



St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai – Muhaisnah

DISTANCE LEARNING SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Written by:	Inclusion Team	Reviewed:	September 2020
Endorsed by:	SLT		
Approved by:	Board of Governors	Next Review:	September 2021

Distance Learning Safeguarding Policy

The Governors and staff of St Mary's School Muhaisnah fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding children during Distance Learning. All staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual student online.

The policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers and all adults who come into contact with children in Distance Learning to make sure and safeguard that which promotes their welfare, well-being through virtual learning.

Aims of the Policy

- to ensure the welfare and safety of students during the distance learning.
- to support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence through virtual approach.
- to raise the awareness of both teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse at home during distance learning.
- to ensure that there are clear procedures for reporting Distance Learning Child Protection concerns, which are known to everyone.
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk before or during virtual learning.

Guidelines for Teachers

1. Teachers must not have one to one sessions with any student. In the case of Inclusion Support team members, a third party team member must be present when having a Google meets/ Zoom. Teachers can record academic sessions only.
2. During counselling or intervention sessions, as per child protection policy, a team member and one of the parents must be present during live sessions or interventions for the protection of the child and of the teacher or counsellor. Where the matter is of a child protection nature and it would be detrimental for the parent to be present, there must be two staff members around.
3. Students must turn on the cameras for the safety purposes of both teachers and students during the class live sessions in the event that the cameras are off the teacher must call the attention of the child on the spot and the parent through email sighting the date and the time that it happened.
4. Record the class live sessions to safeguard the actions and words spoken during the distance learning for the protection of both students and teacher.
5. When the child discloses any child protection issue or safeguarding concern, the teacher will write the exact words used (no paraphrasing) you may not record this.

If possible, take the statement in the presence of a third party who may be a teacher or staff for safety and security purposes.

6. Directly report the incident to the Child Protection Officer (Primary/ Secondary and the Principal as the overall Child Protection Governor.)

Rules

1. Teachers and students are not allowed for one-to-one chat privately.
2. Webcam and microphone are off unless allowed by the teacher.
3. Teachers must wear smart -casual attire and wear school uniforms when attending distance learning classes.
4. Use a background that is neutral and professional. Do not give the students or parents an insight into your home space as this could put you at risk should any allegations ever arise.
5. School Leaders random drop-in during the live sessions to ensure quality and safe learning.
6. Review the chats in google classroom for follow-up and for future reference. Do not enter into private chats with any students.
7. Parents can only be communicated by school email. Do not use WhatsApp, Direct messaging and never have parents or pupils on personal social media pages.

Guidelines for Parents

1. Ensure that the child has a school regular routine with wake-up alarm, breakfast on the table and set learning hours each day.
2. Ensure that the child has a Distance Learning tool device such as internet and headset, Laptop/tablet and audio.
3. Prepare a weekly timetable for the child and affirm each success that will keep him/her motivated. Show support and understanding for each low moment.
4. Create a study area, preferably a quiet place away from distractions (all the required stationery and study material to be kept ready) with headphones to block out background noise. It is recommended that the student dress appropriately (not in pajamas or night gowns) and sit at a table on a comfortable chair rather than a sofa. Sessions should never be attended from the student's bed. Create an atmosphere of teaching/ learning space.
5. Parents set rules at home to avoid distraction and a place where the student can sit comfortably such as a table, chair. Live sessions should not take place in a bedroom.

6. Students finish the task within the day to prevent them from working late at night. Ensure they have a good night rest and develop healthy sleeping habits.
7. In the event the student is not able to attend classes due to illness, an e-mail must be sent to the class teacher immediately.
8. Parents and other adults should be fully clothed when attending the live sessions with the student. (No pajamas or nightgowns)
9. Protect your child online, Digital platforms provide an opportunity for the child in learning but also a risk for children's safety, protection and privacy. Establish rules together with your child about how, when and where the internet can be used.
11. Build an open communication based on trust and love with the child. Discuss good hygiene practices and reinforce the importance of things like regularly taking a bath, handwashing. Make sure they are in a safe, secure and caring environment.
12. Stay connected with SMM regarding your children's learning and tasks. Stay informed, ask questions and get more guidance through the official emails of SMM.

Guidelines for Students

1. Establish a routine and expectations. It is important to establish good habits from the start of the day.
2. Choose a good place to learn. Set up a physical location that is dedicated for school online focused activities.
3. Stay in touch with your Teachers, Learning Support Teachers, Counsellors, SLTs through our online platforms and virtual learning environments.
4. Establish time for quiet and reflection. It's good to build in some time for peace and quiet. Siblings may need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction.
5. Monitor your time on-screen and online. Work together to find ways to prevent "down time" from becoming just more 'screen time'.
6. Connect safely with your friends and be kind. Be polite and respectful and behave appropriately in dealing with online conversations with your teachers, classmates and friends.
7. Avoid chatting unnecessary words and conversation during live sessions.
8. Report inappropriate behaviour and other problems so that everyone maintains healthy relationships and positive interactions.
9. Follow the school guidelines in dealing with online interaction during your Distance Learning.
10. If you have any concerns or worries, the counsellors are there to help you. Contact Sr Victoria svictoria@smgeducation.org and she will give you a referral for support. Your tutor can

also help to get you some support, so if you prefer you may talk to them in your daily attendance session or send them an email.

Guidelines for Students of Determination

During distance learning, students of determination will be required to shift and create habits of success in their new learning environment. Learning Support Teachers /Counsellors will help communicate clear expectations to the students. **Students, in consultation with their parent(s)/guardian(s), and to the greatest extent possible, given their individual circumstances, should:**

- Establish daily routines to effectively engage in the learning experiences.
- If possible, identify a comfortable, quiet space in their homes where they can work effectively and successfully.
- Monitor the established lines of communication with their teacher(s), to check assignments, updates, and feedbacks.
- Check their email, Class Dojo, Google Classroom, Hangouts (Distance Learning Tools) regularly
- Do their best work by completing assignments with integrity and academic
- Do their best to meet timelines, commitments and due dates.
- Communicate proactively with their Learning Support Teacher(s)/Counsellors if they cannot meet deadlines or require additional support for their tasks
- Adhere to the School Distance Learning Safeguarding Policy

Students will not make progress if the work is done for them, and whilst we and the parents will support, students are expected to be independent in their work as much as possible.

Guidelines for SMM Counselling Distance Learning:

1. Parents will be notified before we conduct counselling to both primary and secondary students
2. There must be no use of personal cameras or screenshots taken during any sessions
3. No sharing of direct numbers; we only use the SMM platforms.
4. Acknowledge and observe the behaviours of the students during live sessions for any signs of unusual stress.
5. During counselling, do not record sessions as part of confidentiality and privacy issues.
6. Information is never disclosed unless there is a child protection issue, in which case it must immediately be reported to the appointed Child Protection officer. Observe confidentiality and privacy policies.
7. Online counselling is not more than one hour.
8. It is important for the counsellors to ask the issues and concerns encountered by the students during DL.

9. Time of follow-up and monitoring are set among high-risk concerned students.
10. Any form of abuse or violence at home should be forwarded to the Child Protection Officer.

Guidelines for Distance Learning Dealing with anxiety and the feeling of restlessness during distance learning and triggers of events in the family and personal issues and extended hours of service.

As per practice at SMM, the Students of Determination with a behavioural medical diagnosis, are provided with **Social, Emotional and Mental Health-SEMH** Programme/Intervention wherein the following routines are systematically implemented among the team (Smart Buddies and Counsellor)

Daily SMALL-TALK Session

1. **Socialization skills** - opportunity for each student to mingle with others with respect and compassion.
2. **Reflection** - each student is given a specific day to be a mindfulness champion. Students are learning to be appreciative and grateful with what they have.
3. **Brain gym**-helps the students to release excess energy (hyperactivity and release silent depression) and boost happy hormones.
4. **Creative updates** of Academic and Behavior Performance during the Distance Learning through feedbacks of the teachers and the parents.
5. Students are motivated and encouraged to be more focused and attentive.
- Responsible behaviour is observed during distance learning.

5. **Topic Discussion of the Day** (based on SEMH-KHDA category)

This is an open discussion that strengthens the logical and critical thinking skills as well as deepening the socio-emotional attitudes of the students.

6. **Closing reflection**- gratitude time, to express what they were thankful for.

7. **Extended minutes for one on one counselling (if needed)**

It is being offered after the session if someone among the Smart Buddies is low in spirit or melancholic **due to unnecessary comments received from others and unsettled during the session.**

8. **Empowerment of “Home-School Partnership”** through weekly and scheduled parents’ meetings.

This is the first key to address in order to achieve the continuous progress of the Students of Determination. They are the partners and caregivers who will ignite the interest and active participation of each student. Their presence and commitment in the meeting makes the

encounter legal, achievable and full of hope that will give each child a reason to bloom and shine and hold his/her ground in a world where there is “Us, We and together there is one”.

Records and Monitoring during the Distance Learning

It is crucial to keep accurate online records where there are concerns about the welfare of a child. These records are confidential.

All staff are made aware of the need to record and report concerns about a student or students during the Distance Learning. The Designated Child Protection Officer is responsible for such records and at what time they should be released.

Confidentiality is essential and all Distance Learning Safeguarding files are kept in a secure location in the Designated Child Protection Officers.

Reference: Aligned to SMM Child Protection Policy & SMM Distance Learning Practices