



## PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Safeguarding during Distance Learning Guidelines* is to ensure all schools are well informed to develop and implement policies that address the safety of students, parents and teachers during distance learning.

## INTRODUCTION

All staff, students and parents need to be aware of the range of risks associated with the use of internet technologies, especially in the context of a distance-learning environment. As a community, we have a shared responsibility to ensure that all students can learn effectively and safely; including no barriers to their learning.

In a distance-learning context, there is a responsibility for schools to educate students on potential online safety issues. Schools should ensure that teachers are fostering the appropriate behaviors and critical thinking skills within students to enable them to remain safe when using the internet and related technologies, in and beyond the context of distance learning.

All members of the school community have a responsibility for promoting and supporting safe behaviors in their home environment, and follow robust safeguarding guidelines. The school's safeguarding team should be included in the planning process for distance learning, as effective learning cannot take place unless students are safe and secure in their learning environment.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of these guidelines are to:

- supplement schools' existing safeguarding/child protection policies;
- support schools in ensuring the safety and wellbeing (social, emotional and physical) of all students in a distance learning environment;
- ensure there is a common understanding of the distance learning expectations for schools, students and parents;
- ensure our school have appropriate policies, procedures, and trained staff to ensure the wellbeing and safety of students and teachers in a distance learning environment;
- increase awareness and education of safeguarding in a distance learning environment for students, teachers and parents and their responsibilities in ensuring student safety;
- ensure that the IT teams in our school is aware of potential issues and understand the technical requirements to support safeguarding.
- ensure our school is aware of the necessity of understanding and adherence to the federal laws of the UAE as they apply to safeguarding

## Roles and responsibilities

### Safeguard





## **1. The School Principal**

- 1.1 The school principal is responsible for ensuring the school adheres to the UAE federal laws and resolutions concerning activities conducted online, cyber, data protection, and privacy laws contained in the Federal Law No. 5 of 2012 ("New Cyber Crime Law").
- 1.2 The school principal must have clear and robust policies regarding distance learning safeguarding, and these policies should be disseminated to all non-teaching and teaching staff members, students, and parents. These should also be readily available.
- 1.3 The school principal should ensure that parents receive advice and guidelines on filtering systems and educational activities that include safe use of the internet and support where and when required. Students must read the guidelines with an adult at home to ensure they fully understand their responsibility and the expectations associated with online safety.
- 1.4 The school principal should ensure that parents have read and understood the school's safeguarding guidelines for distance learning.
- 1.5 The school principal and IT team should conduct due diligence of learning management systems, third party software and hardware and identify high-risk applications. This is to ensure the selected learning management system supports both the learning and safeguarding of all.
- 1.7 The school principal and IT team should ensure that the school's devices and learning management systems are running the latest version to improve security features.
- 1.8 If the school decides to use live teaching as part of the distance learning provision, the school principal should ensure the live classes follow best practice. For example, trying to maintain the same class numbers or even reduce if possible, to allow student interaction. Live lessons are encouraged to start once parents have agreed to 1.4.
- 1.9 If the school decides to offer one-to-one online tutoring and support for students, the school principal should ensure that at least two adults (teacher and one other) be present online with the student. The 'other' adult could be a parent, carer, another teacher, or a teaching assistant.
- 1.10 The school principal should ensure that, for students in the early years, kindergarten and cycle one, a parent or carer must always be present if live teaching or one-to-one tutoring occurs.
- 1.11 The school principal should ensure that if volunteers offer to provide additional support to the school's students, the school follows all necessary safeguarding policies to ensure the safety of all students. This may require teaching assistant, parent, or responsible adult be present while the volunteer provides online support for the student.
- 1.12 The school principal should ensure that the school has a designated leader for ensuring online safeguarding. This leader will also ensure all staff are aware of safeguarding training and any updated safeguarding information.
- 1.13 The school principal should ensure that teachers, students, and parents are aware of the contact details within the school if they have wellbeing or safeguarding concerns.





- 1.14 The school principal should ensure that all teaching and non-teaching staff have had appropriate training whether face or face or online in safeguarding and that this is documented.
- 1.15 The school principal, as part of quality assurance measures, should designate Vice Principal & supervisors who are able to enter virtual classrooms to monitor lessons on an impromptu and unannounced basis for best practice and to ensure safeguarding is being addressed.
- 1.16 The school principal and IT team should provide all teachers with a school email account to use for all school business. This is to minimize the risk of receiving unsolicited or malicious emails and it avoids the risk of personal profile information being revealed.
- 1.17 The school principal and IT team should ensure that only school approved communication platforms, applications and email are used for communication with students and parents. Some messaging services which are not considered acceptable forms of communication and puts the student and staff member at risk, breaching safeguarding protocols were not to be used.
- 1.18 The school principal and IT team are encouraged to use educational technology (edtech) software to perform real-time monitoring and search for exact phrases and keywords in several languages to monitor any questionable activity.
- 1.19 The school principal and IT team should ensure that students only use school-approved accounts on the school's learning management system and only under direct teacher supervision for educational purposes.
- 1.20 The school principal should ensure, in consultation with the safeguarding leads, that sufficient resources are allocated to supporting the welfare of students of determination, those students who may be considered vulnerable, and those students at educational risk.
- 1.21 The school principal should be aware and regularly meet with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss wellbeing and safeguarding concerns, and that these meetings are documented.
- 1.22 The school principal and IT team are expected to conduct regular online wellbeing surveys for students and parents and develop actionable plans based on survey findings.

## **2. Teachers**

- 2.1 Teachers must be familiar with the school's safeguarding distance learning policies and guidelines, which typically would include:
- safe use of email;
  - safe use of the internet and social media;
  - safe use of the school's learning management platform;
  - safe use of the school network, equipment, and data;
  - protection of personal information including passwords;
  - safe use of digital images and digital technologies (such as mobile phones and digital cameras);
  - procedures in the event of misuse of technology by any member of the school community and their role in providing e-safety education for students; and







- Posting or writing anything that would be deemed negative to the school's reputation, inappropriate and/or illegal by UAE law.
- 2.2 Teachers should ensure that all work set on the school's learning management system is appropriate to the age and ability of students and is culturally sensitive.
- 2.3 Teachers should first discuss with the school principal if they feel there is a need to record live online classes; subject to the parental agreement (1.4) being signed.
- 2.4 Teachers should not communicate with students and parents via social media, personal email or messaging services that are outside of the school's digital infrastructure.
- 2.5 Teachers are encouraged to guide, and educate students to manage the amount of time they spend online in front of a screen.
- 2.6 Teachers must be clear about the expectations of students (e.g. a 'classroom standard' of behaviour is expected from all participants). If students behave inappropriately or are not following these guidelines during a live session the teacher should follow up according to the relevant school policies and procedures.
- 2.7 Teachers should report to the relevant school leader who can decide if students are dressed inappropriately during an online session, or if an inappropriate picture is posted onto the school's learning management platform.
- 2.8 Teachers should communicate with parents through the agreed school communication channels when it is believed students are either not engaging in distance learning.
- 2.9 Teachers are encouraged to teach students about copyright and respecting other people's information, images, etc. through discussion, and activities as part of the curriculum and/or the school's core values.
- 2.10 Teachers should report immediately any inappropriate material, or communication that is of wellbeing or safeguarding concern to the relevant safeguarding leaders within the school.
- 2.11 Teachers are expected to wear professional and culturally acceptable attire if using pre-recorded videos or presenting live. This is extended to the teacher ensuring that the background in the recorded or live session is appropriate.
- 2.12 Teachers must make students and parents aware of the impact of online bullying and outline how they can seek help if these issues affect them. Students should also be made aware of where to seek advice or help if they experience cyber-bullying problems when using the internet and related technologies.
- 2.13 Teachers should consider if the school's learning management system includes an online chat feature, and when and how this should be moderated.
- 2.14 Teachers should ensure that when sharing their screen with students that they set the screen sharing to 'host' only.
- 2.15 Teachers should ensure that live communication is never conducted with only one pupil (unless a parent or another adult is also present). If a live communication begins and only one pupil is logged in, the teacher will be expected to terminate the conversation.
- 2.16 Teachers must review any sites that are provided to students as part of an internet research assignment or any other activity outlined as part of their learning. Teachers should re-check these sites regularly as a matter of good practice.





- 2.17 Teachers should consider Privacy Settings before posting (e.g. YouTube has a variety of settings - Public, Unlisted, Private, Comments Allowed/Not Allowed - that will determine who can see and comment on the video).
- 2.18 Teachers are encouraged to form a partnership approach with parents to oversee and counteract any potential issues regarding internet safety and wellbeing. In addition, teachers are encouraged to track non-engagement of parents and make contact if and when required.

### **3. Parents**

- 3.1 Parents should ensure that their child/children is/are located in a shared space in their house within proximity of parents where practically possible, and not in a private space such as a bedroom or bathroom.
- 3.2 Parents should ensure that their child/children is/are wearing professional and culturally acceptable clothing. Should teachers feel that the student is dressed inappropriately they are encouraged to raise this directly with the student and parent.
- 3.3 Parents should ensure that their child/children is/are on time for any scheduled live lessons, tutorials or activities and ensure that behavior and language meet the school's standards.
- 3.4 Parents should ensure that their child/children does/do not use platforms other than the ones authorized by the school directly for the continuity of learning.
- 3.5 Parents or students must not record or photograph any online interactions, lessons, activities or tutorials as it breaches UAE privacy law.
- 3.6 Parents must report any communication which is believed to be a wellbeing or safeguarding concern immediately to their class teacher or school's leaders for further investigation.
- 3.7 Parents must report to their child's teacher or the school immediately if they observe their child or their peers communicating negatively or inappropriately during a forum or via video conversation.
- 3.8 Parents should ensure that their child/children does/do not post or write anything which would be deemed negative to the school's reputation, inappropriate and/or illegal by UAE law.
- 3.9 Parents should ensure that face-to-face communication is only between teachers and students. Any parent-to-teacher communication should be in the usual manner, via email/school's communication platform, or telephone unless discussed beforehand.
- 3.10 Parents should not record, share or comment on public forums about individual teachers and/or content that is provided by a school.

### **4. Students**

- 4.1 Students are expected to comply with the school's behavior policy, safe use of technology policy, and student code of conduct.
- 4.2 Students should ensure that they are in a formal setting. For example, not working online in a bedroom or bathroom when part of a live session.





- 4.3 Students should ensure that they are appropriately dressed for distance learning and any live session.
- 4.4 Students should only contact their teacher/teachers by using their school email address or the school's learning management system.
- 4.5 Students must contact their class teacher and/or the school's safeguarding leaders immediately if they feel that they are victims of cyberbullying or have any concerns regarding online behavior.
- 4.6 Students must not share their login details to the school's learning management system with anyone other than parents.
- 4.7 Students must use social media responsibly and not comment on individual teachers.
- 4.8 Students must not record or photograph any online interactions, lessons, activities or tutorials, unless they have permission by the teacher.
- 4.9 Students must not use social media such as Snapchat/Instagram whilst engaged in distance learning activities.
- 4.10 Students should log out of a one to one session with a teacher if they do not have an adult attending and the teacher does not have another support person attending.

### Useful Links

- Digital Wellbeing Support Line  
<https://u.ae/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/cyber-safety-and-digital-security/digital-wellbeing-support-line>
- UAE Child Protection  
<http://www.moi-cpc.ae/en/default.aspx>  
<http://www.moi-cpc.ae/en/CHILD.PROTECTION.DIMENSION.aspx>
- UAE Child Safety  
<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/children-safety/childrensafety>
- UAE Cyber Laws  
<https://u.ae/en/resources/laws>

