Plymouth Nursery School Federation
Virtual Meeting Safety Guidance and Code of Conduct

Dear Parents / Carers,

As many of us get used to connecting with others and joining meetings virtually (e.g. being on video with a friend, family members or professionals in a meeting) it is worth taking a moment to think about what you are letting other people have access to when you do so and the potential risks involved.

There are many different video chatting platforms that you may be invited to join socially, such as House Party, WhatsApp, Google Meet but as Zoom & Microsoft Teams seem to be the favoured means in Plymouth by which schools are connecting with families for meetings, we have attached user safety guidance for these below.

Please take a moment to read the information sheet below about the virtual system you have been asked to use.

Regardless of which virtual meeting platform you join a video call with, there are a few things we can all do to safeguard our privacy:

- Make sure you and all your family members are appropriately dressed.
- Make sure you know how to turn your camera and your microphone on and off to protect the privacy of others in your home.
- Make sure you do not share the log in and password details of the meeting with anyone else.
- Make sure everyone in the meeting agrees to pause the meeting / stop the conversation if anyone walks into any of the attendees rooms that is not invited.
- Make sure there is nothing visible in your background surroundings that gives information as to who is in your family, where you live, which school / early years setting your child(ren) attend. Be particularly mindful of school uniform, school / family photographs, mail and the view from your window of the road you live on.
- Make sure you know who the person in charge / responsible for the meeting is.

If there is something you want to say that you are uncomfortable about raising yourself, you can message someone you trust in the meeting and ask them to raise the point on your behalf. You can also use the message bar option to ask someone in the meeting to contact you separately if you are concerned or worried about something e.g. you have a safeguarding concern or you don't feel safe.

Please do not hesitate to speak to a member of staff if you would like further advice or support with your virtual meeting.

Guides from: www.nationalonlinesafety.com

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

Founded in 2011, Zoom is one the world's leading video conferencing software providers. It has a number of features, including video and audio conferencing, real-time messaging, screen-sharing and the ability to upload, share and search for content. Users can start their own meetings or they can join meetings set up by others. The app is available to use across PCs, laptops, tablets and mobiles phones and is free to download on both the app store and on Android.

What parents need to know about ZOOM

ZOOM BOMBING

'Zoom bombing' is the term which has been coined to describe unauthorised people joining zoom meetings uninvited and broadcasting pornographic or inappropriate videos. An attacker can hijack a meeting if they know the meeting ID and it isn't reinforced with a password. Not taking preventative measures or implementing privacy controls could open up the risk of children witnessing sexual or inappropriate content with very little notice.

RISK OF PHISHING

The rise in popularity of Zoom has led to a rise in hacking operations and phishing campaigns. This is when participants are encouraged to click on links to join what they believe to be legitimate Zoom meetings via email, but which are in fact fraudulent. These scams aim to obtain sensitive information such as user login details, passwords and/or credit card information.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Depending on how the app has been set-up, Zoom can offer very little privacy. In many cases, the meeting hosts can see detailed information about each participant including their full name, phone numbers and maybe even location data. Furthermore, depending on where the camera has been set up or where your child's computer is positioned, private or personal information could be stolen depending on what can be seen in the background.

LIVE RECORDINGS

One of the features of Zoom is the ability to record live meetings. By default, only the host of the meeting can usually record live sessions however other meeting members can also record if the host gives them access. Recordings can be stored on devices or on the cloud and can be downloaded and shared with no restrictions. This means that videos, audio clips and transcripts of recordings involving your children could be widely shared on the internet or between users without your authorisation or consent.

PRIVATE ZOOM MEETINGS

Zoom has a facility to set up breakout rooms, which enables a private meeting within the main Zoom session. The host can choose to split the participants of the original meeting into separate sessions. This gives children the ability to speak privately away from the main group to other users however chats aren't always monitored by the host and if the meeting has been made public, children could be more vulnerable to experiencing negative comments.

'LIVE STREAMING' RISKS

At its very core, Zoom facilitates live streaming. That means it inevitably carries some of the associated risks that live streaming brings. These are likely to be minimal within a controlled environment (for instance when used in a classroom setting for remote learning). However, live streaming means that content isn't always moderated and children who use the app unsupervised or with limited security settings, may be more at risk of exposure to viewing inappropriate material. Other risks can include downloading malicious links, sharing personal information or even potential grooming.

Safety Tips For Parents

REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Remind your child that if they do see something that makes them feel uncomfortable or upset then they need to talk about it and report it. Parents can report unwanted activity, harassment, and cyberattacks to Zoom directly. To help your child, you could try setting up a checklist before they go online, with an agreed set of rules and what they should do if they see something inappropriate.

USER PRIVATE MEETING IDS & PASSWORDS

It is always better to set up a meeting with a random ID number generated by Zoom than by using a personal number. This means it is harder to guess and less likely to be hacked. It's important to never share meeting IDs with anybody you don't know and always set-up a password function to allow other people to sign-in. This should already be a default setting that is applied on Zoom.

PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL DATA

It's important to discuss with your child that they should not share personal information on Zoom. This includes passwords, their address, phone number, etc. Create your child's account under a false name or pseudonym and always set a custom background to help hide details in your home. Zoom allows you to turn on virtual backgrounds and select your own image to appear behind you.

BEWARE OF PHISHING EMAILS

Every time you or your child gets a Zoom link, it's good practice to ensure it has come from the official platform and is not fraudulent. Signs of a phishing email include an unrecognisable email address, an unofficial domain name or a slightly distorted logo. The email itself might also be poorly written or contain suspicious attachments.

TURN OFF UNNECESSARY FEATURES

If your child is using Zoom, there are a number of features that you can turn off to make the experience safer for them. For instance, disabling the ability to transfer files or engaging in private chats can help to limit the risk of receiving any malicious attachments or receiving any inappropriate messages. In addition, you can turn off the camera if it is not needed or mute the microphone when not in use.

USE THE 'VIRTUAL WAITING ROOM FEATURE

The waiting room feature on Zoom means that anybody who wants to join a meeting or live session cannot automatically join and must 'wait' for the host to screen them before entering. This is now a default function and adds another layer of security to reduce the likelihood of zoom bombing.

KEEP YOUR VERSION UPDATED

It's important to ensure you are using the latest version of Zoom available and always update it if you get a prompt. These updates are usually to fix security holes and without the update you will be more vulnerable to an attack. Check the official website to see what the latest version is and compare it to your own.

HOST IMPLEMENTED PRIVACY CONTROLS

If your child is part of a larger group meeting, then it's important to make sure that the host is abiding by Zoom's Terms of Service. This includes the fact that they have gained everybody's permission for the session to be recorded. The host should also have set screen sharing to 'host only' and disabled 'file transfer' to help keep the live stream secure.

Meet our expert

Emma Davis is a cyber security expert and former ICT teacher. She delivers cyber awareness training to organisations nationally and has extensive knowledge and experience of managing how children access services and apps online.

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SOURCES: https://zoom.us/privacy | https://zoom.us/ | https://zoom.us/docs/doc/School%20Administrators%20Guide%20to%20Rolling%20Out%20Zoom.pdf
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/02/zoom-technology-security-coronavirus-video-conferencing

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Microsoft Teams, or simply 'Teams', is a platform that allows for collaborative working, either as students or as professionals, using communication capabilities through audio, video and instant messaging. The software is available both online through a web browser and to download from microsoft.com. Users can have 1:1 online meetings or set up live events to host up to 10,000 people. Groups can be set up to include only relevant users and almost all file-types can be uploaded and shared, from PDFs and Word documents to audio and video files.

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

What parents need to know about MICROSOFT TEAMS

DISCLOSING PERSONAL DETAILS

Like any messaging service or social network, children can be targeted by others to share their private or personal information ranging from their phone number, birthday and home address to their social media accounts or even their personal login details and passwords. Oversharing their private information can lead to any manner of risks including online fraud, bullying or even grooming activity.

CYBERBULLYING

The risk of cyberbullying can be increased online when using chat facilities. Microsoft Teams provides the ability for users to chat to each other via its instant messaging service, both as part of a group or privately. Children could find themselves the target of negative or hurtful comments directed from other users who might find it easier to say things they maybe otherwise wouldn't in person.

INAPPROPRIATE CHAT

The chance to have private conversations in Teams can also mean that children feel as though they can share messages and communication between each other that are hidden away from others. Whilst children are most likely to use Teams in a school setting, the ability to chat privately may provide an opportunity to be less formal which could lead to sharing inappropriate messages, files or content which is unsuitable in a school environment.

HACKING RISK

Teams, like any software application, may be a target for hackers to illicit personal data. A 'man-in-the-middle attack' could occur, whereby the attacker reroutes communication between two users through the attacker's computer without the knowledge of the other users. This means that online communications could possibly be intercepted and be read or listened to, exposing both parties to the possibility of identity fraud or other criminal behaviour.

VIRUS INFECTION

Viruses and other harmful programs are among the risks of using online platforms like Microsoft Teams. Wherever you can share files or links, there is a risk that the content could be malicious. This could lead to slow computer performance, deletion of data, the theft of private or personal information and even hackers taking control of your PC.

LIVE STREAMING RISKS

Microsoft Teams, like other video-conferencing software platforms, facilitates live streaming. That means it inevitably carries some of the associated risks. These are likely to be minimal within a controlled environment (for instance in a classroom setting / remote learning). However, live streaming means that content isn't always moderated and children may inadvertently view or hear inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material that they otherwise wouldn't.

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Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

BLOCK USERS

If your child is receiving inappropriate messages or finds themselves being harassed or abused on Teams, they can block these contacts from the privacy control in the settings menu. To add an extra layer of protection, you can also block contacts whom hide their ID to protect children from communicating with people they don't know.

PROTECT PERSONAL INFO

It's a good idea to talk to your child about the importance of keeping their personal information private and secure. Children should only give out the minimum information they need to when creating an account and understand that if other people request their personal details from them, they should avoid providing it and report any concerns to a trusted adult.

ENABLE BACKGROUND BLUR

To help protect your privacy during a video call or live stream, it may be a good idea to blur the background or even add a background effect. This can easily be done by clicking 'Background effects' before joining a meeting after which you'll have the option to blur your background, replace your background with one of the images provided or upload and use an image of your own.

UPDATE COMPUTER SECURITY

It's important to ensure you perform regular computer and software updates, as these patches often improve security flaws and minimise your vulnerability to cyberattacks. Having your own computer security or anti-malware software is another level of defence in minimising the chances of an attack from viruses, malware and other harmful programs. Ensure this is updated everyday so that it is able to protect you against the very latest threats.

TALK ABOUT RISKS

As a parent, talking to your child and making them aware of the risks of working and communicating online can help them to be more digitally resilient. Perhaps outline a set of agreed do's and don'ts and try to ensure young people know what to do if they are made to feel uncomfortable or experience any negative behaviour or activity.

AVOID VIDEO/AUDIO

It's always a good idea to turn off your audio during live group calls when not in use. This can easily be done by muting the mic and will avoid others hearing anything personal in the background at home or at school. Similarly, if possible, try to encourage children to avoid using video call to help guard against any privacy concerns and limit the risks of viewing anything inappropriate or unsettling.

Meet our expert

Emma Davis is a cyber security expert and former ICT teacher. She delivers cyber awareness training to organisations nationally and has extensive knowledge and experience of managing how children access services and apps online.

SOURCES:
https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software
https://www.microsoft.com
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