SAFEGUARDING AND INCLUSION

Guidelines for supporting additionally vulnerable students during periods of remote learning

All staff conduct throughout digital and remote learning must remain in line with GEMS Safeguarding Policy Manual, GEMS Safer Working Practice Guidance and all other relevant policies. The conduct of all parties, including students, parents and staff includes the strict prohibition of cyber bullying, online harassment and the use of inappropriate language in any communication.

In line with wider safeguarding and inclusion policies, it is important that we continue to meet the individual needs of all of our students, even through these times of remote and digital learning.

You may have additional concerns about how we do this for our most vulnerable learners. The information below provides schools with guidance when developing distance learning protocols relating to safeguarding and inclusion.

This does not serve as an exhaustive list but offers points for consideration when making decisions about the provision you will be putting in place for these students.

GEMS Safeguarding Policy Manual   GEMS Safer Working Practice Guidance

KEY RISKS

When identifying key risks, your school should consider:

- Students with existing mental health conditions
- Students in high-risk households, including potentially abusive environments
- Cessation of regular emotional well-being services
- Increased social isolation
- Increased family-stress
- Potential for students to be left unsupervised
- Excessive screen-time
- Online safety. Schools should consider revisiting and re-publishing any school online safety guidance. (see Section 7)

Note: For high need cases, planning should be undertaken on an individualised basis through a multi-disciplinary approach. This should include key personnel to create a team around the child such as the school counsellor, DSL, SEN Teacher and, wherever possible, involvement by the child in keeping themselves safe.

Regular updates for high need cases should be shared with Senior Leaders.

If any of the above are applicable, you may wish to consider:

- Making more frequent communication with the family (ensuring that during any welfare checks, you speak with the child as well as any adult)
- Recording all instances of home communication (dates, times, context and content of discussion)
- Reminding all class teachers of the child's vulnerable status to ensure they remain vigilant and report. This does not need to include the sharing of sensitive and confidential information but advising there have been previous concerns is appropriate
- Offering the family additional virtual counselling services

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Maintain your systems and processes for reporting and recording student concerns

- Remind staff of the need to remain vigilant and report anything they are concerned about
- Recirculate your school's procedure for reporting and recording any concerns
- Continue to report through Phoenix HSE
- Review any existing plans (IEPs, IBPs, Pupil Passports, Safety Plans, Medical Care Plans) and make necessary adjustments to account for the change in environment
- Ensure staff are aware of the need to keep senior leaders informed where there are significant concerns around a vulnerable student's access to education. This may relate to safeguarding concerns or to special education educational needs and disabilities.
- Ensure you review what platforms and opportunities are in place for students to raise any concerns (what if the concern relates to teacher? Parent? Peer? School leader?) What processes do you have to effectively action and escalate these concerns.
- Ensure that students, parents and staff are all aware of how students raise concerns eg Toot Toot, Mylearning etc and who will take action. (See section 7)

Note: In the event of an emergency situation, advice and guidance remains available from Sara Hedger, Head of Safeguarding. Her contact details are 058 565 1968 and sara.hedger@gemseducation.com.

Email Sara

KEEP CONNECTED

Keep connected with your families

You may do this by:

- Sending an initial letter to families clarifying your school's methods of communication throughout this period
- Making use of platforms such as SeeSaw and MyLearning
- Creating a simple data-capturing system to enable parents to track and record target achievements from home
- Signposting families to community-based services or therapy centres
- Establishing a process for regular check-in with high risk cases
- Encouraging families to access the GEMS Connect App.

Note: When contacting families or children, you should **always** use a work phone and **never** your personal mobile. Staff should not arrange face-to-face meetings with students outside any permitted activities.

ENCOURAGE SELF-REGULATION

Encourage and support parents to think about self-regulation

You may do this by:

- Sharing sensory and brain-break tips
- Sharing emotional regulation charts or templates
- Providing advice on developing and maintaining a routine at home
- Signposting families to online resources to support independent learning

DIFFERENTIATE YOUR CURRICULUM DELIVERY

Continue to differentiate your curriculum delivery

You may do this by:

- Re-sharing IEPs with all families
- Establishing an online platform where the Inclusion Team can provide advice and guidance on lesson plans
- Ensuring each Team's classroom has two staff members in it
- Providing levelled and extension tasks for lessons
- Providing students with options for task completion
- Adapting your lesson format to meet the child's profile of need
- Chunking written information at a level appropriate for the student
- Providing students with stationary packs
- Providing a physical toolkit of practical activities

- Offering webinar sessions for counselling services. For safeguarding reasons please ensure two practitioners are present during any individual delivery
- Signposting to websites and online learning platforms as part of a lesson plan

Note: If you are signposting families to web-links or online resources, or are using online resources yourself, please ensure these have been viewed in their entirety to guarantee their suitability for the age and stage of the student.

WORK WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

Maintain joint-working with your colleagues

You may do this by:

- Ensuring professional contact details for your DSL/Head of Inclusion are re-shared with all staff
- Establishing an online platform for information sharing such as Microsoft Teams or Yammer
- Agreeing pre-arranged times for departmental virtual meetings
- Clarifying the process for physical teacher meetings with your Principal
- Encouraging colleagues to regularly check in with each other – the risk of social isolation is not just a risk for students, but Teachers, too!
- Ensuring staff have a buddy system or similar and know who they can talk to if they are struggling

ONLINE SAFETY

Online Safety for Staff and Students

- Ensure that any 'live sessions' have a minimum of 3 participants (including the teacher) there should be no 1:1 sessions. If there is only one child online in your session you should postpone and reschedule.
- Record all live sessions and store in the cloud so that they can be reviewed and revisited by students and staff when necessary.
- Revisit Safe working practice with staff to avoid behaviours that may be outside of the GEMS Safer Working practice guidance and any relevant codes of conduct.

  - What plans are in place for staff to reinforce online behavioural expectations with students? Will these be visited before each session as you may if you were physically in a classroom?
  - Ensure there is a quality assurance process in place to assure the safety and welfare of students. This would include middle and/or senior staff being members of any relevant Microsoft team eg Phase Leader and/or Assistant Leader KG2 in all KG2 classes, Inclusion Lead/SEN Teachers in relevant classes etc.

- Discuss with your middle and senior leadership teams who would be most suitable to be allocated to classes and then consider a framework for QA that includes safeguarding monitoring which can be led by the DSL/Principal.
- Ensure that staff, parents and students are aware that a variety of live and recorded sessions will be randomly monitored and why it is important.
- If staff are in live sessions at home, ensure they have checked the background or blurred the background so that their place of residence cannot be identified and there are no personal/ unprofessional materials in the background eg papers with addresses, personal photos etc. It should not take place in a bedroom.

  - Review how children can raise concerns about online behaviours. Whether that is a concern about an adult or other student. Which platforms do you use? Can these be accessed by students at home? What happens to that information – who will action/escalate the concern? Do ALL staff know that their responsibility for taking action is the same whether they are onsite or undertaking remote learning and if so, do they all know what to do?
  - To further safeguard staff and students, GEMS IT and Microsoft have worked together and are putting the following safeguards in place for all GEMS schools using Microsoft Teams:

  o   Disable recording option – Only teachers can record the session, students will not be able to.
  o   Disable private chat
  o   Grey out "Meet now" option - this would ensure students are unable to start their own meeting
  o   In addition to this, IT have also created a workaround, which would allow only the teachers to mute the students.
  o   For more information and to access the guides, please refer to the recent email sent by the IT Team. They continue to engage with Google to create further safeguards.

GEMS EDUCATION

We see **genius** in every child

Contact Sara Hedger

Contact Emily Ellington

With special thanks to the following practitioners for their contributions:

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The GEMS Counsellor's Network