



# **Mercia learning Trust**

## **Safeguarding Considerations for Remote Learning**

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## **1. Introduction**

Adults have a crucial role to play in the lives of children. This guidance has been produced to help establish the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard children and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

## **2. Responsibilities**

Staff are accountable for the way in which they: exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children.

All staff have a responsibility to keep pupils safe and to protect them from abuse (sexual, physical and emotional), neglect and contextual safeguarding concerns. Pupils have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and well-being. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional misconduct.

The safeguarding culture of a school is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and pupils and behaviour by the adult that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

The public, local authorities, employers and parents/carers will have expectations about the nature of professional involvement in the lives of children. When individuals accept a role working in an education setting they should understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust involved in that role.

Employers have duties towards their employees and others under Health and Safety legislation which requires them to take steps to provide a safe working environment for staff.

Legislation also imposes a duty on employees to take care of themselves and anyone else who may be affected by their actions or failings. An employer's Health and Safety duties and the adults' responsibilities towards children should not conflict. Safe practice can be demonstrated through the use and implementation of these guidelines.

## **3. Power and positions of trust and authority**

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children in a school or education setting are in a position of trust in relation to all pupils on the roll.

The relationship between a person working with a child/ren is one in which the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for adults to understand this power; that the relationship cannot be one between equals and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.

The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others and report and record any such incident. This is as relevant in the online world as it is in the classroom; staff engaging with pupils and / or parents online have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times.

#### **4. Standards of behaviour**

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and those with whom they work.

Staff should be aware that their behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, could compromise their position within the work setting in relation to the protection of children, loss of trust and confidence, or bringing the employer into disrepute. Such behaviour may also result in prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) a bar from engaging in regulated activity, or action by another relevant regulatory body.

#### **5. Dress and appearance**

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, staff should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake; this also applies to online or virtual teaching or when working with small groups on site (in the case of schools who remain open to vulnerable children or those of critical workers). Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate will render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

#### **6. Communication with children (including the use of technology)**

In order to make best use of the many educational and social benefits of new and emerging technologies, pupils need opportunities to use and explore the digital world. Online risks are posed more by behaviours and values than the technology itself.

Staff should ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours, working to local and national guidelines and acceptable use policies which detail how new and emerging technologies may be used.

Communication with children both in the 'real' world and through web based and telecommunication interactions should take place within explicit professional boundaries. This includes the use of computers, tablets, phones, texts, e-mails, instant messages, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, chat-rooms, forums, blogs, websites, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos, web-cams and other hand-held devices. (Given the ever-changing world of technology it should be noted that this list gives examples only and is not exhaustive.)

Staff should not request or respond to any personal information from children other than which may be necessary in their professional role. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'.

Staff should not give their personal contact details to children for example, e-mail address, home or mobile telephone numbers, details of web-based identities. If children locate these by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond with the staff member, the adult should not respond and must report the matter to their manager. The child should be firmly and politely informed that this is not acceptable.

Staff should adhere to their establishment's policies, including those with regard to communication with parents and carers and the information they share when using the internet.

## **7. Use of technology for online / virtual teaching**

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:

- 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
- staff and pupils should be fully dressed
- 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, parents and pupils 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

## **8. Using school channels to communicate**

As always, staff shouldn't communicate with parents or pupils outside school channels (e.g., they shouldn't talk to parents using their personal Facebook accounts, or contact pupils using their personal email addresses or phone numbers).

## **9. Using Microsoft Teams**

Decide whether you'll let pupils use chat in Microsoft Teams. Like any chat function, it could lead to bullying, or be a distraction from learning.

To disable chat for pupils, you need to create a 'messaging policy' in Teams and then assign it to pupils.

First, create your new messaging policy:

- Log in to the Microsoft Teams admin centre
- Click 'Messaging policies' on the left-hand side
- Click 'New policy' and give it a name (e.g. 'Disable chat')
- Select the 'Chat' setting, and turn it off
- Click 'Save'

Then, assign this policy to pupils:

- Log in to the admin centre
- Click 'Messaging policies' on the left-hand side
- Click on the policy you've just made, then 'Manage users'
- Search for the user you want to add, click on their name, and then click 'Add'
- Repeat step 4 until you've added all of your pupils
- Click 'Save'

Teachers should:

- Sit against a neutral background
- Avoid recording in their bedroom where possible (if that's not possible, use a neutral background)
- Dress like they would for school – no pyjamas!
- Double check that any other tabs they have open in their browser would be appropriate for a child to see, if they're sharing their screen
- Use professional language

Ask pupils to also be in a shared space in their house, rather than in their bedroom. No pyjamas for pupils either! Alternatively, you could ask them to turn their cameras off.

Ask parents who'll also be there to be mindful that other children might see or hear them and anything in the background.

Make a recording so there's something to go back to later on if you need to, and keep a log of who's doing video calls and when.

To record in Microsoft Teams:

- In the meeting, click 'More options' (the 3 dots) > 'Start recording'
- Wait for the recording to start (you'll get a notification saying 'Recording has started')
- When you finish, click 'More options' > 'Stop recording'
- Wait for the recording to be saved in Microsoft Stream (whoever started the recording will get an email notification when it's ready to watch)

## **10. If you're using Microsoft Teams for live streams**

Teachers should:

- Sit against a neutral background
- Avoid recording in their bedroom if they can (if that's not possible, use a neutral background)
- Dress like they would for school – no pyjamas!
- Double check that any other tabs they have open in their browser would be appropriate for a child to see, if they're sharing their screen
- Use professional language

Record live streams, so there's something to go back to later on if you need to, and keep a log of who's doing live streams and when.

To record a live event in Teams, check the 'Recording available to producers and presenters' setting when you schedule your live stream. You can make the recording available for pupils too, by checking 'Recording available to attendees'. The recording will be available for 180 days after the event ends.

To disable chat for pupils, uncheck the 'Q&A' setting when you schedule your live stream.

## **11. If you are recording videos to share through YouTube**

Teachers should:

- Record against a neutral background

- Avoid recording in their bedroom if they can (if that's not possible, use a neutral background)
- Dress like they would for school – no pyjamas!
- Double check that any other tabs they have open in their browser would be appropriate for a child to see, if they're sharing their screen
- Use professional language
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If teachers have a personal account where they've created playlists, ask them to set up a separate work account.

Teachers should:

- Set their videos to 'Unlisted' so that only people who have the link (e.g. parents who you've emailed) will be able to see the video
- Set the audience as 'Made for kids', so that adverts won't appear at the start of the video, and comments will be disabled

When uploading videos to YouTube:

- Under 'Audience', click 'Yes, it's made for kids'
- When you get to the 'Visibility' step, click 'Unlisted'

## **12. If you're using Google Classroom to set work and communicate**

Decide:

- Whether you'll allow pupils to post and comment in the communication 'Stream', or disable this function for them (see below)
- What they can talk about in posts and comments, if allowed to

(If you disable pupil comments in the 'Stream', pupils will still be able to respond to feedback from their teacher on work they've handed in – they just won't be able to post on the 'Stream' page.)

To disable pupil comments in the 'Stream':

- Open your class in Google Classroom
- Click 'Settings' (the cog icon)
- Scroll down to 'General'
- Click the drop-down option to the right of 'Stream' and select 'Only teachers can post or comment'
- Click 'Save'

If you allow pupils to comment, tell them they should only talk about school work in the 'Stream' and that you may 'mute' them, i.e. stop them from posting or commenting (see below), if they post anything that's inappropriate or bullying in nature.

Give parents the chance to opt out of their child posting in the 'Stream' too. If they opt their child out, mute them.

To 'mute' a pupil:

- Click on a class in Google Classroom
- Click 'People'
- Next to the pupil you want to mute, check the box
- Click 'Actions' > 'Mute'
- Click 'Mute' again to confirm

To delete inappropriate or bullying posts or comments (you'll still be able to view them if you need to use them as evidence – see below):

- Go to the class
- Find the post or comment you want to delete
- Click 'More' (the 3 dots) > 'Delete'
- Click 'Delete' again to confirm

To view deleted posts and comments:

- Go to the class
- Click 'Settings' (the cog icon)
- Next to 'Show deleted items', click 'Show' to toggle on
- Hide the deleted items again by clicking 'Hide' to toggle off
- Click 'Save' to save your changes and return to the 'Stream' page

### **13. If you're using Google Meet for live streams**

Teachers should:

- Sit against a neutral background
- Avoid recording in their bedroom if they can (if that's not possible, use a neutral background)
- Dress like they would for school – no pyjamas!
- Double check that any other tabs they have open in their browser would be appropriate for a child to see, if they're sharing their screen
- Use professional language

Record live streams so there's something to go back to later on if you need to, and keep a log of who's doing live streams and when.

In 'view-only' Google live streams, pupils will be automatically muted and won't be visible, so you don't need to worry about what other adults in their homes might do that gets caught on camera.

If you schedule meetings in Google Calendar or Gmail, pupils won't be able to rejoin once the final attendee has left. This means pupils won't be able to rejoin for their own private calls.

You might still want to ask for pupils to be on mute with webcams off, to cut risks. Otherwise, no pyjamas for pupils either, and ask parents to be mindful of what they say and do in the background.

To record in Google Meet:

- In the meeting, click 'More' (the 3 dots) > 'Record meeting'
- Wait for the recording to start
- When you finish, click 'More' > 'Stop recording'
- Click 'Stop recording' again to confirm
- Wait for the recording file to be generated and saved to the Meet Recordings folder. The meeting organiser and the person who started the recording will also get an email with the recording link

(You'll need to be using the computer version of Meet to record.)

#### **14. If you are phoning pupils**

You should:

- Do this through parents' phones only (unless this itself poses a safeguarding risk), particularly in primary school, and in all cases make sure parents are aware and agree
- Call in school hours as much as possible
- Make sure you log this on CPOMS so there is a record of the date and time of each call.
- Have a parent there at the child's end, and have the phone on speaker phone
- Either use a school mobile, or block your number so parents don't see it. (Give parents a heads-up of what time you'll be calling if you're blocking numbers, so they're more likely to pick up.)

If staff are using video calling, take the same steps as above.