Child Protection / Safeguarding through Covid-19 Outbreak

Policy Statement

This policy is an addendum to the preschool's main Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and is intended for use during the COVID-19 emergency period only.

We continue to recognise that safeguarding and child protection is an essential part of our duty of care to all children and that we have a responsibility to safeguard children, whether they are on-site or staying at home. We understand that safeguarding, child protection and promoting the welfare of all children is everyone’s responsibility and everyone has a role to play in protecting children. We continue to promote a culture of vigilance, where staff and volunteers act immediately if they have safeguarding concerns about a child. We recognise that our school is part of a wider safeguarding system for children and work closely with other agencies to promote the welfare of children. We maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’ and will consider the wishes of, and at all times, what is in the best interests of each child.

Due to the nature of the emergency we are facing and the changing threat from COVID-19, this policy is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that the preschool is compliant with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance; government guidance relating to the COVID-19 outbreak; and guidance from the local authority.

All staff will be made aware of this policy and updated regularly on further developments.

Further information about the government’s approach to COVID-19 can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote safeguarding and child protection and demonstrate the preschool’s commitment to keeping children safe whilst operating under emergency measures related to COVID-19
- Provide all members of staff with the information required to meet their safeguarding duty and protect children from harm during this time
- Ensure that children are protected from maltreatment or harm
Procedures

Binfield preschool is committed to the following principles at all times:

- All children have the right to be protected from harm
- The best interests of children will always continue to come first
- All staff are responsible for keeping children safe and have a responsibility to act if they think a child is at risk of harm
- If anyone in preschool has a safeguarding concern about any child, they should continue to follow usual procedures and must act and act immediately

A Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Safeguarding Lead should be available; and

Working with other agencies (such as Children’s Services) is essential to promote safeguarding and protect children from harm.

We continue to be subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 in the exercise of their functions to have “due regard” to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and will refer to appropriate services if we are concerned a child is being radicalised.

We continue to fulfil our duties under Section 5B of the FGM Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, support and supply staff, volunteers and committee members working in or on behalf of Binfield Preschool. All references in this document to ‘staff’ or ‘members of staff’ should be interpreted as relating to the aforementioned unless otherwise stated.

This policy applies to all staff, whether working on-site or at home.

Context

Following government guidance, the preschool has been closed to pupils from Friday 20th March 2020.

The preschool remains closed and is looking to reopen on Monday 15th June 2020 for the children of keyworkers, children who are deemed to be vulnerable and children who are moving onto primary school at the end of term, as per government guidance. The school has given careful consideration to which children need to continue to attend preschool, in order to ensure children are safe and to minimise the spread of COVID-19.
Each child has been considered on a case-by-case basis and an assessment of risk has been made, with relevant external agencies, parents and the Local Authority, to decide if a child should be on site or not. The school considers children to be vulnerable and may need to attend if they are:

- Children on Child Protection Plans; Children in Need; Looked-After or Previously Looked-After; and
- Children with SEND (with or without an EHCP), who would be safer at school than at home.

Children other than those above may be considered vulnerable and some children will become vulnerable during the time that the preschool is closed. The preschool will continually review which children will attend preschool, in line with local and governmental guidance.

Additional support may be put in place to safeguard:

- Children vulnerable to CE/Contextual safeguarding issues and those in receipt of early help; and
- Children who are homeless/living in temporary accommodation, refugees and asylum seekers and young carers.

There is an expectation that children who have a social worker will continue to attend preschool, unless they have an underlying health condition that will put them at severe risk.

Children who require additional support as mentioned above who are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, Binfield Preschool in partnership with the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

All children (regardless of vulnerability) will be contacted by email.

*Local Safeguarding Arrangements*

The preschool will ensure that it is aware of any changes to local safeguarding arrangements through existing channels of communication with the Local Authority.

The preschool continues to follow our Safeguarding policies and continues to use the guidance when considering if children require additional support or statutory intervention.

This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in local safeguarding arrangements.

*Roles and Responsibilities*

The Committee continues to monitor the preschool during this period of emergency closure. The chair continues to have oversight of management of the preschool. Meetings between staff and Committee members continue via web-based technology.
The Manager will:

- Ensure that this policy is regularly updated in line with evolving government and local guidance relating to COVID-19
- Ensure that this policy and associated procedures are adhered to by all staff
- Ensure that all adults coming into contact with children at school have been subject to the appropriate safer recruitment checks
- Respond to allegations of abuse against all other members of staff; and
- Ensure that staff on-site and off-site have regularly updated training to ensure that they are aware of local safeguarding arrangements

In the event that the Manager is unavailable either on-site or remotely, the above responsibilities will be completed by the Assistant Manager supported by the chair of committee.

*The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)*

The role of the DSL is outlined in the main preschool Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

In addition to their usual duties, the DSL will also have regard to the additional mental health issues that children may be experiencing as a result of COVID-19 and provide/arrange support for them and their families as necessary.

Once preschool reopens, wherever possible, a trained DSL (or deputy DSL) will be available on site. Where this is not possible due to staff self-isolation, a trained DSL (or deputy DSL) will be available to be contacted via phone or online video.

In the event that the DSL and the DSL/s are unable to work remotely due to illness, an appropriate staff member will take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This could include, but is not limited to, updating and managing access to safeguarding and child protection files and as required liaising with children’s social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments. Information will be passed to the DSL as soon as practicably possible.

Arrangements for contacting the DSL/DDSLs will be shared with staff before 9am each day, as well as any relevant safeguarding and child protection updates and training.

The government has acknowledged that DSL refresher training is very unlikely to take place during this emergency. All DSLs and DDSLs that have previously been trained will continue to be classed as DSLs even if they miss their refresher training, in line with current government guidance. All DSLs and DDSLs will keep up to date with the latest safeguarding information and guidance via e-bulletins, Local Authority e-bulletins and taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments.
The Role & Responsibilities of all Staff within Preschool

All staff, whether on-site or working from home, will:

- continue to operate under the principles of the main preschool Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the staff Code of Conduct, all relevant legislation and statutory guidance and continue to have particular regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019)
- continue to promote a culture of vigilance and refer all safeguarding concerns to the appropriate person immediately
- adhere to all government, local and preschool advice relating to hygiene, response to COVID-19 symptoms and self-isolation
- seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are unsure; and
- safeguard children’s wellbeing

Responding to signs of abuse

Information relating to types of abuse and signs and symptoms of abuse can be found in the preschool’s main safeguarding and child protection policy and

All staff will continue to be alert to indicators of abuse and will report any concerns to the appropriate member of staff immediately.

If a member of staff, parent/carer or member of the public is concerned about a child’s welfare (whether they are attending preschool or not), they should report it to the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible. If the designated safeguarding lead is not available, it should be reported to the deputy safeguarding lead without delay. Although any member of staff can make a referral to Children’s Social Care, *where possible there should be a conversation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead via telephone or online video call, if they are working from home. If there is no DSL available, concerns should be reported to the chair of committee.*

If anyone other than the Designated Safeguarding Lead makes a referral to children’s social care or to the police, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible.

If the preschool is concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm, we will seek advice from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and make a referral to this service if necessary. MASH continues to be fully functional in terms of its safeguarding responsibilities. Referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub can and should still be made for children at risk of harm using the online MASH professionals reporting form.

**MASH Telephone number:** 01344 352005

**Out of hours Emergency Duty Team:** 01344 786543

**Prevent/Channel Referrals:** Community Safety Team
The preschool will continue to work with the local authority with regard to concerns about a child. We will risk assess each report on a case-by-case basis and continue to operate as usual in response to reports, unless instructed otherwise by the police or Local Authority. This information will be recorded on the child’s safeguarding and child protection record as usual. If a child is attending an additional setting, this information will be shared with the DSL at the other setting.

All services are under increased pressure during this period of emergency. However, the preschool recognises that safeguarding continues to be of paramount importance and will work with other agencies in order to ensure children are safe. If a child’s situation does not appear to be improving following a referral, the preschool may refer the child again. We aim to ensure that our concerns have been addressed and that the situation improves for the child.

Record-keeping
A written record of all safeguarding and/or child protection concerns, discussions and decisions made will continue to be kept in individual children’s files. This will be separate from the main preschool file and will only be accessed by the relevant safeguarding staff.

Attendance
The preschool adheres to government guidance, which states that parents should keep their children at home, wherever possible, and that schools, colleges and early years settings should remain open only for children of critical workers and those deemed to be vulnerable if safe to do so.

As such, the preschool will only be following our usual attendance procedures for those children who have been invited to attend based on priority and have accepted a place. Non-attendance of those invited will be monitored and managed according to our policy. The preschool will follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their child and the child subsequently do not attend.

The preschool will work with families and social workers to agree whether children should attend preschool or not. If it is agreed that a child should attend and they do not, the preschool will follow this up with parents/carers.

If a child who should be attending preschool develops symptoms at home, they must contact preschool and remain at home in accordance with government guidelines.

The preschool will take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to 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 preschool, or discontinues, we will notify their social worker.

In the case where children may have existing health issues and are classed as vulnerable but will not attend preschool (for example, those with underlying health conditions), we will continue to keep in regular contact through their keyworker.

The preschool will record pupil daily attendance using our usual registration process and will inform the local authority, who will be tracking attendance.

**Allegations of abuse against staff**
The preschool takes all allegations against staff seriously and will manage them in line with our Safeguarding policy.

If a concern or allegation of abuse arises against the Manager, it must be reported to the Chair of Committee without delay. In the event that the Chair of Committee is unavailable due to illness or other circumstance, concerns must be reported to an alternative member of the committee.

If a concern or allegation of abuse arises against any member of staff other than the Manager, it must be reported to the Manager without delay. In the event that the Manager is unavailable due to illness or other circumstance, concerns must be reported to the assistant manager.

Allegations of abuse against staff should be not discussed directly with the person involved.

The Manager or Chair of Committee should refer concerns to the Local Designated Officer (LADO), who is operating as usual, by emailing a referral form to LADO@bracknell-forest.gov.uk or calling 01344 351572.

If is found that a child has suffered, or it is suspected that they have suffered, abuse or harm, a MASH referral will also be made.

In the instances where an allegation is dealt with internally, the Local Authority designated officer will provide information and support to the preschool in managing the allegation. This service will still be provided throughout this period of emergency.

The procedure for whistleblowing is outlined in the preschool's main Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

**Policy Review**
This policy is a dynamic document and will be updated regularly as further government and local guidance is published.
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next review date</td>
<td>19/05/2021</td>
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<td>Version number</td>
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<td>Adrian Hone</td>
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