



## Online Communication Safety Policy

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As we move to distance learning it is important that pupil and staff safety is prioritised. Aladdin, Email and SeeSaw are already employed as a means of communication. Others apps are also used to support teaching and learning eg. Raz kids. During this school closure some staff will also be introducing an element of video conferencing such as zoom. We hope this will support pupils at this difficult time. In using all of the online communication tools mentioned, there are guidelines which must be strictly adhered to for the safety of all involved.

This policy does not set out to replace our Acceptable Usage Policy. Rather it is proposed as an important addition to the area of learning from a digital platform. The policy presented here should be read also in tandem with our school's Code of Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying (including Cyber Bullying) Policy.

The primary obligation of all schools is the welfare of the learners in their school. This policy, therefore, seeks to ensure that remote learning is safe for all student learners and that personal and sensitive data is also protected under GDPR legislation. Schools must ensure that learning takes place in an environment that is respectful and fair and meets its statutory duties.

This Policy has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education and relevant sections of:

- The Education Act (1998)
- Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- Equal Status Act (2000)
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- Disability Act (2005)
- Children First Act (2017)
- GDPR
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary schools
- NEWB Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour (2008).



- DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools (May 2020)
- DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: *Supporting Primary Pupils at very High Risk to Covid-19* (August 2020).

This is a working document. As we continue to explore options available to support distance learning, the document will be updated accordingly.

## Context

Teaching and Learning is always evolving, especially, as we move deeper into the 21st century. Developments in IT provide us all with great opportunities as learners and teachers. Never before has there been greater scope to learn using technology and it continues to change the learning relationship between teachers and students. Advances in technology mean that assignments can be delivered remotely and that greater access to information on the internet affords the opportunities for real learning to take place under the watchful and professional guidance of the teacher. However, whether a child is being directed remotely or via a traditional classroom environment, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher, whether at home or school, the same statutory rules apply i.e. the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and all of the school's policies apply.

We recognise that online collaboration is essential for distance learning and that families are in favour of increased opportunities to maintain the connection between school and home. St Aidan's NS uses a variety of child friendly, online tools, which assist in providing more effective teaching and learning, while also enabling greater communication between staff, families and students.

These guidelines are outlined below.

*Seesaw Class App* is used for our pupils to connect to their folder and they then have the option of uploading items to their folder for their teacher to see. This app is used in all classes. Parental consent is required prior to using this app. Each child will be assigned an individual access code. Unfortunately, single



family log in is not facilitated on Seesaw. Some lessons will be pre-recorded and uploaded via Seesaw.

### **Guidelines for good online communication in St Aidans NS:**

1. Where video calls are used such as on Zoom, under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.
3. It is the duty of parents/guardians to supervise children while they are working online and to ensure any content which they are submitting to their teacher is appropriate.
4. Staff members can communicate with pupils and their families via Aladdin, Email or through the established app eg. Seesaw, Zoom.
5. Any electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families.
6. Students and staff will communicate using tools which have been approved by the school and of which parents have been notified.
7. Parental permission will be acquired before setting up a profile for a pupil on a communication forum.
8. The duration of zoom calls will be guided by such areas as teacher timetables, appropriate time normally allocated to a class and class numbers and level.
9. **For video/Zoom calls, parental permission is implied, as the link to a video call will be communicated via the parent/guardian's email address. Essentially, by virtue of the pupil logging on to the call, permission is assumed.**
10. For security reasons, passwords will be provided to families, where applicable.
11. St Aidan's NS cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are hacked.
12. Communication using a mobile phone will not be frequent, but in the rare exception where it is necessary, staff members will ensure that their caller ID is private.

### **Guidelines for staff members using online communication methods:**

1. Under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Staff members will communicate with pupils and families during the hours of 9.30am - 3pm, where possible.
3. Staff members will have high expectations regarding pupil behaviour, with any communication which takes place online.



4. Staff members will seek to become familiar with apps before using them with pupils.
5. Staff will check that consent has been given, before setting up a pupil profile for an online app.
6. Staff members will report any concerns regarding online behaviour or interactions to school management.
7. Staff are encouraged to generate a new meeting ID and password for each Zoom meeting being held.
8. Staff members will notify parents/guardians of the date, time and password for a video call via email.
9. Staff members will only admit participants to video conferences, if they recognise the email address/username as being connected to a pupil.

#### **Rules for pupils using online communication methods:**

For submitting learning:

1. Submit work and pictures that are appropriate - have an adult take a look at your work before you send it.
2. Use kind and friendly words.

For video calls/Zoom:

1. Pictures or recordings of the video call are not allowed.
2. Remember our school rules - they are still in place, even online.
3. Set up your device in a quiet space, with no distractions in the background.
4. Join the video with your microphone muted.
5. Raise your hand before speaking, just like you would do in class.
6. If you have the chance to talk, speak in your normal voice, using kind and friendly words.
7. Show respect by listening to others while they are speaking.
8. Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the video call.
9. Be on time - set a reminder if it helps.
10. Enjoy! Don't forget to wave hello to everyone when you join!
11. Ensure your name (parents name) is visible on screen. No amendments to names or screen setting are allowed during zoom calls.

#### **Guidelines for parents and guardians:**



### For learning

1. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that pupils are supervised while they work online.
2. Check over the work which pupils send to their teacher, ensuring it is appropriate.
3. Continue to revise online safety measures with pupils.
4. Instant messaging and changes to names within apps is not permitted without the prior consent of the teacher

### For video calls/Zoom

1. Under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Ensure that the school has the correct email address for inviting you to join apps and meetings.
3. The main purpose of a video call is to maintain a social connection between the school staff and pupils at this difficult time. Encourage pupils to listen and enjoy the experience.
4. Be aware that when participating in group video calls, you can be seen and heard unless you are muted or have disabled your camera.
5. You will automatically enter a waiting room when the code for a Zoom call has been entered. Please note that school staff will only accept users into video call if you can be identified by the display name on your zoom account.
6. Please ensure that your child is on time for a scheduled video, or they may be locked out. Please request to join the Zoom call approximately five minutes before the scheduled start time. This will give school staff time to verify your email address.
7. Make sure to familiarise your child with the software in advance. For video in particular, show them how to mute/unmute and turn the camera on/off.
8. Participants in the call should be dressed appropriately.
9. An appropriate background/room should be chosen for the video call.
10. For detailed information on GDPR and Zoom, please visit <https://zoom.us/privacy>

**By accepting an invitation for your child to engage in any online video communication with staff you are consenting to their participation and agreeing to abide by the above rules.**



It is important to note that any breach of the above guidelines will result in a discontinuation of this method of communication. A breach may also result in a person being immediately removed from a meeting or in a meeting being immediately terminated. In this case, the child's parent will receive a report on the incident from the teacher and in some instances from the principal.

This is a working document. As we try out new ways of supporting distance learning, the document may be updated.



This policy extends the school's child protection policy. In Facilitating access to tuition for our students St. Aidan's national school extends the opportunity to study via the Internet. In providing these opportunities we commit to adhering to the following best practice and the interest of safeguarding both students and teachers.

Child protection concerns



Remote teaching introduces the students to the idea of communicating with an adult that is not part of their family group over the Internet. This is not a practice that should come to be considered normal by the student and it should be emphasised by parents that communicating in this matter is something that requires permission and supervision.

This method of teaching invites the teacher into the students home and vice a versa without being physically present and therefore possible unknown to other members of the household. There should be an awareness on behalf of all involved that there is someone virtually present in their home and that everyone's actions need to be reflected in this in so far as possible. The teaching situation should closely reflect that of teaching in a school setting.

St Aidan's national school teachers undertaken as part of the School's child protection policy to report any concerns of a child welfare nature to the designated liaison person in the school under Childs welfare matters. This relates not only to the students but to the welfare of any child in the location which they're working physically and virtually.

Ratified by the Board of Management:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

