

Dear Parents and Carers of Children and Young People in Halton,

During these unprecedented times, schools are having to turn to the virtual world more than we would ever have imagined possible just 18 months ago and the use of video conferencing is an essential platform for live learning. This brings with it many new aspects to bear in mind, when considering the safeguarding of our children and young people.

Having liaised with safeguarding colleagues in other local authorities, and discussed with schools the measures they are putting in place to facilitate live and remote learning, we wanted to write to you all to assure you of the guidance and support offered to schools, Halton's expectations in relation to safeguarding in live learning, and the roles we each have to play, when it comes to keeping children safe online.

'Live' Lessons

'Live' lessons are just one possible element of each school's offer of remote learning, and schools will make a decision as to whether this is appropriate for their children & young people based on a number of factors.

Whether using Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, SeeSaw, Class Dojo or another similar service, when used appropriately, each software option enables schools to control the learning as they would in class; by admitting only those students who need to access live lessons, managing contributions from students – through unmuting participants at suitable moments and not allowing participants to annotate or draw on the screen, for example, and providing easy access to independent tasks.

With these measures in place, I therefore want to assure parents that, if schools choose to use 'live lessons' as part of their offer, they can be both safe and beneficial:

- ✓ They provide children and young people with positive contact with their teachers and peers
- ✓ They enable teachers to check in with students to ensure they are safe and well

If any parents are having difficulty in enabling their children to access their remote learning, including 'live' lessons, please do talk to your child's school.

In order to ensure that the live lessons have maximum impact on the learning of all children, there are some important aspects that need to be considered by families:

Security of learning

Access codes and passwords should never be shared or forwarded to anyone else. Doing so constitutes a safeguarding breach and will be taken extremely seriously by the school. We are asking you to ensure that this is fully explained to your children and young people and that you monitor this with them. Unfortunately, there have been a small number of cases of this occurring, with students sharing their login details on social media – we need to stress that this should not be happening and

needs to be stopped so that we can preserve the safety and security of all children and young people.

Halton advise that all 'live lessons' are recorded, or at least two members of staff are present. This is a protective factor, so that if there are any breaches or concerns raised, for whatever reasons, these can be reviewed appropriately. It is not intended to be used for monitoring purposes.

If a school chooses to permit children and young people to have cameras turned on, please ensure that everyone in the household is appropriately dressed and that the environment is appropriate. As both children of critical workers and vulnerable students are being taught in classrooms, Halton advise that these class members are not seen on screen during live lessons.

Every school throughout Halton is working exceptionally hard to meet the needs, both educationally and mentally, of their children and young people. Their dedication, passion and determination to do the best for each and every one of our children and young people, is truly exceptional and humbling. There will be moments when things don't always go according to plan and during these unprecedented times, that is to be expected. But I have no doubt that every decision made, is done with only the best intentions and with our children and young people's interests and the wellbeing of everyone within the school family, at the heart.

However, if there is ever something which is troubling you, or if you feel something could be done to help improve the home learning experience, please do speak with the leadership team of the school.

Yours sincerely,

Benjamin Holmes

Safeguarding Children in Education Officer

Halton Borough Council