

# 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

## 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?

## 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/anonymous routes
- Consider how the school is supporting children's mental wellbeing, especially with increased screentime
- 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

## Remember

The UK Safer Internet Centre Helpline will be available to respond to any online safety query:

[helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

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

