Young Learner: Virtual Classroom Safeguarding, Behaviour Policy and Code of Conduct

Safeguarding

At the British Council we are proud of our high standards for safeguarding children in both our face-to-face classes and our virtual classrooms. Virtual classrooms can present some challenges when monitoring behaviour at distance, responding quickly to unforeseen circumstances in different locations, and protecting student contact details. With this in mind, our virtual classroom space has been designed with several features to ensure all children learn in the same safe and nurturing environments you expect from our classrooms.

Our Virtual Classrooms

The following is a brief list of safeguarding features in our virtual classrooms.

All classes will have an adult present.

We ensure that all classes are monitored by our trained teachers and teaching assistants. Students cannot enter the classroom without a staff member present, and if the teacher leaves the classroom (for example, due to connectivity issues) students are put on hold and cannot interact with each other. Teaching Assistants may be present in the virtual classroom for the online safety of your child(ren).

First names only.

To create a safe environment and minimise the possibility of contact being made outside of the classroom, we don’t share personal details of students on the platform or in the class. Students in the virtual classroom only have their first name and initial of their last name visible on screen.

Microphones and cameras

Teachers are able to mute any student’s microphone or turn off their video camera. If this happens, students cannot turn their microphones or cameras on again themselves, only the teacher can. Students can also mute themselves and switch off their cameras and the teacher cannot override this. This feature is helpful and used in a situation where the student needs privacy or if the teacher or student has concerns regarding bullying, seriously inappropriate behaviour or online safety.

Removing a student.

The teacher is able to temporarily remove a student from a classroom. This feature will only be used if there is a serious concern due to repeated unacceptable behaviour or online safety. In the event that a student is temporarily removed from a classroom, an email is automatically sent to our dedicated safeguarding team who will follow up with the teacher, parents and student about the incident.

Banning a student.

Teachers are able to ‘ban’ a student for the remainder of the lesson. This feature will only be used if there is a very serious concern due to repeated unacceptable behaviour or online safety. This will also automatically send an email to our dedicated safeguarding team, who will follow up with the student, parents and the teacher. The student may be able to re-join future classes after consultation.

Reporting a concern

Teachers and students have access to this feature in the virtual classroom. There are two levels of reporting:

* **‘I have a concern about inappropriate behaviour in the classroom’**

Students fill out an incident form to report something they feel is affecting them. When this form is submitted, it triggers an email to the dedicated safeguarding team and the user who submitted the form will receive an acknowledgement and follow up.

* **‘Emergency’**

If someone clicks ‘Emergency’ the class is immediately ended for all participants. This action sends an SMS to a dedicated British Council number and an email is also sent in this case.

Group and Private Chat

The virtual classroom includes a chat feature with both a group chat channel and a private channel between the teacher and each student. The chat function automatically blocks:

* inappropriate language (in English)
* long strings of numbers (which could be phone numbers) and email addresses.

Teachers and administrators can also hide messages from students that they feel are inappropriate although they can still see the message and the message will remain in the chat log, so that it can be checked. Hiding a message triggers an automatic email to our dedicated safeguarding team.

Invisible Administrators

Classes may be monitored by a local administrator or Teaching Assistant, using an invisible administration function if there is any concern regarding behaviour or the class is being observed for teaching quality standards.

Student and Parent Behaviour Policy

Learners should abide by all policies covering the appropriate use of virtual learning platforms managed by the British Council. In addition to this students and parents must abide by the rules in the signed Code of Conduct.

We expect all our virtual students to be responsible for their behaviour when taking part in virtual lessons

Positive Behaviour

Like all classes, virtual students and teachers are expected to respect others. This means they need to:

* Be friendly to other students.
* Let other students join in activities with them.
* Try the activities their teacher asks them to participate in.
* Follow the teacher’s instructions
* Listen to others and give them an opportunity to speak
* Make sure they are the only person on their camera
* Ask for help from their teacher or tell an adult that they trust if they are unhappy.

We believe that the most effective way of achieving our aims is to praise and encourage positive behaviour.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Students must **not** show any of the following behaviour:

* Use of or threat of violence.
* Bullying.
* Deliberate disobedience.
* Discrimination.
* Use of swear words in any language
* Use of telephones during lesson time
* Sending impolite messages.

Anti-bullying policy

The British Council has a zero-tolerance stance regarding bullying. Learners must follow the behaviour policy applicable for face-to-face classes in virtual classes. Failure to abide by this behaviour policy may lead to the student’s suspension or exclusion from the course.

Student and Parent Code of Conduct

When accessing and using the platform or taking part in in a virtual class, students and parents agree:

* the computer used to join the virtual classroom is located in an appropriate open, well-lit room in the home with a plain background. Ideally this is not the child’s bedroom
* only the child enrolled in the class will be visible in the virtual classroom during the lesson
* parents can help their child(ren) with technical issues at the beginning of the class only
* parents do not help their child(ren) or participate during the lesson
* to use appropriate behaviour and language expected in a face-to-face lesson
* to dress appropriately as expected in a face-to-face classroom
* not to record, film or take screenshots of the lesson (failure to comply strictly with the no recording policy may result in expulsion from British Council courses)
* not to share any personal data, including telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and all other forms of personal data or contact data with other students or the teacher
* to interact with other students only in the virtual classroom and not attempt, or aid another person, to interact with other learners outside of the virtual learning environment.
* To follow the behaviour policy applicable to face-to-face classes; including our zero-tolerance stance on bullying.

This code of conduct for students and parents has been designed to protect the rights and privacy of all the children using the platform and virtual classrooms. In the event of some concern that the agreement is not being followed, the teacher or British Council will consult closely with the student and parent to manage behaviour in the virtual classroom. If the behaviour continues the teacher may temporarily remove or ban the student from class.