



St Francis' Catholic Primary School
Station Road
Nailsea
North Somerset
BS48 4PD
Tel: 01275 855373

Head teacher: Mrs Catherine Hunt
Acting Deputy Head teacher: Mr Simon Groves
E-mail: office@stfrancispri.org
Website: <http://www.st-francis.n-somerset.sch.uk/>

26 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

St Francis' Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Microsoft Teams Key Protocols

First of all, a big thank you and well done for helping us to set up Microsoft Teams with our children in such a short space of time. The teachers have been delighted to have more regular contact with children learning from home and initial feedback around our daily register sessions and check-ins is proving positive.

As you would expect, our number one concern in establishing a virtual learning environment is that of safeguarding. The benefits of a VLE during a period such as this far outweigh the associated risks. That said, we want our use of Microsoft Teams to be as safe and secure as possible in order to safeguard all children and the adults involved in its use. (Behaviour and expectation guidelines for children, staff and adults at home were shared recently via Class Dojo – please contact your child's teacher if you need another copy.)

Any VLE is going to be prone to technical mishaps or simple human error. With that in mind, we wanted to point out some of the key protocols which must be in place if we are to avoid potential issues.

Meetings

- A responsible adult must be present in the house whilst your child is attending a Teams meeting. If no adult is present, the child will have to leave the meeting
- Children should be set up in a suitable location for Teams meetings:
 - An adult should be within earshot
 - If children are in a separate room, doors must be open
 - Check what can be seen in the background of this location – is it possible to see anything inappropriate?
- At the end of a meeting:
 - When the teacher leaves the meeting, it **should** automatically end for all children involved. It is not possible to re-enter the meeting
 - Any text 'chat' should end at the same time as the meeting
 - If something goes wrong and the meeting carries on in the teacher's absence, children should leave the meeting of their own accord. Adults at home should be aware of when meetings are due to end and ensure that children have left as expected

- Recording meetings. In our use of Teams so far, it has been possible to watch recordings of and catch up on any missed meetings. These protocols have now been revised:
 - Teams has altered its storage protocols recently and pupils are now able to download meetings after the event. We do not feel this is appropriate, so have altered our practice of putting videos up for children to review afterwards. If you have downloaded any register/check-in sessions that were missed, we ask that you now delete them
 - We will explore avenues open to us that would allow videos to be streamed in future
 - 1:1 sessions between staff and children will continue to be recorded for safeguarding reasons. We ask that a responsible adult checks in with the staff member at the beginning of the meeting and is present within earshot throughout. This is to safeguard staff as well as pupils.

Expansion of Teams

Now that children have experienced the initial excitement of using Teams, a period of time is required whereby staff can reflect on the effectiveness of what we are doing and how best to develop its use in the future. Children may find that some permissions are restricted and gradually reintroduced over the coming weeks. Needless to say, there are countless directions that Teams could be taken in. In the meantime, we kindly request your help with the following:

- Ensure that children are only on Teams when they are attending a meeting or engaging with home learning and assignments
- Adults should check that children have logged off successfully when not in use
- Ensure that Teams is only being used in the ways that the class teacher has asked. As it stands, this only includes meetings, home learning and assignments. Any exploration of email or other Office 365 applications is not appropriate at this stage.

We appreciate that it may feel like this letter comes with a lot of demands and that, like us, you are probably suffering from information overload. However, teamwork is essential if we are to make our VLE a safe place to be and your support is always appreciated. Should you have any questions, Class Dojo is still up and running and teachers expect to receive messages from parents/carers via this platform.

Kind regards,

Simon Groves
Acting Deputy Head