



# **Policy for Telephone, Online and Virtual Contact with Children and Families during COVID-19 School Closure**

**This policy has been written in consultation with all SLT and governors. It will be reviewed in light of feedback from teaching staff and parents.**

## **Mission Statement**

*The community of Whickham Parochial C of E Primary School works together to create a thriving , inclusive learning environment, in which every child matters and individuals develop self worth and skills.*

## **Aims and objectives**

Whickham Parochial Church of England Primary School takes its responsibility for the welfare of children during the COVID-19 school closures very seriously. This policy has been designed to regulate the contact with children during this period in order to support their wellbeing and their access to the curriculum.

### **Procedures and Responsibilities for telephone contact.**

Head teacher will:

- Identify vulnerable pupils.
- Contact vulnerable families at least weekly during school or bubble closure.
- Contact vulnerable families if a child is isolating.
- Continue to maintain 'pay as you go' mobile phones so that staff have a safe way to contact children and families that does not incur cost for them or invade their privacy.

Teaching Staff will:

- Begin contact with families of non-vulnerable children using chat at first, but then mobile phones if chat is not responded to, from the second week of bubble or school closure
- Be contactable via phone during school hours in the event of a bubble or school closure
- Only contact families on the work phone or on digital chat.

### **Procedures and Responsibilities for digital contact**

Teachers will:

- Initiate a digital chat each day from the second week of closure and follow up any child/family who misses the chat for two consecutive days with a phone-call.

Parents and children will:

- Respond to the digital chat.
- Remember that all exchanges, either between teachers and children or children and their classmates, must meet our expectations of curtesy and kindness, and will remember that their chat is visible to all.
- Only use the chat facility for remote learning based content.

### **Procedures and Responsibilities for virtual sessions or meetings**

Teachers will:

- Provide at least one virtual session or lesson per week from the second week of bubble closure.
- Consider the background of their meeting and ensure no inappropriate personal belongings of visible – they will blur the background if they can.
- Record each session, save it for safeguarding purposes and then delete it after two week.

Parents will:

- Support their child in logging into Teams using the email address and password sent to them (please see our website under 'Remote learning' for support with this).
- Ensure that children use only their account and do not share their passwords with others.
- Turn off their microphone until the class or group are asked to turn it on.

- Ensure that the environment in which their child joins a meeting is conducive to their concentration and full attention, and encourage good learning behaviour from their side of the session.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

- If a member of staff hears anything that makes them concerned for a child's health or wellbeing, they should fill out a cause for concern sheet in the usual way if one is available to them or create a written report. This must be sent to DSL the same day as the cause for concern is created.
- Phone calls are only to be made on allocated school mobile phone or using school landline.
- If at any time a staff member is asked to speak to a child, they must only do so if the carer stays in the room and the family's phone is put to 'speaker'. This rule will be communicated to parents and is there to protect staff.
- Any contact via any video or facetime app must be approved by the head teacher and must be conducted with families of the children present or recorded.
- If videos are being created, this must be done in a room with nothing on display which could be offensive or could violate the privacy of the member of staff. All videos should be approved by the head teacher before being posted.

## **GDPR**

In order to protect the privacy of families, contact details will only be shared on a need to know basis. The contact details for each class will be shared with individual class teachers on their private Microsoft Teams account, which can be accessed from home. These details will not be printed. The staff member can, if they choose to, enter the contact details into their school mobile phone on the strict condition that this phone is used nowhere but in their own home and is only used to contact families and for families to contact them. When the COVID-19 school closure ends, or when contact of the type detailed in this policy is no longer necessary, the phone memory will be cleared and the phone returned to school.

In order to protect the privacy of staff, teachers must only use the school landline or their school mobile phone for contact with parents. Staff are advised never to give out email addresses – parent emails should come through the school or Head Teacher's email address.

## **Wellbeing – staff**

These are unprecedented times and staff are likely to be feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Many staff members are trying to support their own children in home learning as well as provide work for their class. SLT and governors acknowledge that teachers in this position will struggle to maintain the rigour, pace, purpose or time they would normally devote to the teaching of their classes via distance learning methods. In order to make this more manageable, directed staff meeting time has been dedicated to providing a 'first week' pack to put in place in the event of a closure. While that week is running, the staff member will have additional time to prepare for the rigours of the next week.

Contact with children is very important and is a vital part of our safeguarding of children during these strange times. Staff are asked to have an online chat each day and a live session each week after the first week. We advise that, unless the phone is being used for contact calls, it is turned off or set not to accept incoming calls at times not including the contactable hours. If a teacher were to become ill, they should: report this to the head teacher, turn off their school mobile phone (the requirement to be contactable will stop) and parents will be notified.

## **Wellbeing – pupils and families**

It is expected that at some point, children will struggle to cope with the circumstances of our school closure. If a parent is concerned about their child's mental health, please refer them to the

information on our website under 'COVID-19 arrangements' and then 'wellbeing' where they will find relevant links and information. If a child is struggling to eat or sleep, or displaying any other worrying changes in behaviour, please ask them to contact their GP and report this to SLT. If the parent wants the child to do more but is struggling to get them to focus, remind them that they can report how much they are doing to us and we can come to an arrangement around expectations. Remind parents that there will be a huge variation in how children cope with remote learning and that we will made our best possible endeavours to catch the children up when they return.

## **Conclusion**

Please give feedback where you feel you need to and in response to your experience as you begin this process.

This policy is in line with other school polices and therefore should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Safeguarding and child protection Policy (COVID-19 Addendum)
- Online Safety Policy
- Remote Learning Plan

This policy will be reviewed in the light of changes to legal requirements and in response to consultation with staff.

Rachel Walton

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