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Violet Way Academy

Remote Learning Policy and Plan

Document Control

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Effective Date	Spring 2024
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Policy Owner	Michelle Kee
Policy Approver	LGB

Version Control

Version	Date	Amended by	Comments
V2	16 th October 2020	RB/KW/SS	Enhanced updated version compared to the initial policy that was launched on 1 st October 2020. This policy is more detailed in light of Government policy changes.
V3	18 th December 2020	MH/SS and based on parental/staff feedback and review of the Remote education delivered through December 2020.	Enhanced to meet latest guidance and comply with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) contingency framework for education and childcare settings released and the template for schools: share information about your remote education
V4	20 th January 2021	MH/SS and KW	Reviewed the Ofsted Framework for Remote learning, identified questions for surveys and adjusted the Remote Learning Plan
V5	January 2022	MK	Updated and amended version following Government policy changes
V6	January 2024	MK	Updated and amended to remove Covid specifics in line with guidance.

Rationale

Our priority is to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

In the event of school closure, Violet Way Academy is committed to providing a continuity of education to its learners. This will be provided through remote (online) learning. Extensive remote learning would apply particularly in a situation in which VWA is closed for an extended period of time, but a high proportion of pupils and teachers are healthy, and able to work as normal from home.

Remote learning may also be appropriate in situations when pupils, in agreement with the school, have a period of absence but are able to work at home, at least to some extent. This may apply in cases such as exclusion from school, or longer-term illness, assuming pupils are able to complete school work at home.

Flexibility of Learning

We realise that the circumstances that cause our school to close or of a child being unable to attend school, for long-term medical reasons for example, will affect families in a number of ways. In our planning and expectations, we are aware of the need for flexibility from all sides: -

- technology as a family may be limited
- systems may not always function as they should

An understanding of, and willingness to adapt to, these difficulties on all sides is essential for success. Paper copies of learning can be provided where necessary in some situation.

Expectations for families

We believe that it is in the best interests of our children that we continue to provide structured support to the best of our ability. It must be noted that the work children engage in during a period of closure will be part of our current planning and so should not be considered as optional. Children and parents should consider the arrangements as set out in this document as highly recommended. Where families have made school aware, they have no devices for online learning, alternative arrangements will be made (Appendix 4).

Delivering Remote Education Safely

Keeping children safe online is essential. At Violet Way we follow the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education which underpins how we protect children online. Please see our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for more information. Teachers will refer to the guidance in Appendix 2, which must be followed to safeguard yourself and the learners.

Parents can make references to the posters in Appendix 5 and/or visit Think You Know (Online Safety) <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> for tips and advice.

For individual children unable to attend school for extended periods due to a medical condition or need:

Parents will: -

- Support their child's learning to the best of their ability.
- Contact the school through Marvellous Me/ Teams/ Tapestry if there are any concerns or support is needed.
- Ensure that children have access to the learning provided by the school.
- Contact the school through Marvellous Me or the school office if there are any concerns or support is needed.

Teaching Staff will: -

- Ensure that children have access to home learning that reflects missed learning in school.
- Ensure pupils have online access to the reading scheme and are directed to books that match their reading ability.
- Ensure pupils can access resources to support phonic skills in line with their reading ability.
- Provide verbal or written feedback through Teams or Tapestry.
- Report any concerns to SLT.
- Respond to queries as soon as possible when they are not in class.

Children will:

- Follow the timetable or work instructions provided with support from an adult.
- Ensure that learning they are completing is to the best of their ability.
- Only access materials that have been shared by teaching staff or by parental permission.

For Partial or Full School Closures

Parents will: -

- Will follow the timetable (see Appendix 1 for examples) and instructions given by the school and ensure they do not send their child/children into a school setting during the closure unless contacted individually.
- Support their child's remote learning to the best of their ability.
- If your child is unable to complete work remotely from home due to feeling unwell you must contact class teachers to let them know via Teams / Tapestry /Marvellous Me or email.
- Ensure work is submitted daily to class teachers via Teams / Tapestry. If no work has been submitted for two days, then the school will be in contact with you.
- Contact the school if there are any concerns or support is needed via Teams / Tapestry / Marvellous Me or the school office.

Teaching Staff will:

- Provide learning closely linked to the school's medium-term plans and integrated into the school's curriculum planning to ensure no lost learning.
- Provide pre-recorded video lessons and / or Oak Academy video lessons for English, Maths and Foundation lessons.
- Provide feedback for learning through Teams / Tapestry.

- Keep a log of completed remote learning to ensure it is being accessed daily and to feed back to a member of SLT if a child does not complete any learning for two days and parents have not been in touch to give a reason for this.
- Will give out Marvellous Me Thumbs Up points for each completed home learning task.

N.B The staff member providing the learning and giving the feedback may not always be the class teacher.

Children will: -

- Follow the class timetable for their learning at home.
- Ensure that learning they are completing is to the best of their ability.
- Only access materials that have been shared by teaching staff or by parental permission.

Approaches to teaching pupils remotely may include:

- Recorded teaching e.g., video/audio recordings made by teachers.
- DfE recommended lessons i.e. Oak Academy
- Printed paper packs produced by teaching staff.
- Textbooks and reading books pupils have at home.
- Commercially available websites supporting the teaching of specific subjects or areas, including video sequences or clips.
- Long term project work and /or internet research activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers

- Teachers will follow the guidance and information outlined in this document which describes their roles and responsibilities when children are self-isolating and in the event of partial or full school closure.
- Teachers will keep a record of learning completed remotely (Appendix 3) and will contact parents of pupils who are not engaging with the learning.

Subject Leaders

Curriculum leads are responsible for:

- Setting out the expectations for each year group.
- Providing advice and guidance to support staff.
- Signposting useful resources to support the planning of remote learning.
- Ensure that remote learning is of a high standard and consistent across the school through discussing the learning available and viewing this together.

The SLT and Trust Technical Manager are responsible for:

- Providing learning for those self-isolating where there is no school closure.
- Provide training and support for all staff to support remote learning.
- Monitor remote learning set.
- Monitor Teams / Tapestry.
- Provide technical support for parents and children, including passwords.
- Provide regular updates to parents regarding the procedures.
- Assisting pupils and parents with accessing the internet or devices

- Checking the remote learning approach across the school including daily monitoring of engagement from pupils.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of remote learning –through regular discussions with teachers, governors, and subject leaders, reviewing work set and reaching out for feedback from pupils and parents.
- Monitoring the security of remote learning systems, including data protection and safeguarding considerations

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL is responsible for managing and dealing with all safeguarding concerns raised by staff or parents and follows the latest guidance from KCSIE. This includes expectations for DSL or DDSLs to be on site daily.

SENDCO and Inclusion Manager

We recognise that some pupils, for example some pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) may not be able to access remote learning without support from adults at home. We acknowledge that this may place difficulties on families, and we will work with parents and carers to support these pupils directly through the SENDCo alongside the class teacher. Reception pupils will access learning through Tapestry.

- Liaising with parents of children who have an EHC plan to discuss needs and adjustments required for remote learning.
- Ensuring that pupils with EHC plans continue to have their needs met while learning remotely and liaising with the Headteacher and other organisations to make any alternate arrangements for pupils with EHC plans.

Pupils and Parents

Expectation of pupil's engagement and the support expected of parents and carers at home.

- All pupils are expected to engage with remote learning and demonstrate the behaviours and attitudes we would expect in school.
- Parents are expected to support pupils in line with the information outlined in this document.
- Pupils will follow set routines as set by their parents to enable them to support their child's education.
- School leaders will actively seek parental, staff and pupils voice to further engage and support remote learning.

Assessing children's work and progress

Assessment will be undertaken through a range of approaches including:

- Whole class feedback
- Quizzes marked automatically via digital platforms.
- Verbal feedback through sessions to individual pupils
- Questioning during lessons and capturing learning progress through discussion and answer sessions

Accessing Remote Learning – Information about our remote learning offer

- Your child will have a suggested timetable, including well-being and physical activities daily.
- A login for online reading portal to be sent home to children so they can access books at their level at home. Teachers will let you know what level book your child is reading.
- Teachers will upload teacher or Oak Academy lesson recordings – English / Maths/ Topic (learning activities in Reception may differ) on to assignments on Teams (Tapestry for Reception) along with any resources.
- Children can complete learning in their homework books and parents can take photos to share completed work with the class teacher.
- Teachers will upload the videos at the end of the school day, so children can complete the following day.
- Feedback will be given with the following day's learning unless specific needs or issues arise. Teachers will communicate these via the individual feedback on Teams (Tapestry for Reception).
- Children should complete learning at home to the best of their ability and MarvellousMe 'Thumbs Up' points will be rewarded for working hard and trying their best.
- If your child is struggling with any remote learning please contact your class teacher or the school office.
- Parents should continue to read with their children daily.
- Opportunities for songs, rhymes, and opportunities to talk should be maximised.
- Practical activities such as baking, painting and craftwork should also be undertaken where possible – examples are included as part of the timetables.

Online resources recommended by the School.

- BBC daily lessons <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons>
- Oak National Academy <https://classroom.thenational.academy/>
- Phonics Play <https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>
- YouTube Kids <https://www.youtubekids.com/>
- Think You Know (Online Safety) <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Appendix 1 - Suggested Timetables for partial / full closure

Reception Remote Learning Timetable

	Wake up	10:00-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-11:20	11:20-11:40	11:40-12:00	12:00-1:00	1:00-1:30	1:30-1:45	1:45-2:30	2:30-2:45
	Wake up	Video Lesson	Phonics	Phonics	Well-being and exercise	Topic	Free choice and lunch	Maths Video	Maths	Free Choice	Story time
Monday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	Story Video lesson	Phonics	Independent Phonics activity	Cosmic Kids Yoga	Click on the Oak Academy link	Free choice and Lunch	Click on the Oak Academy link	Independent Maths Activity	Free Choice	Click on the link to listen to the story of the day
Tuesday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	Writing Video lesson	Phonics	Independent Phonics activity	BBC Supermovers	Click on the Oak Academy link	Free choice and Lunch	Click on the Oak Academy link	Independent Maths Activity	Free Choice	Click on the link to listen to the story of the day
Wednesday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	Story Video lesson	Phonics	Independent Phonics activity	Singing or Cosmic Kids Yoga	Click on the Oak Academy link	Free choice and Lunch	Click on the Oak Academy link	Independent Maths Activity	Free Choice	Click on the link to listen to the story of the day
Thursday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	Writing Video lesson	Phonics	Independent Phonics activity	Wild Workouts	Click on the Oak Academy link	Free choice and Lunch	Click on the Oak Academy link	Independent Maths Activity	Free Choice	Click on the link to listen to the story of the day
Friday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	Story Video lesson	Phonics	Independent Phonics activity	Singing or Cosmic Kids Yoga	Click on the Oak Academy link	Free choice and Lunch	Click on the Oak Academy link	Independent Maths Activity	Free Choice	Click on the link to listen to the story of the day

NB: Free Choice Activity Suggestions on the following page

Year 1/Year 2 Remote Learning Timetable

	Wake up	9:30-10:00	10:00-10:10	10:10-11:00	11:00-11:10	11:10-12:00	12:00-1:00	1:00-1:30	1:30-2:30	2:30-2:45	2:45-3:00
	Wake up	Phonics Lesson	Wake up shake up!	Maths Video	Snack break	English	Lunch time	Well-being and exercise	Topic	Story time	Daily Reading
Monday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	View the phonics plan and click on the links to complete your phonics lesson	Wake Up Shake up song	Click on the Oak Academy link in Teams		Click on the link in Teams to watch your video lesson	Lunch Free choice activity	Cosmic Kids Yoga	See Teams for the topic lesson	Click on the Teams link to listen to the story of the day	Enjoy reading a book of your choice Oxford Owl
Tuesday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	View the phonics plan and click on the links to complete your phonics lesson	Wake Up Shake up song	Click on the Oak Academy link in Teams		Click on the link in Teams to watch your video lesson	Lunch Free choice activity	BBC Supermovers	See Teams for the topic lesson	Click on the Teams link to listen to the story of the day	Enjoy reading a book of your choice Oxford Owl
Wednesday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	View the phonics plan and click on the links to complete your phonics lesson	Wake Up Shake up song	Click on the Oak Academy link in Teams		Click on the link in Teams to watch your video lesson	Lunch Free choice activity	Singing or Cosmic Kids Yoga	See Teams for the topic lesson	Click on the Teams link to listen to the story of the day	Enjoy reading a book of your choice Oxford Owl
Thursday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	View the phonics plan and click on the links to complete your phonics lesson	Wake Up Shake up song	Click on the Oak Academy link in Teams		Click on the link in Teams to watch your video lesson	Lunch Free choice activity	Wild Workouts	See Teams for the topic lesson	Click on the Teams link to listen to the story of the day	Enjoy reading a book of your choice Oxford Owl
Friday	Eat your breakfast Make your bed Brush your teeth for 2 minutes	View the phonics plan and click on the links to complete your phonics lesson	Wake Up Shake up song	Click on the Oak Academy link in Teams		Click on the link in Teams to watch your video lesson	Lunch Free choice activity	Singing or Cosmic Kids Yoga	See Teams for the topic lesson	Click on the Teams link to listen to the story of the day	Enjoy reading a book of your choice Oxford Owl

NB: Free Choice Activity ideas on the following page

Free Choice Activity Suggestions

Make Rice Krispy cakes	Play I spy	Sort your toys by size	Make up a quiz	Paint something	Pair your socks	Blow some bubbles
Sing the alphabet song	Make up a new game	Keep a diary	Take a <u>GoNoodle</u> break (gonoodle.com)	Practise counting groups of objects	Roll 2 dice and add the numbers	Investigate what floats or sinks
Do a Jigsaw	Read a <u>Cbeebies</u> story	Play a card game	Go on a shape hunt	Help to make lunch	Make some patterns	Spend some time outside every day
Build something	Write a shopping list	Sort your toys by colours	Play a board game	Read something every day	Make a treasure map	Draw your favourite animal
Make some junk art	Find something taller than you	Find the shortest thing in your house	Play with water	Talk about your family's birthdays	Clean your bedroom	Make your own book
Write your name in rainbow colours	Cut something out	Read a story every day	Build a fort	Practise tying your laces	Write the numbers in 3 different ways	Pick up 10 toys and put them away
Read the tricky words	Learn a fact about bears	Tell a grown up a story	Make up a new dance	Play in your garden	Make some pudding	Paint something

Appendix 2 – Videos and Live lessons – safeguarding yourself and the learners

When creating a video for online/remote learning.

These guidelines must be followed to safeguard yourself and the learners.

Failure to follow these guidelines could result in disciplinary action.

When videoing at home ensure that;

- The background is blank, with no family photographs or distinguishing features.
- If recording yourself, ensure professional clothes are worn.
- Ensure you watch videos back to check for any mistakes.
- When recording you should be the only person in the room.

Videos should be kept short and provide modelling to support the learner with their independent learning activities.

Videos should be, unless organised by SLT, of the class teacher of that class team.

Videos may be checked by SLT or other members of the leadership team at any time.

For more information about how you can safeguard yourselves and the children when remote learning;

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Appendix 4 – Where families have no devices for online learning

Families with no devices for online learning.

The school will ascertain the availability of devices of our families through a survey. From this staff will be made aware of those learners in their year group and be able to cater for them accordingly. Where possible, we will provide devices from which they can access the remote learning. Where this is not possible, packs will be created for pupils. The expectation would be that staff speak weekly to parents to monitor home learning and well-being.

Home learning

A paper copy of the home learning should be provided as appropriate where devices are not available. This includes the spellings, reading books, phonics cards and high frequency words, current maths learning from White Rose and English flipchart activities for that topic of learning. All learners have been given home learning books, which any work at home can be completed in. The expectation would be that staff speak weekly to parents to monitor home learning and well-being.

School Closure/Bubble Closure Learners

If a bubble closure occurs learning will be sent to children without devices by post. These learners would have learning provided in a pack which would be suitable for the full closure. The expectation would be that these are marked at home by the parents. Staff could review this learning on return, but no formal marking would take place. The expectation would be that staff speak weekly to parents to monitor home learning and well-being.

Equipment

School will issue / lend laptops or iPad to pupils where there is no availability at home. Parents should contact the school office if they do not have suitable devices at home.

Where poor internet connection is an issue, school will issue routers or dongles providing that they have discussed and had this agreed with the school. All queries may come to the school office.

10 TOP TIPS

REMOTE LEARNING FOR PARENTS

Remote learning can be a great way to continue learning outside the classroom, particularly in difficult circumstances. For parents and carers, the idea of remote learning isn't always straightforward and there can be a number of factors they need to consider, especially around ensuring their children feel comfortable and are familiar with the whole concept. That's why we've created this guide to help parents and carers support their child in getting the most out of their remote learning experience.

1) Take an active interest in your child's learning

As a parent or carer, remote learning will be a new concept for your child and there are bound to be a few teething problems to start with. Take an active interest in their learning and help support them whenever they need a helping hand.



2) Monitor your child's communication and online activity

It's important to remind your child that despite being at home, the same level of behaviour and conduct exists as if they were at school. Encourage them to remain polite, remember their manners and not to post or send any negative comments just because they are behind a computer.



3) Establish a daily schedule and routine

Working from home and trying to learn in a more casual setting that children might associate more with play and a degree of freedom might take a bit of getting used to. Try to stick to a daily routine and use the timetable/schedule that schools have sent home to help children keep on top of their daily learning.



4) Encourage screen breaks away from devices

Remote learning will inevitably require more interaction with computers, laptops and tablets. Teachers will invariably advise on screen breaks however it doesn't hurt to keep a check on their time online or encourage them to get some fresh air/exercise.



5) Ensure your learning device is in a public space in the home

It's important to consider where your PC or laptop is placed if live video is being used. Try to keep the background neutral with no personal information visible and move learning devices out of the bedroom as this could be deemed inappropriate.



6) Implement safety controls and privacy restrictions on apps and software

Dependant on how your school implements remote learning, your child may be required to download certain software or apps. Whilst these are likely to be relatively safe to use, like any other new app or platform, parents should still implement safety controls as a precaution.



7) Ensure your child only uses official school communication channels

It's important that all communication with teachers and school staff is directed through approved school channels, whether that be through the school's online portal or the relevant secure messaging site.



8) Familiarise yourself with relevant school policies

Schools should have a policy on remote learning and direction that they can share with parents. Familiarise yourself with this and ensure you know what is expected of teachers and your child during lessons, both online and offline.



9) Maintain feedback with teachers

Engage in communication with teachers where possible and try to feed-back progress and development as well as any helpful suggestions around the learning process. Be transparent but remain professional and only use official channels to communicate.



10) Monitor your child's wellbeing and mental health

Remote learning will likely mean that your child won't get the same level of social interaction and might not see their friends for a while. Keep a check on their wellbeing and try to encourage them to get out as much as you can. Whilst learning from home might seem fun and exciting to start with, missing out on seeing their friends everyday might take its toll.



Smart devices promise to make our lives easier. And in many cases - they do. But these new technologies present risks too. Whether you're using a digital assistant to record your shopping list or you're controlling your lights through a smart system, many smart functions can be 'hacked' and controlled by someone outside your home. This guide will help you identify some of the ways you can stay alert and protect yourself.

1

KNOW THE RISKS

The success of any smart device relies on it communicating with other devices using the Internet. It's an unavoidable part of using smart devices, but it does expose you to numerous risks. Attackers could use the Internet connection to steal your data for identify fraud or to make unauthorised purchases through your devices. There is even potential for more sinister exploitation, such as child grooming or cyber-bullying.

2

WHAT IS THE INTERNET OF THINGS?

This is the term given to all the devices connected to the Internet in your home. It includes a new digital doorbell connected to your smartphone, your kettle that boils when you tell it to on your tablet or your heating that comes on when you swipe on your smart watch. The Internet of Things (IoT) is designed to make life easier, but it also opens up your home network to potential cyber-attacks. It doesn't mean you can't enjoy the benefits, but it does mean being aware of the potential negatives.

4

SECURE YOUR DEVICES

If you do use apps on your smartphone to control devices in your home, make sure your smartphone is secure. At the very least make sure the pin function is enabled, as well as any biometric authentication you have. Where possible, it's also a good idea to download some anti-virus software for your smartphone.

5

KEEP YOUR SOFTWARE UP TO DATE

Manufacturers constantly update and improve software used in smart devices. Some will automatically alert you to an update, but not all do. To be on the safe side, it's a good idea to set reminders in your calendar. Check the manufacturer's website for any updates and run them if necessary.

3

CHECK ENCRYPTION SETTINGS

Whenever data is sent over the Internet, it is 'encrypted'. This makes it harder to read if it's intercepted. You should look to use a strong encryption setting, such as WPA2, rather than WPA or WEP. Again, you can check your router manual for how to do this.

6

RENAME THE 'GATEWAY' TO YOUR HOME

Your Internet router is the virtual gateway to your home network. It needs protecting. To do this, you should change the default name (the SSID) and password. You can usually find steps to do this in the instruction manual. Don't use your family name. Choose something more obscure. Make the password complicated too, using upper and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols. Do this for your router and any other smart devices connected to the Internet.

14 Top Tips To Get Smart About The DEVICES In Your Home



National Online Safety®



7

USE A SEPARATE NETWORK FOR GUESTS

If your router has a feature that allows you to set up a separate network for guests, you should use it. That way, when guests use your Wi-Fi they won't have access to your devices.

10

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If you ever feel something is wrong or your network is being exploited, visit the manufacturer's website or ring their technical support department. It's better to be safe than sorry.

11

UPDATE SOFTWARE

Manufacturers constantly update and improve software used in smart devices. Some will automatically alert you to an update, but not all do. To be on the safe side, it's a good idea to set reminders in your calendar. Check the manufacturer's website for any updates and run them if necessary.

8

SAY GOODBYE TO SIRI AND ALEXA

It's a good idea to change the activation words on your smart devices so they are unique to you and your family. This makes it that much harder for people to break into your smart devices.



9

DEACTIVATE ANY UNNECESSARY FEATURES

Though it's a fun idea, you probably don't need to control your kettle from outside the house. In fact there are often many unnecessary features included on smart devices. Where possible, you should look to disable these. Doing so reduces the ability for people to hack your devices. And, when someone sees you've actively taken steps to increase security, they're less inclined to try to compromise them.



12

BUILD A WALL

You could also purchase a dedicated 'firewall' device. This is something that plugs into your network and stops cyber threats reaching your router. Some routers do have a firewall element included, but they are no replacement for the real thing. A firewall device thoroughly analyses information coming into and out of your network and helps stop malicious attacks. A security device is strongly recommended to anyone who works from home or deals with sensitive information.



13

SECURE YOUR SMARTPHONE

If you do use apps on your smartphone to control devices in your home, make sure your smartphone is secure. At the very least make sure the pin function is enabled, as well as any biometric authentication you have. Where possible, it's also a good idea to download some anti-virus software for your smartphone too.



14

REGULARLY AUDIT YOUR DEVICES AND CONSOLES

Every now and then you should check through all of your smart devices (including games consoles connected to the Internet). Turn them off at the mains and disconnect them from the Internet. In fact, it's good practice to disconnect any devices that aren't in use. It's a small thing but really does help. Even when you think a device might be in sleep mode, if it's connected to the Internet it could still be listening or streaming data.



Meet our expert

Emma Davis was a secondary school Computer Science teacher for more than a decade. Since leaving education, she has been working in a cyber security firm delivering cyber awareness training to businesses and carrying out network testing. She is a mother of a five-year-old, she's had vast experience of controlling and managing how children access online services and use apps.



What parents need to know about

MICROSOFT TEAMS



DISCLOSING PERSONAL DETAILS

Like any messaging service or social network, children can be targeted by others to share their private or personal information ranging from their phone number, birthday and home address to their social media accounts or even their personal login details and passwords. Oversharing their private information can lead to any manner of risks including online fraud, bullying or even grooming activity.



CYBERBULLYING

The risk of cyberbullying can be increased online when using chat facilities. Microsoft Teams provides the ability for users to chat to each other via its instant messaging service, both as part of a group or privately. Children could find themselves the target of negative or hurtful comments directed from other users who might find it easier to say things they maybe otherwise wouldn't in person.

#BULLY



INAPPROPRIATE CHAT

The chance to have private conversations in Teams can also mean that children feel as though they can share messages and communication between each other that are hidden away from others. Whilst children are most likely to use Teams in a school setting, the ability to chat privately may provide an opportunity to be less formal which could lead to sharing inappropriate messages, files or content which is unsuitable in a school environment.



HACKING RISK

Teams, like any software application, may be a target for hackers to illicit personal data. A 'man-in-the-middle attack' could occur whereby the attacker reroutes communication between two users through the attacker's computer without the knowledge of the other users. This means that online communications could possibly be intercepted and be read or listened to, exposing both parties to the possibility of identity fraud or other criminal behaviour.



VIRUS INFECTION

Viruses and other harmful programs are among the risks of using online platforms like Microsoft Teams. Wherever you can share files or links, there is a risk that the content could be malicious. This could lead to slow computer performance, deletion of data, the theft of private or personal information and even hackers taking control of your PC.



LIVE STREAMING RISKS

Microsoft Teams, like other video-conferencing software platforms, facilitates live streaming. That means it inevitably carries some of the associated risks. These are likely to be minimal within a controlled environment (for instance in a classroom setting / remote learning). However, live streaming means that content isn't always moderated and children may inadvertently view or hear inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material that they otherwise wouldn't.



#WakeUpWednesday

Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

BLOCK USERS

If your child is receiving inappropriate messages or finds themselves being harassed or abused on Teams, they can block these contacts from the privacy control in the settings menu. To add an extra layer of protection, you can also block contacts whom hide their ID to protect children from communicating with people they don't know.



PROTECT PERSONAL INFO

It's a good idea to talk to your child about the importance of keeping their personal information private and secure. Children should only give out the minimum information they need to when creating an account and understand that if other people request their personal details from them, they should avoid providing it and report any concerns to a trusted adult.



ENABLE BACKGROUND BLUR

To help protect your privacy during a video call or live stream, it may be a good idea to blur the background or even add a background effect. This can easily be done by clicking 'Background effects' before joining a meeting after which you'll have the option to blur your background, replace your background with one of the images provided or upload and use an image of your own.



UPDATE COMPUTER SECURITY

It's important to ensure you perform regular computer and software updates, as these patches often improve security flaws and minimise your vulnerability to cyberattacks. Having your own computer security or anti-malware software is another level of defence in minimising the chances of an attack from viruses, malware and other harmful programs. Ensure this is updated everyday so that it is able to protect you against the very latest threats.



TALK ABOUT RISKS

As a parent, talking to your child and making them aware of the risks of working and communicating online can help them to be more digitally resilient. Perhaps outline a set of agreed do's and don'ts and try to ensure young people know what to do if they are made to feel uncomfortable or experience any negative behaviour or activity.



AVOID VIDEO/AUDIO

It's always a good idea to turn off your audio during live group calls when not in use. This can easily be done by muting the mic and will avoid others hearing anything personal in the background at home or at school. Similarly, if possible, try to encourage children to avoid using video call to help guard against any privacy concerns and limit the risks of viewing anything inappropriate or unsettling.





Suggested Apps and Games For EARLY YEARS



Learning

FISH SCHOOL HD



This app teaches young children (age 2-5) about important things like letters, shapes, numbers and more, all set in a colourful underwater setting with adorable sea creatures. The basic idea has fish and sea creatures forming the shapes of letters, numbers etc that your little one can identify. Developers Duck Duck Moose have a lineage of creating family friendly apps and games with 21 top-selling apps since 2008. Fish School HD has over 50,000 downloads and offers a rounded package of activities, but many other apps by this developer are highly rated and offer a few twists on the formula. As always it's worth checking a few out to see which best suits your child's interests. Fish School HD is available for free on iOS and Android.

GREEN EGGS AND HAM - DR. SEUSS



The classic Dr. Seuss book has been reworked into an interactive adventure for modern day devices, with an emphasis on encouraging literacy learning in younger children. Within the app, there's a few different options on how to enjoy the story; you can read it aloud together, have the app read the book and follow along, or just play the story through automatically. You can even tap on words to hear them individually to practice vocabulary. While the app will set you back £3.79 on Android (£3.99 on iOS) it has an excellent rating and over 10,000 downloads, with many noting how much their young children have enjoyed the story. It speaks volumes about the quality of the work, too, that a book from 1960 can still be read and loved by children some two generations after its initial release.

TOCA LAB: ELEMENTS



Toca Lab is the app of choice in encouraging little scientists to get to grips with elements, our world and how physics and chemistry work. This one might be a little advanced for younger kids and, though it has a PEGI 3 rating, it does recommend ages 6-8 in the description. All 118 elements are present in Toca Labs and kids are encouraged to find and test them all. Experimenting with things like Gold, Neon, Hydrogen and more, it gives a better grasp of how everything in our universe is formed. Bear in mind though that it's not meant to be a scientifically accurate account of how elements react, but to build curiosity in young minds. The app is available on iOS and Android for £3.99.

BAREFOOT WORLD ATLAS



What's the next best thing to travelling the world? Well, for kids with access to an iPad or Apple phone, Barefoot World Atlas could be a close second. In this app available only on iOS for £4.99, kids and adults can explore the globe from the comfort of their own homes and learn all about our planet. The app, which is rated 4+, only appears on Apple devices but the sheer amount of information contained in here will keep curious kids busy for hours on end.

SKETCHBOOK - DRAW AND PAINT (AUTODESK SKETCHBOOK ON IOS)



Encouraging artistic ability at an early age can often be invaluable in letting kid's imaginations loose and there are many apps that allow them to unlock that passion. SketchBook comes highly recommended with over 300,000 reviews. Essentially, the app comprises a blank canvas and a host of "fast and powerful creative sketching tools" like pens, pencils and paint brushes to let those creative juices flow. SketchBook is rated PEGI 3 so even younger children should be able to get to grips with it. However, it could prove a little too complex for some and the large collection of tools and crisp graphics would suit a larger screen like an iPad, over a mobile phone. Despite this, the ability to simply mess around and doodle, coupled with more advanced accessibility later down the line, should make it a must own for all age ranges. The app is free to download on both Android and iOS.

Just for Fun

LITTLE FRIENDS: CATS & DOGS



If you're looking to introduce pets into the family home but aren't sure about how your children might react, a good way to get your younger ones acquainted with an animal before a big commitment is a game like Little Friends: Cats & Dogs. This Nintendo Switch game tasks players with feeding, playing with and loving their own virtual cat or dog. Much like Nintendogs or even Tamagotchi of the 90s, Little Friends is a fun way to build up confidence to owning a real animal. While only a 1 player game, Little Friends: Cats & Dogs is suitable for all ages and entirely offline, so there's nothing at all to worry about when they're enjoying it alone.

BBC iPLAYER KIDS



This app is designed for kids and lets them watch all their favourite CBBC and CBeebies shows in one place. The simple presentation is super easy to navigate and the app itself is entirely free on both Android and iOS with no adverts whatsoever. BBC iPlayer Kids can download shows to your device's internal storage allowing you to take all the best bits with you when there's no WiFi and multiple profiles mean everybody gets straight to their favourites with minimal fuss. According to the app description, it will ask for your child's name and age to recommend other programmes it thinks they might like.

YOUTUBE KIDS



YouTube Kids takes the popular YouTube format and curates a more specialised environment for children to search through. While any age range can benefit from YouTube Kids, the 'Preschool' Mode is specifically designed for kids aged 4 and under. According to the app's description, 'Preschool' Mode promotes creativity, playfulness, learning and exploration through its channels. The inclusion of parental controls (limited screen-time, video blocking and flagging) and strict advert monitoring by YouTube means the experience is incredibly safe for younger kids. It should be noted that in the app description, YouTube say that some inappropriate content can slip through the cracks, but they're constantly implementing updates to stop these. A hugely popular app, YouTube Kids is available on iOS and Android with well over 100 million downloads.

MARIO KART 8 DELUXE



Mario Kart has been a staple of Nintendo consoles since 1992. It has been a favourite of young and old alike for over 20 years and is always an incredibly fun experience. Now exclusively on the Nintendo Switch with Mario Kart 8, the bells and whistles may have changed, but the enjoyable core gameplay and challenge have not. Suitable for all ages, Mario Kart can be played alone, online or at home with up to 4 players on one screen. The ability to take the Switch out with you into the world and play wherever you like is a huge advantage over other games and means you can always be sure of some quick entertainment.

ROCKET LEAGUE



The concept behind Rocket League takes teams of jet-fuelled cars zipping around football-inspired pitches in an attempt to knock a giant, over-sized ball into nets. Rated PEGI 3, the challenge of Rocket League is probably more suited to those 5 and up, but anybody can enjoy the bright colours and fun gameplay. Rocket League is available on Windows PC, Mac, PlayStation, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch at various price points. Be warned though, you can spend money in the game for certain items so be sure you know when your young ones are playing and what they're buying.

Meet our expert



Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

