Safer Online practices

Safeguarding in Education
January 2021 updated version

1. Safeguarding and online learning

Since March 2020, schools and other educational settings have moved at an exponential rate to develop ways of using technology to facilitate learning and since October 2020 all settings are legislated to have remote learning provision. The national expectations are outlined in the [Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction guidance.](#)

This is further supported by guidance issued on 7th January 2021 from the Department for Education issued '[Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools. Guidance for all schools in England](#)'.[1]

2. West Sussex Context

West Sussex Safeguarding in Education Team first issued guidance in this area in May 2020. This is the updated guidance.

We know our schools have been working incredibly hard to put in place contingency plans to enable the delivery of education remotely. The range of approaches include technological innovation such as; creating sets of recorded lessons, video-conferencing, signposting online resources, online platforms to maintain group interaction with the teacher, live streamed assemblies and in some cases live streaming of lessons enabling a pupil to interact with their teacher and school-based class. Whilst this will be an appropriate way to continue learning at home for many pupils, all schools should consider plans within their usual safeguarding frameworks and ensure there are offline opportunities for pupils to engage in learning.

Schools should be aware of different risks posed by these new approaches and by the fact that pupils will necessarily be physically isolated from their usual support networks, in some cases, for significant periods of time. Whilst defining their remote learning provision in line with national expectations, schools will have considered many of these but as the rate of access increases, schools will understand the importance of ensuring that all safeguarding considerations are assessed and appropriately mitigated.

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3. Key Considerations

Whilst considering safer practices for online and remote learning, the rest of this document is aimed to assist schools by signposting to additional guidance, resources and advice. However, there are key considerations that thread through all of this;

- Are all staff aware of key policies and directed practice?
- Have governors and school leaders reviewed staff codes of conduct to ensure they encompass safe practice's on line for the current situation?
- Do the online learning practices to safeguard pupil replicate learning experiences and actions as if in the learning was taking place in a classroom?
- Is the access at home following safeguarding practice for the facilitator and the learner?
- How is anonymity of vulnerable pupils protected with group or live learning sessions
- Does the setting ensure that they are utilising platforms that have previously been used and are familiar with?
- If using an external provider has the setting ensured that the external provider has their own safeguarding policy, reviewed it to ensure the practice caters for their own particular setting.
- How does the setting make it clear to parents how they can contact school during the current situation and how they can raise concerns regarding online safe practices?

3.1 Delivering remote education safely - Legislation and Guidance

Keeping children safe online is essential. The statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education provides schools and colleges with information on what they should be doing to protect their pupils online.

3.2 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2020

Schools will be aware that the new version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) applies from 1 September 2020. On page 102, in Annex C, KCSiE makes specific reference to online safety. Other key additions to KCSiE this year include the need for staff to be alert to children's mental health problems as a possible indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation, and the need for schools to follow up on safeguarding concerns in relation to supply staff.

3.3 Covid 19 guidance

Restricting attendance during the national lockdown; schools (Jan 2021) contains the most up to date guidance regarding remote learning and safeguarding considerations.
Guidance on safeguarding and remote education was updated in Oct 2020.

Further support on delivering online remote education safely, is available from:

- [Undertaking remote teaching safely (NSPCC)](#)
- [safe remote learning](#), published by SWGfL
- [online safety and safeguarding](#), published by LGfL, which covers safe remote learning
- the National Cyber Security Centre, which includes which [video conference service](#) is right for you
- [School Online Safety Policy Templates (SWGfL)](#)
- [Safe remote learning hub](#)
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4. Safeguarding when using online learning approaches

Whilst it is acknowledged that most of the content and lessons will be delivered via existing online resources such as Google Classroom, Tassomai, Mathswatch and other industry standard applications, some schools are looking to offer 'virtual' lessons to pupils.

Pre-recorded streamed sessions and webinars should broadly follow the guidance below. This would limit the risks in many ways as the content of the broadcast would be pre-set and the user would not be viewing a group or interacting as one. If schools are considering broadcasting 'live', more detailed safeguarding considerations need to be taken, including how senior staff can monitor live time.

4.1 Online Platforms:

- Online learning is an extension of school therefore the same common principles apply between teachers, parents and pupils.
- Recognised platforms are recommended.
- Schools must not use platforms that are age-restricted, i.e. Facebook should not be used.
- Weekly plans and structure can help provide clarity and manage expectation
- Work set should be achievable within a standard single period in-school lesson or broken into management activities and sub-tasks.
- Parents should be supported to understand tasks, access arrangements and how to raise concerns regarding access or suitability of work.
- Teaching professionals should be accessible during the standard school day to respond to queries (although this does not have to be pupil's specific class teachers)

It is vital to remember that when selecting a platform, the safeguarding practices guide and define the choices and are then applicable to all platforms.
Additional guidance is provided for many platforms by the provider themselves and should be part of the decision-making process. These include;

- [Safeguarding Risks with Zoom (PracticePal)](#)
- [Zoom for Education: Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions (Zoom](#))
- [Zoom Basics - Using Zoom for Classes and Meeting (Steve Dotto/YouTube)](#)

4.2 Live Streaming:

Most schools will already have considered the specific challenges but advice from key providers and national government list the following as areas to consider when using 'live' access;

1. The London Grid for Learning has published a set of [20 safeguarding considerations in the form of a poster](#) for all staff when live streaming

2. [Live Streaming (Childnet)](#)

In addition, the following precautions must be adhered to when offering Live Stream lessons:

- SLT must agree communication channels on behalf of the whole school.
- Live Streaming should never be 1:1; group sessions only.
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and where possible be against a neutral background. Some platforms offer the ability to blur backgrounds or add virtual backgrounds, which may be helpful. However, be mindful that the blurred or virtual backgrounds can still show parts of the room or other people due to movement.
- The live class should be recorded and backed up elsewhere, so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed. This also enables pupils to access the lessons at a later date.
- Lessons should be no longer than a standard single period in-school lesson (ie less than 60 minutes ideally) Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.
- Schools should risk assess the use of live learning using webcams. Pupil video functionality should be switched off in most circumstances but voice can be enabled, so pupils can participate in discussion and/or ask questions.

5. General Data Protection Requirement (GDPR):

Data Controllers need to reassure themselves that any teaching/learning software and/or platforms are suitable and raise no privacy issues; or use cases against the providers terms and conditions (for example, no business use of consumer products).
The use of personal email and technology accounts should be prohibited, in order to maintain integrity and standard professional boundaries
When communicating electronically, the use of BCC should be utilised to avoid sharing personal information.
The school should continue to promote the use of internet safety measures including strong safe passwords.

6. Wider considerations

While staying at home due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), parents and carers may be concerned about their children's education and the impact of missing school. The government is clear that neither they nor schools expect parents and carers to act as teachers or to provide the activities and feedback that a school would. Schools should support parents and carers to help children with their home learning. This includes the provision of digital technology to disadvantages families where possible.

All schools are urged to consider the accessibility families will have to technology and ensure that this is not a barrier to children's learning. Where possible, alternative non-IT reliant resources should also be offered and available for pupils and their families.

The emotional and physical health and wellbeing of pupils is of paramount importance. Schools should be assured that accessing IT or online based learning does not put unnecessary pressure on the child or their family at this time. Nor should it negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of the staff members. The government is clear that learning strategies and practices should be a balance of digital

and offline resources and activity.

During this time, it is also likely that many children will be using the internet more than ever so safer internet messages are particularly important.

Where online work is set, it should be digitally accessible on a range of devices such as PCs, Laptops, tablets and smartphones. Schools must encourage parents to manage screen time; such as breaking tasks up and allowing plenty of time for physical activities and non-screen-based work.

Standard good practice is for devices to be switched off at least 1 hour before children and young people go to bed.

7. Safe Use of Technology at Home

During home learning, it is important to help parents and pupils to strike a balance between academic work and wellbeing development. Alongside ensuring that all Wi-Fi access is via appropriate filters, age restrictions are followed and suitable hard ware is being used, there are some basic health and safety principles that should be encouraged so pupils stay fit and well. When using IT equipment, pupils should try to avoid awkward static postures by changing position regularly and getting up/moving and stretching between tasks.

Children should take regular rest breaks with at least 5-10 minutes of non-screen time every hour. This will help to protect their eyes and also will help with their attention span.

Pupils should engage in home learning using a suitable position in the home such as a kitchen table or desk; sat in a comfortable and a supportive chair. It is not safe or healthy for pupils to be using laptops on their laps or mobile devices whilst sat on a sofa or in bed. Charging cables must be kept secure and used safely to avoid fire hazards or risk of electrocution.

Where PCs are being used, they should be set up and adjusted to ensure screens are at eye level and keyboards and mice are accessible so as to avoid eye and neck strain. Pupils using mobile devices, including laptops tablets and mobile smartphones should be supported to take regular breaks (every 20 minutes) and to use stands where possible to help tilt the screen.

Good hygiene should also be encouraged including wiping mobile devices with suitable cleaning products on a regular basis.
The following websites may be helpful for guiding parents to safe practices;

- National Education Union
- NSPCC
- Connect safely
- Internet matters app guides
- UK safer internet site social media guides
- SWGFL you tube guide

Supporting parents to consider online safety habits should also be encouraged. The following tools may assist with this;
- Be safe to be secure poster
- A guide to keeping your child safe online WSCC
- Staying safe online support from WSCC teams

8. Reporting Concerns:
If parents or children are concerned about something they have seen online or have experienced any

negative issues, they can report via the Internet Watch Foundation and Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). They would also be advised to contact the school as appropriate to share these concerns.

Links for more information about this can be found below:

8.1 Social Media:

If children stumble across worrying or criminal content online, it should be reported to the Child Exploitation & Online Protection centre.

8.2 Child sexual abuse images:

If criminal content is discovered online, it should be reported to the Internet Watch Foundation. Criminal content in the UK includes child sexual abuse images, criminally obscene adult content as well as non-photographic child sexual abuse images.

8.3 Online terrorism:

Terrorism related content should be reported to the police's Counter Terrorism

Internet Referral Unit.

8.4 Hate speech:

Online content which incites hatred on the grounds of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender should be reported to True Vision.

9. Further Advice & Support

For more general information about ways to stay safe online, visit the WSCC Staying safe online web-pages.

This guidance and associated resources can be found on the SiE team resources pages of WSSFS.

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