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Guidance

Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Understand how to follow safeguarding procedures when planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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Applies to:

England

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Read the latest information about nursery, school and college closures (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>) following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This guidance is to help schools and teachers support pupils' education at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

It should be read alongside Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>).

Safeguarding pupils and teachers online

Most children are being educated at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, so school leaders and teachers are having to adjust to remote education strategies. While this is happening, it is important that schools continue to follow safeguarding procedures.

As set out in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>) guidance, online education should follow the same principles set out in your school's staff behaviour policy (sometimes known as a code of conduct).

Keeping teachers safe when providing remote education is also essential. Remote education is a new experience for both staff and pupils, so it's important that schools understand how to approach safeguarding procedures online.

Schools may wish to use these resources to understand more about ensuring online education is safe:

- remote education advice from The Key for School Leaders (<https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/safeguard-and-support-pupils/safeguarding-while-teaching/remote-teaching-safeguarding-pupils-and-staff/?marker=content-body>)
- advice from NSPCC (<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely>) on undertaking remote education safely
- guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre (<https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/safe-remote-learning/>) on remote education

Guidance on teaching online safety in schools (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>) provides information to help schools ensure their pupils understand how to stay safe and behave online.

School contact with parents and carers during this time can also be used to reinforce the importance of children staying safe online.

It's especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do, including:

- sites they will be asked to use
- school staff their child will interact with

Schools should emphasise the importance of a safe online environment and encourage parents and carers to set age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices and use internet filters to block malicious websites. These are usually free, but often need to be turned on.

Use these resources to support parents and carers to keep their children safe online:

- Thinkuknow (<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>) provides advice from the National Crime Agency (NCA) on staying safe online
- Parent info (<https://parentinfo.org/>) is a collaboration between Parentzone and the NCA providing support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations
- Childnet (<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/parent-and-carer-toolkit>) offers a toolkit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help

and support

- Internet matters (https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIktuA5LWK2wIVRYXVCh2afg2aEAAYASAAEgIJ5vD_BwE) provides age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices, and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world
- London Grid for Learning (<https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety/>) has support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including tips to keep primary aged children safe online
- Net-aware (<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>) has support for parents and carers from the NSPCC, including a guide to social networks, apps and games
- Let's Talk About It (<https://www.ltai.info/staying-safe-online/>) has advice for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
- UK Safer Internet Centre (<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>) has tips, advice, guides and other resources to help keep children safe online, including parental controls offered by home internet providers and safety tools on social networks and other online services

Reporting concerns

It is essential to have and communicate clear reporting routes so that children, teachers, parents and carers can raise any safeguarding concerns.

Schools may wish to review the existing arrangements to ensure they are appropriate during school closures, or if additional or alternative arrangements need to be put in place.

Schools should consider signposting to the practical support that's available for reporting harmful or upsetting content as well as bullying and online abuse.

Harmful or upsetting content

Get support by:

- reporting harmful online content to the UK Safer Internet Centre (<https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>)
- getting government advice and trusted resources from Educate Against Hate (<https://educateagainsthate.com/>) on safeguarding from radicalisation, building resilience to extremism, and promoting shared values

Bullying or abuse online

You can:

- get advice on reporting online abuse from the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>)
- get advice and support from Anti-Bullying Alliance (<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/if-youre-being-bullied>) for children who are being bullied

Schools may also wish to use resources such as Tootoot (<https://tootoot.co.uk/>) to provide a confidential route for pupils to report bullying or abuse.

Schools can access the free Professionals Online Safety Helpline (<https://swgfl.org.uk/services/professionals-online-safety-helpline/#contact>) which supports the online safeguarding of both children and professionals. Call 0344 381 4772 or email helpline@saferinternet.org.uk. The helpline is open from Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm.

Communicating with parents, carers and pupils

Although education is now having to take place remotely, it's important for schools, teachers and pupils to maintain professional practice as much as possible. When communicating online with parents and pupils, schools should:

- communicate within school hours as much as possible (or hours agreed with the school to suit the needs of staff)
- communicate through the school channels approved by the senior leadership team
- use school email accounts (not personal ones)
- use school devices over personal devices wherever possible
- advise teachers not to share personal information

Virtual lessons and live streaming

There is no expectation that teachers should live stream or provide pre-recorded videos. Schools should consider the approaches that best suit the needs of their pupils and staff.

Teaching from home is different to teaching in the classroom. Teachers should try to find a quiet or private room or area to talk to pupils, parents or carers. When broadcasting a lesson or making a recording, consider what will be in the background.

In some areas, schools may also be able to seek support from their local authority when planning online lessons and activities and considering online safety.

Providing pastoral care remotely

Helping parents, carers and pupils to make a weekly plan or structure that includes time for education, playing and relaxing is important to reduce stress and anxiety for families.

As set out in Public Health England's guidance for parents and carers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#helping-children-and-young-people-cope-with-stress>), routine can give children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty.

Schools might want to consider whether one-to-one sessions could be appropriate in some circumstances. For example, to provide pastoral care or provide support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This should be discussed and approved by the senior leadership team to assess any risks. There may be helpful solutions, such as including a parent or additional staff member in the call.

Personal data and GDPR

Schools and colleges should continue to follow the guidance outlined in the data protection: toolkit for schools (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-toolkit-for-schools>) when managing personal data and may need to consider:

- taking care not to share contact details when emailing multiple people
- being careful when sharing usernames and other personal data for access to online resources
- providing access to school data systems safely

Read the other guidance on remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19#guidance-on-remote-education-during-coronavirus>).

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- Remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)
- Supporting your children's education during coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)
- Help children with SEND continue their education during coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-with-send-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)
- Get technology support for children and schools during coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)

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