upcoming deadlines these include:

**Schools Financial Values Standards** – this should be submitted to the Local Authority by the 15 May 2020 (maintained schools only). Given the circumstances if this has yet to be approved by the Governing Board then it can be signed off by the Chair of Governors, sent to the local authority and retrospectively presented to the Governing Board.

In terms of the **school budget** this needs to be approved by the Governing Board by the 30 June 2020. This cannot be approved under Chair's action. Consideration will need to be given closer to the time as to whether a virtual meeting can be held to approve this.

Software for video conferencing is available from a number of organisations, e.g. Microsoft Teams, Governor Hub, Skype, WhatsApp etc.

### **Academies**

Academy local GB's and stand-alone academies should check their articles of association to ensure they are compliant with any requirements of remote attendance at meetings. If you are a local governing board and in doubt seek advice from the trustees.

Again your articles of association or Schedule of Delegation may allow for proxy voting, for local GB's, if in doubt seek advice from the trustees.



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At this stage head teachers and staff will quite rightly be focussed on day to day operational matters. Governing Boards still have responsibilities for oversight of the effective running of the school however. Matters governors, will want to reflect upon include:

- The safety and wellbeing of the head teacher and staff. This is a key role for the Chair of Governors. This need not be on a daily basis but the welfare of staff is paramount.
- The ability to offer provision for those with free school meals. Can this be maintained?
- What are the contingencies if your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has to self-isolate/ fall ill?
- What provisions do we have in place to enable pupils to continue their learning at home?

Consider as governors setting up a virtual group to keep each other updated or use the messaging service via Governor Hub.

Governors also have an enhanced DBS check so dependent upon their willingness and whether they fall into a vulnerable group may be able to offer wider support at this time if willing and available.



## Sample letter to Parents/ Carers re. School Openings

Dear parent/ carer,

As you are aware during this unprecedented times schools are being asked to provide on-site support only to those pupils that meet specific criteria such as those vulnerable due to medical or emotional need or whose parents are keyworkers.

The government guidance is clear that parents and carers are being asked to keep their child at home, wherever possible and that schools should only remain open to those children that absolutely need to attend.

If your child fits one of the criteria set nationally then phone the main school number and discuss with us whether spaces are available for your child to attend school as normal. If you or your partner are a key worker then also contact us to discuss their needs.

It may be the case that as the current pandemic continues we may work with other local schools to pool resources and staffing on one site rather than separate school sites. We will keep you informed and will organise school transport for those who already access such services accordingly.

For those parents/ carers who access free school meals then contact the school office for details of how meal parcels/ supermarket vouchers can be obtained to ensure they continue to receive a meal as now.

We need your support at this time. Where work is sent home for your child we would ask that you ensure that it is completed and that you speak to them about it to support their retention of information and aid you in supporting their learning.

In addition there are some simple things you can do to support your child's education at this unprecedented time. Details of these are at the end of this letter.

I appreciate that this may be a difficult and stressful time for many families. As mothers/ fathers/ sons/ daughters and carers it is the same for us as staff. We therefore request that you treat staff respectfully at this difficult time. We will not tolerate staff being the subject of abusive behaviour and reserve the right to take appropriate action if this is directed at any of our staff.

Updates on the Coronavirus and what to do can be accessed via:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Updates on what is happening in school can be found on our website and via official school social media. Look after yourselves and your families at this time.



## Supporting your child's education

### **Encourage them to access work sent home by school/ uploaded onto the schools website**

Work continues to be issued by the school for pupils. Please encourage your child to access this and complete this as best they can including learning key topics.

### **Revisit work they have done previously to aid retention**

Talk to them about work they have done since returning to school in the autumn. Ask them to describe key topics they have learnt. Encourage them to learn more about these topics online or through books, newspapers etc. This will help them to retain information for when schools return to normal.

### **Help them to access learning via computer/ their phone/ television or books.**

There are plenty of free materials available that can support learning such as [BBC Bite size](#). Your school website may also have links to websites that support the curriculum.

Television catch up services may also have free programmes that cover a range of age related topics that support a child's education. The most effective means of support is encouraging your child to read, reading with them where possible. Ask your school whether you can access books if your child is not in school, use everyday tasks to support counting and language development.

### **Enable children to access outdoors and remain active**

It is essential that everybody follows the guidance around self-isolation and self-distancing. Potentially further restrictions may be placed on travel and social contact outdoors. Until then encourage safe access for your children outside and encourage them to remain active indoors or out.

### **Stay safe**

Whatever the circumstances follow national guidance and stay safe. Look out especially for members of your family and vulnerable people in the local community such as the elderly or those with underlying health conditions.



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## **Sample letter regarding School Hubs**

Dear Parent/ carer,

as you know we have been working tirelessly to keep the school open for pupils that we are required to support at this time including those whose parents/ carers are key workers.

We are in a position however where this has become unsustainable and so have been working with the following schools..... to develop a hub where pupils from these schools will continue to be supported whilst the national situation continues.

From (date) pupils from the schools stated above will receive support at (school name and address). All activities will be overseen by staff employed in these schools following appropriate safeguarding practice and procedure.

Those attending and entitled to free school meals will receive these as normal. Those pupils who receive school transport at the moment will likewise continue to receive this service during this period. If you don't receive school transport and will find it challenging to take your child to the hub school daily then please contact the school office.

If your child has a named school as part of their EHC plan then please discuss your child's need with the school if you are concerned.

These steps have been taken in liaison with the local authority and are a consequence of extreme circumstances. We appreciate your co-operation and ongoing support at this time.



## Definitions

Vulnerable Pupil	A pupil is classed as vulnerable if they are a Child in Need, the subject of a Child Protection Order, Looked After, have an Education Health and Care Plan. Schools may also deem other pupils vulnerable as a consequence of knowledge of home/ lifestyle factors that make them vulnerable.
Keyworker Child	<p>Children of parents or carers for whom one of them works for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The National Health Service</li><li>2. The Armed forces</li><li>3. Teachers, school staff and registered childcare provision staff</li><li>4. Care home workers</li><li>5. Social workers</li><li>6. Pharmacists/Pharmacy Workers</li><li>7. Police officers, community support officers &amp; civilian staff working for the Police</li><li>8. Prison officer or other probation staff</li><li>9. Firefighters</li><li>10. All Local authority officers</li><li>11. Environmental health officers</li><li>12. Highway Agency traffic officers</li><li>13. Supermarket staff and supermarket delivery drivers</li><li>14. Employees of key infrastructure industries such as Gas / Electricity / Water/ telecommunications</li></ol> <p><i>If one parent / carer in a household falls into one of these categories and they don't have any suitable childcare, then they should contact the school to discuss the ability to opt into the support offer being provided by the school.</i></p>



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Some families we are contacting are at risk of disengaging because they are receiving multiple calls from different agencies. What can we do to reduce the risk of disengagement?**

The lead responsibility for safe and well checks remains with the school. Where different agencies are involved they should be contacting you to agree a timetable of contact including frequency to prevent duplication. The risk assessments you have kindly provided are being used to risk assess all vulnerable pupils across Walsall and ensure a consistent approach across Walsall Council services. If you have concerns about disengagement then contact the lead professional for that child or young person. If problems persist contact Seona Baker at [seona.baker@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:seona.baker@walsall.gov.uk)

### **Will EHCP needs assessment requests be accepted during the period of school closure?**

The EHC Assessment team will accept assessment requests during the period of school closures, in accordance with the statutory guidance. We are aware that the government are considering amending SEND regulations to change timescales relating to EHC plan processes during this period. Whilst we wait for more detailed guidance from the government regarding the expectations on local authorities, we will continue to make reasonable endeavours to fulfil our statutory duties.

The EP service's ability to comply with statutory timescales are likely to be impacted by access to children and young people for assessment and staffing levels. There are likely to be a number of other challenges and barriers to completing the process within timescales (such as capacity within health and social care services to complete assessments and provide advice and consultation with some schools and settings in order for a school to be named), and whilst we will make reasonable endeavours in line with government guidance we recognise delays are not in the best interests of children and young people.

To ensure that children and young people are able to access the provision they require in the short term and also once school re-open, we will be encouraging schools to make use of the TTS funding arrangements (information given below) to ensure that children and young people have their needs met on return to school whilst an EHC request is made.

Further information regarding new EHC requests will be distributed following updated government guidance. If you have any queries regarding this then please get in contact with your Link EP.

### **I have an Annual Review that is due to take place next term, should I go ahead with this remotely?**

Once we receive updated guidance from the government we will be sending out more detailed information to all schools regarding the expectations for Annual Reviews, but our current advice is that in most cases it will be appropriate for Annual Reviews to be postponed until schools reopen fully. This will ensure you have the involvement of relevant



support services and can engage the child/young person and parent/carer fully in the process.

If you perceive an urgent need to hold an Annual Review then please get in touch with your casework officer for a discussion to agree a way forward.

## **I made a request for an EHC assessment a few weeks ago, what will happen now?**

The government issued guidance on 22nd March stating that as part of their emergency powers they will 'modify the statutory duties' on local authorities relating to EHCPs.

We are waiting for further more detailed information regarding the expectations but in the meantime the EHC Assessment Team is working closely with the EP service and other health and social care colleagues to manage the situation with statutory assessments that are already in progress.

Where an EP has recently been into school to complete an assessment, they will be writing and distributing the Psychological Advice reports as soon as possible and the EHC team will make reasonable endeavours to complete the process and issue a final plan with a placement named. However, there may be some difficulties with consulting with placements due to school closures.

Where an assessment has been recently agreed but an EP has not yet been in to school to complete an assessment, the EP service will be following the updated professional guidance and will be considering whether completing an assessment remotely and providing Advice is possible, appropriate and ethical.

When it is considered to be appropriate an EP will be allocated and will be trying to make contact with the school, family and child/young person to arrange a remote assessment (may include phone consultation, sharing of information and using remote technology). This is likely to be for a small number of assessments. Where this is possible the EP service will be seeking to complete the assessment and distribute the Psychological Advice reports as soon as possible so that the EHC team can make reasonable endeavours to complete the statutory process.

Health and social care services will make reasonable endeavours to fulfil their statutory duties but their ability to do so may be impacted on by urgent priorities related to the COVID-19 response, staffing levels and availability of the child for assessment, particularly if the child was previously unknown to them.

## **How will I make sure that children get the support they need in September if EHC needs assessments can't be completed during the school closure period?**

Full information will be distributed shortly regarding 'Transitional Top Up Support' funding arrangements.

We expect that this will become live from 1st April. It is a 1 year temporary funding model to ensure that children (Reception year to year 13) with complex needs receive high needs funding to ensure their setting can meet their needs if they do not have an EHCP already and are not accessing an ARP place. This will be accessed via an application and panel process and will be for children who have needs identified as being Band 4 or above on the





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revised High Needs Banding model (final model to be distributed electronically very soon). If requests are agreed it will provide immediate access to high needs funding until March 2021 or until a child is taken off roll.

Schools will be able to apply for this for the summer term 2020 for children who would be eligible for an EHC needs assessment. We would encourage schools to utilise this process to reduce the urgency for an EHC request, as ideally EHC assessments should be carried out whilst children and young people are accessing learning in their usual education setting.