

Victoria Park Primary School



Acceptable Use of Video Conferencing Policy

September 2023

Date	Policy Reviewed	Policy Amended	Added to Website
May 2020	May 2020	May 2020	May 2020
September 2021	September 2021	September 2021	September 2021
September 2022	September 2022	September 2022	September 2022
September 2023	September 2023	September 2023	September 2023

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Video Conferencing Policy

Rationale

Over the last number of years, staff have been encouraged, and have enthusiastically worked to continue their own teacher professional learning by participating in a wide range of activities. Increasingly, this has included blended learning employing video conferencing tools to participate in remote learning; using a wide range of digital platforms, such as WebEx, Zoom, Teams, Slack, Gsuite and Collaborate. In March 2020, following the instruction to close schools to pupils for face to face teaching due to the outbreak of Covid-19, our staff naturally began to consider how these video conferencing tools could be used to supplement our home learning programme. Recognising the powerful impact these tools could have, whilst being mindful and concerned about the real and inherent risks also presented to primary aged pupils by these platforms, the Senior Leadership Team believed it was imperative to create a policy setting out guidelines that staff must follow when using any video conferencing tool to safeguard all within the school community. These guidelines are supported by the Board of Governors of the school.

Mission Statement

At Victoria Park Primary School, we are proud to be an inclusive school providing a high quality, creative and challenging education within a secure, caring and happy environment, where every child experiences a sense of enjoyment and achieves their full potential. We aim to provide each child with a broad and balanced education which encompasses the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2007) and the social, moral, physical and aesthetic aspects befitting the needs of adult life. Emphasis is placed on each pupil developing a caring and respectful attitude towards peers, adults, the community and themselves. Ultimately, we seek to fulfil the vision of preparing pupils as best we can for adult life by 'living to learn and learning to live'.

Vision for Information & Communication Technology

At Victoria Park Primary School, we believe that digital technologies are very powerful resources which can enhance and transform teaching and learning. Given the school's vision of preparing pupils for life, we are committed to promoting pupils' skills within the use of technology across the curriculum. We believe that technology has an integral role to play in helping pupils to achieve their full potential, assisting them in overcoming barriers to learning and in supporting learning throughout the school community. Ultimately, our vision is to encourage and nurture within our pupils, and the entire school community, knowledge, skills and qualities that will make them responsible digital citizens now and in the future. We aspire to safely and confidently equip pupils to face the exciting, new and ever developing opportunities and challenges presented by constantly evolving technology.

Policy Context

This is not a stand-alone policy. When considering the content of this policy, it is important to set it within the context of the wider suite of child protection and safeguarding policies already in place, including, but not limited to, the Safeguarding Policy, Prevention of Bullying Policy and the Online Safety and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy. Where staff have any concerns or queries, they should address these with the Principal or Head of Pastoral Care, before using video conferencing tools with pupils. Staff are very aware that their duty of care for all pupils extends to the use of video conferencing tools. This policy must also be taken in

context alongside the school's Home Learning Plan (March 2020) which was previously circulated to all staff and is available within Staff Central Resources on the school's system.

Why Video Conferencing?

While working at home, pupils may find it difficult to feel connected to the school community and their peers. Many may find it difficult to communicate with all their friends in their class, and even miss their teacher, classroom assistants and support staff. Such difficulties may impact upon a child's own wellbeing. Parents may also find it difficult to continue to keep their child engaged in remote learning over longer periods of time. Video conferencing tools enable staff to interact in real time with members of their class. They provide an opportunity for pupils to see one another from the safety and comfort of their own home and allow for social interaction. From an acceptable social distance, they allow pupils to confirm that their friends and school staff are keeping well.

Video conferencing also presents many challenges to the school, pupils, staff and parents. More detail on this can be found later within this policy. It must be recognised that at the moment, video conferencing is not an appropriate tool for live or direct teaching, and as such no teacher should be utilising it for this purpose. Staff should instead follow the agreed strategies within the school's Home Learning Plan. Furthermore, attendance in video conferences cannot be compulsory for pupils. However, staff may wish to consider the use of video conferencing for optional and informal catch ups and meetings with their class.

Platforms to Use

There are a wide range of video conferencing platforms available. These include Collaborate Ultra, Microsoft Teams, GSuite (Hangouts) for Education, Google Meets, Zoom, WebEx and many more. Each platform provides both the host and end users with many benefits. It must also be recognised that these platforms also carry with them inherent risks (see section below) and can also present technical or accessibility issues for parents and pupils. Whilst the core function of each platform remains constant, the additional functionality within each may make some more accessible or user friendly than others.

The school recognises that these variations may make some platforms more accessible and more practical for different age groups of children or parents than others. The school understands that teachers are in the best position to work out which platform would work best for the age of their class and its circumstances. As such, teachers may wish to carefully experiment with a platform on their own or with another adult, before selecting which one they may wish to use with their pupils.

In selecting a platform for use, teachers should be aware of the advice sought by the school from the Education Authority on multiple occasions. This advice has always remained consistent and advised that the Education Authority (EA) Child Protection Support Service would advocate that schools in Northern Ireland only use the C2K managed platforms (Collaborate Ultra, Microsoft Teams and GSuite for Education accessed through My School portal) with their pupils. The EA note that the Department of Education, through their Safer Schools programme, have concerns with the use of non-C2K video conferencing platforms with pupils, particularly of a primary age, as most of these platforms require users to be aged 16 or over and they would have concerns about the potential risks associated with each.

The school has proactively trialled the use of all C2K platforms. The Senior Leadership Team and Safeguarding Team recognise that some non-managed platforms provide greater accessibility to pupils and parents. They are also mindful of the fact that whilst the C2K service

provides an additional level of protection for all concerned, all online tools have the potential for interference of unintended/inappropriate content, misuse by staff and pupils and other inherent risks. Therefore, the school considers it appropriate to allow members of staff to use the platform they feel will be the safest and most appropriate for their pupils, providing they meet all the required stipulations below, have parental consent before pupils participate and follow the guidance within this policy details below.

Before using a platform, staff should consult with the ICT Co-ordinator to make him aware of their intended use, and to discuss and risk assess the issues which their chosen platform may present. The ICT Co-ordinator will then liaise with the Principal and Head of Pastoral Care to seek approval for the use of the platform, and inform the appropriate members of staff of the Principal's decision.

Risks of Video Conferencing

All video conferencing tools, whether C2K managed or not, pose potential risks to children and staff. Zoom, for example, is considered a medium risk platform for pupils. Below are some of these risks which all staff should consider before beginning to video conference. As this list is not exhaustive, staff should discuss any issues or concerns they have regarding these or any other perceived potential issues with the ICT Co-ordinator before undertaking video conferencing.

- Unintended and unwelcome interference in the session.
- Contact risks for pupils from others.
- Risk of the pupil contacting others by having access to software before your planned session begins or after your planned session ends.
- Images of pupils or staff can be captured either through screen shots, recording or the use of an additional device. These images can then be used or distorted by the user in any way, shape or form.
- Enables access to multiple images of children for others in the household.
- Enables children and families to see inside a teacher's home.
- Risks associated with what may be present on the screen or behind users within homes.
- Risks associated with the actions of other family members or those present within a user's home.
- Inappropriate language, behaviour and use of sharing content options by users.
- Inappropriate clothing.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding issues with regard to content in sessions giving rise to a cause for concern.
- Risk that parents/pupils won't be able to access the sessions due to technical issues or lack of resources.
- Possible allegations of misconduct against staff.

No school related activity can be carried out without presenting a potential risk for all concerned, be that low, medium or high risk. There are risks in using any video conferencing but these need to be balanced with the potential benefits for a child to having that contact with their class and their teacher. It is important however that we proactively take steps to mitigate risk and to safeguard all within our school community, and so, if using video conferencing, it is important that all staff follow all of the following guidelines when carrying out sessions. As the majority of video conferences will take place using personal computers or devices they should not be recorded and no photographs/screenshots should be taken during sessions.

Guidelines for Staff for Video Conferencing with Pupils

Before the Session

1. Staff should ensure that they have discussed the use of their intended platform with the ICT Co-ordinator, who will in turn liaise with the Principal and Head of Pastoral Care.
2. Staff should familiarise themselves with all aspects of the platform they intend to use. We would suggest carrying out a session with another adult to trial all aspects and to better appreciate the management tools required.
3. **Parents must be made aware of the intended platform of use and their consent sought and recorded. They should be advised to check the terms and conditions of use and reminded that they should consider the risks involved.**
4. **It is vital to remember that invites to sessions must only be shared with parents.** It is technically the parents that we are inviting to join the conference, not pupils, as they are over the required age for use of all platforms.
5. Parents must be reminded in advance that they will be required to:
 - i. Ensure that they remain in close proximity to their child while using the video conferencing.
 - ii. Ensure that their child is appropriately dressed (no pyjamas etc).
 - iii. Ensure that the video conference takes place in a communal space, such as a kitchen or living room. Bedrooms are not appropriate.
 - iv. Ensure they discuss appropriate online behaviour with their child ahead of the session.
6. **Staff must seek parental permission for their child to be part of a video conferencing session ahead of the session. Please keep a record of this.**
7. **Never** share your intention to hold a session anywhere online, even on the school's Facebook page. Use the School App or email to share invites with parents. Remind parents that this is a closed meeting only for your class/the group of children.
8. **Video conferencing sessions should not be recorded or photographs taken by anyone involved.**

Setting up the Session

1. Staff should make the Head of Pastoral Care aware of any sessions they are planning to hold with pupils in advance. This notification should include the platform, date, time and target pupil audience, as well as members of staff involved.
2. Set up your own two-factor authentication within your sessions. This may include generating a random meeting ID when scheduling your event and requiring a password to join. This may be different from platform to platform and staff may wish to discuss this with the ICT Co-ordinator ahead of time.
3. If using Zoom, never share your personal meeting ID.
4. Ensure that you have at least **two members of staff** in each planned session at all times.
5. **Never record a session. This presents a child protection and safeguarding issue, as well as a GDPR issue.**
6. Ensure waiting room functions are enabled if available.
7. Time bound sessions. These should not extend beyond 45mins and must take place within the school day.
8. Do not use a recurring meeting ID or link. This will mitigate against unwanted invites being shared or linked in.
9. Make your meetings so they are locked private. **Never share your intention to hold a meeting online or on Facebook.**
10. Disable private messaging functions.
11. Disable or restrict screen sharing if available.

12. Disable file transfer options.

During Sessions

1. Arrive at least ten minutes early for sessions and check all controls are set as they should be. Check your own background is as plain as possible. Within Microsoft Teams, this can be blurred out completely.
2. Check that you have at least two members of staff present.
3. Remember do not record sessions or take photos.
4. Only admit one pupil at a time, checking their background/dress is appropriate.
5. Check with pupils that their parents are somewhere nearby.
6. Quickly establish ground rules for acceptable behaviours with all involved.
7. Remove unwanted or disruptive participants.
8. Manage the microphones and videos of all pupils. The moderator or host can enable and disable these.
9. If you share your screen or content, be mindful that pupils will be able to see any backgrounds or tabs/apps open in the background throughout.
10. Actively continue to moderate and control your session, being mindful of the time.
11. Please remember that at all stages, child protection and safeguarding is of the utmost importance. Should you see anything that gives you cause for concern, or a disclosure is made, this should be reported without delay to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mrs Gillian McDougall, or in her absence, the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mr Ryden. Staff are reminded that the normal protocols remain, such as recording the incident as an initial concern but not interrogating or investigating.

Ending the Session

1. How you end the session will depend on the platform being used. In Collaborate Ultra, it is important that the staff encourage all participants to close their browser completely, and that staff wait to ensure this has been carried out by all pupils before leaving themselves. Within Zoom, it is important that the host ends the session for all users.
2. Remember to feed back any concerns you have to the Head of Pastoral Care for safeguarding issues, the ICT Co-ordinator for technical issues and the Principal for home school link issues.

Conclusion

Staff may wish to use video conferencing for pupils for a variety of reasons, and at the very least, such sessions will provide contact that will be reassuring and supportive to children. Staff **must** ensure that at all times, they are following all the guidance within this policy. Failure to do so may be considered a breach of the acceptable use of the internet and digital technology policy.

It must be recognised that not all staff will be comfortable with this element of technology, and the potential risks involved, and as such video conferencing is not a mandatory part of our home learning strategy in which staff are already working diligently, but rather an optional extra should particular staff wish to avail of it. Staff should not feel compelled or under pressure to carry out such sessions.

Staff with any concerns regarding any aspect of this policy should consult with the ICT Co-ordinator regarding technical aspects, the Head of Pastoral Care regarding safeguarding concerns or the Principal regarding staffing issues.

Policy Review

Use of any form of video conferencing, available platforms and associated child protection and safeguarding issues will be under regular review depending on most recent advice from CYPSS, EA or DENI or other statutory bodies, particularly when advice, regulation or research suggests the necessity.