



OVERVIEW:

Digital safeguarding of pupils involved in the Schools Linking Programme depends on both linked classes working within their own schools digital or E-Safety policies, properly implemented at all levels of each individual school community: published policies, secure school network design, the effective management of school broadband and filtering systems, parental awareness of the dangers of online use and effective teaching about digital technology use.

Each school should work within their own Digital Safeguarding Policy for GDPR requirements taking account of permissions given by parents to the school. TLN provides a letter template for schools to use to seek specific permission for exchange of information including photographs with the link school but each school may have additional requirements

In a link pair, one of the schools may have policy requirements that the other school does not. In this situation we state that the link pair should operate within the requirements that are more stringent in their interaction and we explain this in our Teacher Guidebook for linking.

EXCHANGE BETWEEN LINKING SCHOOLS

We know that exchanging information digitally works really well. It has been a long standing essential part of Schools Linking for many years.

Choosing how to exchange is something that needs to be acceptable to both schools and work with both schools' digital protections.

All information exchanged should be exchanged via the teacher or an adult in school so that the school ensures that everything exchanged is suitable for the other children to receive. In practice this means that teachers mark work before it is exchanged.

We recommend that only pupils first names are used on work exchanged or on calls.

If any tasks are set that involve pupils searching the internet schools should ensure pupils work within their own school policy and process.

We recommend that only pupils first names are used on work or on calls.

TLN provides guidance about sending files, storing files in shared spaces, creating shared pieces of work and lots of other ideas and resources. Fundamentally, it is for both Linking Teachers and their schools to agree on approaches and resources used and to decide what is right for them.



ORGANISING A FUN LINKING MEETING BY VIDEO CALL

We know that meeting by video call can work well for linking schools so you may want to plan a meeting with your link class on a digital platform. In the lesson plans we have written we are assuming this will be Phase 2 of the Linking Year. If you might want to connect sooner so we have put together this advice which has been checked by educational digital experts.

Video calls can really help to bring two classes together and for children to have a much clearer sense of the link – and potentially feel like they have truly ‘met’ each other. Managing a video call between two classes requires careful thought and consideration but they can be used successfully in many different ways. We have produced a guidance video to help with the technicality of video calls using different platforms. (platforms to use, audio and video functionality, safeguarding considerations). We also have creative ideas of what to do on a video call which includes quizzes, games and shared stories. Being on screen can be quite daunting for children (and adults) and so we offer some support for this. These can be found here:

<https://thelinkingnetwork.org.uk/schools-linking-2020-2021/digital-support/>

Step 1: Arrange what video calling platform you will use and organize the IT equipment needed.

Choose a platform that is needed to be acceptable to both schools. Work with your IT colleagues in both schools on this to agree a digital platform.

It can be useful to use a system that one of you is familiar, obviously if it is allowed to be used by the other school as well.

A good camera which has a wide angle lens fixed on the classroom wall above an interactive white board makes for a better experience. This is because the wide angle lens at height will mean that most or all of the classroom can be seen. The high quality lens will mean that the higher quality picture will mean that the view of the socially distanced children in the link class will not be fuzzy.

There are a wide variety of HD webcams available for less than £30 now. Try to get one that mentions HD 1080p, a wide angle lens, autofocus, built in audio and a cable long enough to place it in a high vantage point to fit in all pupils. You can always buy a USB extension cable if this isn't long enough. You may also consider buying a separate microphone. If the camera is placed higher up for a better view of the class the sound quality may suffer and this can be addressed with a separate microphone.

Step 2: Hold a test call.

Arrange a meeting in advance with your colleagues to check how the Video Call works.

Check you can see enough of the classroom, practice screen sharing, practice muting and check the sound.

Step 3: Be jointly prepared for the lesson with a shared plan

What we have learnt from trialing video calls is that a plan makes all the difference with both adults in the two classrooms having an agenda and running order and knowing who is leading which section of the video meeting.



Check the IT is working on the day prior to the meeting with the children present. Plan how long the meeting is going to last and what you will do in detail. Children can feel left out and can easily become distracted - plan some activities.

Start on time and finish on time – leave the children really excited and wanting to meet again. Have a plan for what you will do, while you wait for the other class to arrive especially.

Think about 'protocols'

- Do you want to both be on mute until you are both ready to connect?
- What will the children do whilst they are waiting? (Maybe read a book).
- How will we take it in turns to speak?
- How will children let you know that they have something to say?
- What will you do if you think someone is behaving inappropriately?

Schedule a meeting for a certain time using your chosen platform and ensuring the correct safety safeguarding options have been used. Send these details to the link class. PLEASE NOTE DOWN THE DATE, THE NAMES OF ADULTS ON THE CALL AND NAMES OF THE TWO CLASSES.

Step 4: Be safe during the call

Video calls provides an opportunity to teach pupils best practice in keeping themselves safe online. This includes, for example, not oversharing, choosing what they want to share, recognizing that once something has been shared it is available to a wide audience and being respectful, honest and appropriate at all times in what they say, write or share.

On a video call, you are entering into another school's classroom and they are entering yours and you are enabling children from different schools to meet each other. Each of you must protect the children in your care and make sure you protect the other children too. If something unacceptable or difficult is happening in either of the classrooms, you must keep your children safe, challenge the behaviour, close the call and report the incident.

Top tips:

- Always have a member of staff from both schools in the call at all times.
- Don't record the meeting unless this has been previously agreed and appropriate consent has been given.
- We recommend you only use children's first names on calls.
- We don't recommend that you try to include children who are learning at home in live video calls with your link class.
- Stand at the side of the whiteboard facing your own class, with your laptop screen facing you. Your class will be able to see the link class on the whiteboard and you will be able to see them on the laptop.
- It is very useful to be able to 'phone' or message the other teacher while you are on the call.
- Chat can be very useful but should be always set to everyone and private 1-1 chat disabled with all information in the chat always seen by teachers (not just moderated by teachers) . The principle we are working with is that teachers are the intermediates for all exchange in order to safeguard all pupils. We don't recommend private chat between children.



- During your link meetings, if you have an activity that will involve breaking out into a smaller group, there must always be an adult from both schools so that every pupil has an adult from their school present for safeguarding purposes. If for any reason this doesn't happen the adult from the other room should close the breakout room. We would only envisage this feature being used by secondary schools.

A simple structure might be (15-20 minutes):

- (0) **Alternative Activity** Have something available for children to do already in their places so that is the IT breaks down they have an activity to hand. It might be an art activity or their reading book.
- (1) **Gathering:** as children arrive, ask them about something. In the invitation both classes could share some news or a picture (GDPR permitting).
- (2) **Welcoming:** briefly go through the rules; think of a circle type of game so that everyone gets a chance to speak and be on camera.
- (3) **Show me:** think of a game that allows everyone to take part but without the sound.
- (4) **Tell me:** something like a quiz where different children can give answers or speak up.
- (5) **Challenge:** something for everyone to do at the same time in their own space.
- (6) **Share:** each class shares something, or both classes learn sign language, or one teacher reads a story.
- (7) **Play:** Charades, quizzes, Bingo, Simon Says, Emoji Quiz, Pictionary, Scavenger Hunt, Stand Up/Sit down games to agree with statements, Musical Statues, Draw Me (draw your favourite food, favourite place, favourite weather on white boards)
- (8) **Farewell:** make the ending meaningful not drifting – take it in turns to say goodbye or say one (that sort of thing).

Creative ideas for use on a video call and support can be found [here](#):

FURTHER SUPPORT:

The Scouts Association have some excellent guidance about different digital platforms on their [website](#).

In collaboration with the Curriculum Innovation Service in Bradford, we have produced a video guide for using different video calling platforms. This can be viewed [here](#).

Further support and resources can be found on the digital support section of our [website](#).

