



Wessex
Learning Trust
We Learn Together!

Virtual Learning Policy

Date approved by Trust Board: September 2023
Review Date: September 2026

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Wessex Learning Trust. Registered in England. Company Number 7348580.

Wessex Learning Trust

Virtual Learning Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every three years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Ball'.

Signature:

Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 1/9/2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Kirkup'.

Signature:

Name: Mr Brian Kirkup

Position: Chair of the Board

Date: 1/9/2023

1. Introduction

1.1 In exceptional circumstances, it may become necessary to transition some or all of our teaching within the Trust to online, virtual lessons in order to maintain our learners' continuity of education.

1.2 Virtual learning will never be seen as a substitute for face-to-face teaching. Instead is seen as a stop gap in unprecedented times, such as a health crisis, extreme weather, or where a school site becomes unusable.

1.3 This policy seeks to outline the measures that must be taken when virtual learning is used. These measures will protect staff and learners and ensure we continue to adhere to our safeguarding duties.

2. Aims

2.1 This document aims to:

- Ensure consistency in the approach to remote learning for learners who are not in school.
- Set out expectations for all members of the school community with regards to remote learning.
- Provide appropriate guidelines for data protection.

3. What is Virtual Learning?

3.1 Virtual learning includes instances where traditional face to face teaching is replaced by video calls, audio conference calls, or broadcast video; and there is a direct interaction between a member of staff and learners taking place outside of a traditional school setting.

3.2 Within the Wessex Learning Trust, Microsoft Teams is our preferred virtual learning platform, however other platforms are also suitable for use provided the guidelines in this document are followed.

4. Virtual Learning Safety

4.1 When it is necessary to use virtual learning, it is paramount that:

Staff ensure:

- They do not have one-to-one lessons with learners, only group calls.
- Where possible, the member of staff conducts the virtual lesson from their/a classroom.
- They (as well as anyone else in their household) are dressed appropriately for the call. Virtual learning is used in lieu of traditional classroom teaching, so the same rules on appearance apply. The Staff Code of Conduct and Dress Policy still apply.
- They set appropriate boundaries and ground rules at the start of each session – e.g. when people may mute/unmute themselves.
- Where video is used, staff should film against a plain background or at least blur their background if the former is not possible. They should be filmed in appropriate areas (e.g. not bedrooms) and regular classroom decorum should be maintained.
- If sharing their screen, staff should ensure any other open tabs, documents or programs are appropriate to be seen. Close programmes or other websites that are not required.
- Live classes should be recorded and stored so that they can be reviewed if any issues were to arise in future. A list of participants should be kept alongside details of the length, date, and times of sessions.
- Live classes are be conducted within in normal working hours so that undue pressure is not placed on the member of staff, learners or their families. They should also be kept to an appropriate length, bearing in mind that working online can often be harder work than regular face to face lessons.

- Language is kept professional and appropriate at all times. Family members should not be in the background or within earshot.
- Individuals/schools should catalogue recorded lessons so that they may be used again if required.

Learners ensure:

- They realise they are there to learn and should treat the lesson the same way they would if they were in the classroom.
- They are dressed appropriately for the call and answer it from a suitable location, conducive to learning – i.e. if possible, not a bedroom.
- They keep their language and behaviour respectful and civilised, and know that misbehaviour will be sanctioned as if they were in school.
- They have prepared suitably for the lesson so as they are able to engage and contribute.

Parents ensure:

- They support their children to turn up on time and engage in virtual learning sessions.
- They provide a suitable environment for their child to work, without distractions or interference.
- When within earshot or view of a camera, they maintain an appropriate and professional decorum, and are dressed appropriately.

5. Data Protection

5.1 When conducting virtual learning sessions, it is recognised that it may be necessary for staff to use a personal device such as a phone or tablet which is not the property of the school. This should be avoided wherever possible. However in exceptional circumstances where this must take place staff must ensure that:

- Any recordings or screenshots are moved to a school device such as laptop or cloud storage service and removed from the staff member’s device by the end of the day. If this is not possible, the DSL should be informed.
- They do not give away personal information such as home emails or phone numbers to learners and set up any accounts or meetings using only their professional email.

5.2 Whether using a personal or professional device, all staff members must take appropriate steps to ensure their devices remain secure. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Keeping the device password-protected – strong passwords are at least 8 characters, with a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters (e.g. asterisk or currency symbol).
- Ensuring the hard drive is encrypted – this means if the device is lost or stolen, no one can access the files stored on the hard drive by attaching it to a new device.
- Making sure the device locks if left inactive for a period of time.
- Not sharing the device among family or friends.
- Installing antivirus and anti-spyware software.
- Keeping operating systems and apps up to date – always install the latest updates.

6. Related Policies

6.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Statement and the Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.