

Safeguarding appendix for Remote Learning



This appendix is to be read alongside the current Safeguarding policy. It is not intended to replace but, in this unprecedented time, add to the policies that are in place to maintain the safety of the children and staff.

Context

The DfE website page relating to safeguarding arrangements in schools during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic says “Whilst acknowledging the pressure that schools and colleges are under, it remains essential that as far as possible they continue to be safe places for children.” This addendum is intended as a temporary supplement to the *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings*.

Overview and purpose of guidance

This document is an addendum to the non-statutory ‘guidance for safer working practice’ 2019, an adaptation by the Safer Recruitment Consortium of a document previously published for schools by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This addendum to the safer working practice document is NOT statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE); it is for employers, local authorities and/or the three safeguarding partners to decide whether to use this as the basis for their code of conduct / staff behaviour guidelines.

The document seeks to ensure that the responsibilities of senior leaders of educational settings towards children and staff are discharged by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour.

The 2019 guidance made clear that whilst every attempt had been made to cover a wide range of situations, it should be recognised that any guidance cannot cover all eventualities. The current pandemic with its associated closure of schools to most children is one such example of a circumstance which had not been foreseen and where Government, local authorities, school leaders and staff are having to review and amend guidance rapidly.

Now more than ever before, professional judgements may need to be made in situations not covered by existing guidance, or which directly contravene the guidance given by the employer. In such circumstances, staff will always advise their senior colleagues of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. All staff have a responsibility to be aware of systems within their school which support safeguarding and any temporary amendment to these should be explained to them by senior managers. This includes the school’s child protection policy, staff behaviour policy (sometimes called the code of conduct) and online safety / acceptable use policy.

Underpinning principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way

Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded

- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation
- Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for children
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)
- Staff and managers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed
- Staff should be aware of and understand their establishment's child protection policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, staff behaviour policy and whistle blowing procedure.

Use of technology for online / virtual teaching

Due to the sharp increase in the use of technology for remote learning since March 2020 and this addendum provides some basic guidelines for staff.

When selecting a platform for online / virtual teaching, settings should satisfy themselves that the provider has an appropriate level of security. Wherever possible, staff should use school devices and contact pupils only via the pupil school email address / log in. This ensures that the setting's filtering and monitoring software is enabled.

In deciding whether to provide virtual or online learning for pupils, senior leaders should take into account issues such as accessibility within the family home, the mental health and wellbeing of children, including screen time, the potential for inappropriate behaviour by staff or pupils, staff access to the technology required, etc.

Virtual lessons should be timetabled and senior staff, DSL and / or heads of department should be able to drop in to any virtual lesson at any time – the online version of entering a classroom.

Staff engaging in online learning should display the same standards of dress and conduct that they would in the real world; they should also role model this to pupils and parents. The following points should be considered:

This means that senior leaders should:

- *review and amend their online safety and acceptable use policies to reflect the current situation*
- *ensure that all relevant staff have been briefed and understand the policies and the standards of conduct expected of them*
- *have clearly defined operating times for virtual learning*
- *consider the impact that virtual teaching may have on children and their parents/ carers / siblings*
- *determine whether there are alternatives to virtual teaching in 'real time' – e.g., using audio only, pre-recorded lessons, existing online resources*
- *be aware of the virtual learning timetable and ensure they have the capacity to join a range of lessons*
- *take into account any advice published by the local authority, MAP or their online safety / monitoring software provider*

This means that staff should:

- *ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the online lesson / meeting is taking place and for what purpose*
- *avoid one to one situations – request that a parent is present in the room for the duration, or ask a colleague or member of SLT to join the session*
- *only record a lesson or online meeting with a pupil where this has been agreed with the head teacher or other senior staff, and the pupil and their parent/carer have given explicit written consent to do so.*

- think about the background; photos, artwork, identifying features, mirrors – ideally the backing should be blurred
- staff and pupils should be in living / communal areas – no bedrooms
- filters at a child's home may be set at a threshold which is different to the school
- resources / videos must be age appropriate – the child may not have support immediately to hand at home if they feel distressed or anxious about content

It is the responsibility of the staff member to act as a moderator; raise any issues of suitability (of dress, setting, behaviour) with the child and / or parent immediately and end the online interaction if necessary

Recording lessons does not prevent abuse. If staff wish to record the lesson they are teaching, consideration should be given to data protection issues; e.g., whether parental / pupil consent is needed and retention / storage. If a staff member believes that a child or parent is recording the interaction, the lesson should be brought to an end or that child should be logged out immediately. Staff, parent and pupil AUPs should clearly state the standards of conduct required.

If staff need to contact a pupil or parent by phone and do not have access to a work phone, they should discuss this with a senior member of staff and, if there is no alternative, always use 'caller withheld' to ensure the pupil / parent is not able to identify the staff member's personal contact details.

This means that adults should not:

- *contact pupils outside the operating times defined by senior leaders*
- *take or record images of pupils for their personal use*
- *record virtual lessons or meetings using personal equipment (unless agreed and risk assessed by senior staff)*
- *engage online while children are in a state of undress or semi-undress*

To this end the following specific actions will take place when hosting zoom or any other virtual communication with children.

1. In email to parent with the invite link, the line

By clicking on to this link, I am hereby acknowledging that it is my duty to ensure that the conduct of my child, and the taking part in this meeting, is solely my responsibility.

Within this email must also be explanation that the link and password enclosed are not to be shared.

This email must also include guidance for parents that children must be in a public part of the house, they must be dressed appropriately and must be supervised at all times. Furthermore, it must be outlined that the recording or screenshotting of the meeting is prohibited.

2. All meetings must be password protected.
3. The meeting must have a waiting room function set up that the teacher controls admission from.
4. Microphone and video must be set off when joining the meeting,
5. Staff leading the session must not have any identifiable features in shot and must endeavor to keep others out of shot from their household.
6. Staff members should wear attire commensurate with their position on role
7. The meeting will be controlled by the teacher and they should end the meeting immediately should conduct become unacceptable.
8. If a teacher has any doubt as to the safety or welfare of a child, or an incident preaches safeguarding protocol the staff should follow the usual safeguarding procedures.