Schools: Online Safety Considerations for Reopening

As a school planning to reopen, SWGfL has drawn together the following guidance as helpful pointers to reopening your school.

What to think about when welcoming your children back from lockdown.

Online Safety Issues

- Recognising that most children will have spent more time online. Understand that this may have been unmoderated and unfiltered, increasing likelihood of
  ▫ Exposure to threats and harms
  ▫ Wellbeing related issues
- Without access, some children may be disadvantaged or isolated from their groups and peers

What Schools Can/Should Do?

Recognising And Responding To Issues

- Ensure the Safeguarding/Child Protection lead has time to plan for, and respond to, new concerns
- Remind all staff of safeguarding policy and reporting routines, especially if these have changed due to lockdown
- Clarify and advertise the safeguarding and support routes available to pupils, parents and carers and make provision for online/anonymouse routes
- Consider how the school is supporting children’s mental wellbeing, especially with increased screen time
- Consider promoting the safe use of ‘new’ platforms used during lockdown (Zoom, Houseparty etc.)
- Take the opportunity to ensure online safety and digital literacy learning is consistent across the school curriculum

Reflecting On Successes

- Use surveys to identify pupil experiences to inform planning and future work
- Review existing safeguarding/online safety/ child protection policies. Conduct a gap analysis
- Review and make refinements to processes and policies implemented during lockdown
- Review the arrangements put in place and whether they have impacted on learning
- Review all reported incidents and use actions to inform/evidence progression

Planning For Future Eventualities

- Is intervention required for pupils who experienced limited/no online access (e.g. no internet, smartphone-only, single shared device, mum’s iphone etc)?
- Ensure that children can report their worries and concerns to you, ideally online
- Update staff training plans and implement support to fill gaps
- Review backup and contingency procedures
- Draw on current distance learning to plan for new opportunities
  ▫ Within current parameters/staggered attendance
  ▫ ‘Within worst-case’ parameters
- Draw up contingency plans for a ‘second-spike’ which may impact on staff availability

Wider Issues

- Be prepared for an increase in child protection referrals
- Home may not have been a safe or happy place and some pupils will require additional support
- Some children may have competed with technology for their parents attention
- Plan to support children and families where they do not wish for/cannot allow their child to return to school yet
- Take steps to identify and support pupils being kept off school where domestic abuse or another safeguarding concern may be the barrier to their return
- Vulnerable children may need additional/more intensive support on return
- Identify and plan for how to close the gap between those who were effectively home-schooled and those who were not
- What are the implications for continuing online learning for some pupils during the summer holidays?
- Are there opportunities to build upon the success of online platforms and children’s online learning?
- Attendance during reopening is likely to be unusual and sporadic. How will you ensure children have equal and consistent access to learning?

Remember

The UK Safer Internet Centre Helpline will be available to respond to any online safety query: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

SWGfL is donating its anonymous reporting/messaging platform to all schools (Whisper) for free during lockdown: swgfl.org.uk/whisper

swgfl.org.uk/coronavirus