

# A Guide to Safe Remote Learning in Education



Throughout the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) your school might be operating a mixture of in-school and home learning.

Safeguarding and child protection remains as important as ever and whether you are teaching face-to-face or in a virtual classroom and it is important that you take steps to ensure you and the children you teach are protected from any potential safeguarding concerns.

Wigan Safeguarding Partnership (WSP) have developed this information to help you carry out remote teaching safely. It includes:

- Top tips for good safeguarding practice.
- Safeguarding considerations for remote teaching
- Recognising and responding to child protection concerns
- A summary of useful guidance from across the UK.

Other teachers and tutors who do not normally work in schools may also find the principles of best practice in these resources useful.

## Top Tips for Good Safeguarding Practice

- All staff should be familiar with the schools updated Safeguarding Policy so know how to recognise and respond to the signs of abuse.
- Staff should be familiar with the pupil and staff code of conduct.
- Use a platform that is age appropriate and check the privacy settings.
- Pupils should be aware of how they are expected to behave online.
- Get parental consent and make sure parents are clear about the benefits and risks of online learning.
- Discuss consent and confidentiality with the child and agree what to do if there is an interruption, or they want the session to end, they feel uncomfortable or they wish to have a break.
- Contact should ideally take place in shared spaces, such as a living room and not in a bedroom.
- Staff and Pupils should observe appropriate dress codes.
- Use pupil and teachers school email addresses.
- Only make phone calls from a blocked number or school telephone number.
- Best practice advises that 2 adults should be present during online lessons. ([The Guidance for Safer Working Practice, Addendum April 2020](#))
- Arrange for an appropriate adult to be present throughout or ensure that they are always visible/within earshot.
- Make sure that staff and pupils do not have any confidential items on display.
- Only hold lessons and contact children during school hour unless this has been otherwise agreed with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and parents/ carers.
- Wear your staff ID Badge.

## Remote Teaching

If your school is teaching children remotely, you should consider what safeguarding measures you need to put in place. These should be included in your safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.

### Which platform will you use?

Always make sure the platform you are using is suitable for the children's age group, stage of development and ability. Set up school accounts for any online platforms you use (don't use teachers' personal accounts). Double check the privacy settings.

> [Visit Net Aware, created in partnership with O2, for information about privacy settings on the latest social networks, apps and games \(including video calling apps\)](#)

## Consent

You should make sure parents, carers and children understand the benefits and risks of online lessons and get written consent for children to be involved. You may be able to check in with the accompanying adult before starting the session and go over expectations.

Talk to your staff or colleagues about how you plan to deliver remote lessons – are they comfortable with teaching online? Explain that regular feedback will be sought to ensure that all involved feel comfortable with the planned way of working and that all involved have the right to terminate a session at any point should they feel uncomfortable.

## Live Streaming

If you plan to record or livestream lessons via an online platform, you need to assess any risks and take appropriate actions to minimise harm.

- Consider which platform to use, YouTube and Facebook Live do not allow you to restrict the audience.
- Invite your audience to register to watch the stream and issue a log in and password.
- Familiarise yourself the privacy settings and know how to report any offensive or abusive content.
- Live streams should only take place in school time and on school premises and must always be supervised by appropriate adults.
- Be sensitive to the needs of students, including deaf or disabled children.
- Appropriate staff should supervise and be prepared to deal with any sudden changes or developments which may occur during the livestream.
- If you are recording or live streaming lessons, make sure teachers are in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background.

## Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Teaching online is different to teaching face-to-face. But adults should always maintain professional relationships with children and young people. Staff should familiarise themselves with the school code of conduct and make it clear and have a clear understanding of how they are expected to behave. [The Guidance for Safer Working Practice](#) also provides useful advice.

Children and Young People should be made aware of the how they are expected to behave online. Boundaries and expectations are clarified, as appropriate, in advance or at the beginning of a meeting e.g. E.g. mobiles phones off, use of tools (hand up/hand down/chat functions), start and finish times, break times, possible interruptions due to context and what the procedure will be in this event

At the start and end of each remote session working directly with a child/young person session, check in with the parent / carer /appropriate adult available. At the start, ensure that it is appropriate for the session to go ahead at that time. During this discussion ensure that an adult will always be available / visible / within earshot. At the end, provide debriefing discussion.

For older young people who are 'Gillick Competent,' a risk assessment should take place with your line manager, should the issue of privacy / confidentiality be raised during the work.

## Adult to child ratio's

It is best practice to have at least two adults present when working with children and young people. This applies both on- and offline. The number of adults you need for online lessons will vary depending on the children's age and stage of development, and the activities being carried out. For example, if you are using 'breakout rooms' on an online platform, you need to consider how will these be supervised.

## Contacting children at home

Sometimes staff might need to contact children individually, for example to give feedback on homework. Staff should only contact children during normal school hours, or at times agreed by the school leadership team (DfE, 2020).

Any one-to-one sessions, for example pastoral care meetings, should be risk assessed and approved by the school's leadership team (DfE, 2020). Make sure staff know what safeguarding measures to take if they are having a one-to-one conversation with a child.

Use parents' or carers' email addresses or phone numbers to communicate with children, unless this poses a safeguarding risk. Use school accounts to communicate via email or online platforms, never teachers' personal accounts. Make sure any phone calls are made from a blocked number so teacher's personal contact details are not visible. If staff members are accessing families' contact details at home, ensure they comply with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#).

### **Providing pastoral care remotely**

Where pupils are required to remain at home school may wish to provide pastoral care and support remotely. This should be discussed and approved by SLT, to assess any risks and it may be helpful to have an additional staff member or a parent/ carer, if appropriate, listening in on the call.

### **What do to if you are worried about a child**

If children are not seeing trusted adults at school every day, it is even more important that staff are able to identify any child protection concerns and take appropriate action.

Concerns may arise due to:

- A staff member sees and hears something worrying during an online lesson. This could be something which poses a risk of harm to child, such as; a child being exposed to extremist material; or something which is not age appropriate such as pornography or violence; a staff member overhearing a domestic abuse incident in the family home or overhearing a child being emotionally or physically abused by a care giver; indicators of neglect or poor home conditions which compromise a child's safety and wellbeing.
- A child discloses abuse during a phone call or via email.

All staff should be familiar with their safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures and feel confident in how to recognise and respond to the signs of abuse. **If you feel worried or unsure about anything that you have seen or heard, then you should speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) about your concerns.**

### **Children who need extra support**

Your school should be aware of any children who need extra support while they are learning at home. This might be because:

- They have additional needs or special education needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Their families need extra support.
- They have mental health issues.
- They are at risk of abuse or neglect.

Think about how you will keep in regular contact with these children, support their learning and monitor their wellbeing.

### **Useful Guidance to help school carry out remote teaching safely.**

The Department For Education (DfE) has published guidance on [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus \(DfE, 2020a\)](#)

The DfE has also provided examples of [remote education practice for schools during coronavirus \(DfE, 2020b\)](#) and [guidance on adapting teaching practice for remote education \(DfE, 2020c\)](#)

The NSPCC have developed a guide [Undertaking remote teaching safely](#).

The Safer Recruitment Consortium has made an addendum to [The Guidance for Safer Working Practice's](#).