Noel-Baker Academy
A L.E.A.D. Academy

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Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you at what should be the start of the summer term to outline our approach to online learning in the coming months and answer some of the questions that have been frequently asked in recent weeks.

As I am sure you are aware, the situation and pace of change in these uncertain times is rapid and so we have had to change and adapt in response to the situation. I thank you all for your patience and understanding.

I know that many of our students are finding these strange times difficult to navigate. They are missing their friends, their freedoms and the normal structure of everyday life. We want you and the children to know that we are still here for them and that they/and you can contact us via the methods below:

Pastoral care:

- Each Pastoral Lead has a mobile number on which children can contact them should they need to (sent home via paper letters at the end of term – if you have misplaced the number please email enquiries@noelbakeracademy.co.uk and we will let the relevant Pastoral Leader know to get in touch asap).
- Any safeguarding or cyber-bullying worries can be reported anonymously via the SHARP system (https://noel-baker.thesharpsystem.com/).

Accessing work online:

N.B. (Please note that some teaching staff are not able to report for work at the moment due to personal circumstances or illness. If you email a teacher and do not hear back within 48 hours please email enquiries@noelbakeracademy.co.uk and your query will be passed to the curriculum lead for that subject.)

- Teachers are available via email through Microsoft 365.
- Computer access and passwords: dataexams@noelbakeracademy.co.uk

Help and Support for families:

- Free school meal vouchers queries: enquiries@noelbakeracademy.co.uk
- Counselling support for students (those not accessing virtual counselling through the school counsellor) : https://www.kooth.com/
- Counselling support for adults: https://xenzone.com/qwell/
- Bereavement support for students: enquiries@noelbakeracademy.co.uk

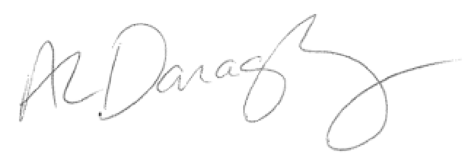
If you need help and support during this difficult time and you are not sure who to ask – please get in touch via email enquiries@noelbakeracademy.co.uk or via the messenger function on our Facebook page.

These accounts are monitored regularly and we will do our very best to support and help wherever we can and however we can.

Finally, the children of critical workers and the staff of Noel-Baker have been working hard in the last few weeks on a number of projects. The Technology team are hard at work making visors for front line staff, the kitchen team are making up essential food parcels for our community and a group of staff have got together (virtually) to create a video for the children that we will share via social media and which will showcase some of the projects that have taken place and hopefully give you a giggle.

I’d like to thank all of you for your messages of support and care. I know that colleagues who have been personally affected by this situation are very grateful for all of your messages of support and love and that we are all missing being in school with our amazing students every day.

Stay home, stay safe and stay in touch.



Mrs Donaghy (Mrs)

Head Teacher

<u>Frequently Asked Questions/Concerns:</u>

1. **I am worried about what I have read online & in the media about when schools will re-open?**

A number of parents have been in touch since the publication of an article in the Sunday Times claiming that schools may re-open on the 11th May. Many of you are understandably concerned and very worried about this and about the implications for your child’s safety, your own safety and that of the adults working in the school. You have raised concerns with me about the availability of PPE, the ability to socially distance in school and fact that many of our young people live in households with vulnerable adults.

As it stands at the moment the DFE have categorically stated that:

“No decision has been made on a timetable for re-opening schools. Schools remain closed until further notice, except for children of critical workers and the most vulnerable children.

Schools will only re-open when the scientific advice indicates it is the right time to do so.”

As an academy we will be guided by the DFE and our Trust advice. We will not take any action that puts the health and safety of our students, staff or the wider community at risk.

We understand your concerns about being able to socially distance in school and agree that this is not possible.

As and when the government advice changes we will be in touch and we will continue to listen to your concerns in this area and work with all parents and carers to keep you and your children safe.

2. **Why is student work focused on content already covered in the curriculum and not new topics?**

When the closures were first announced we took the decision that it was not fair on students or parents to ask parents to try and home school their children and deliver new content that would be unfamiliar to them and to our students. We recognise that all parents and carers have differing levels of expertise and knowledge and that trying to teach and care for children at home is stressful.

We therefore took the decision to initially focus on topics and knowledge that the children had already been exposed to and focused on work that would allow students to consolidate their learning, so that when they return to us they have not forgotten what has been taught and we could focus on the new content then.

In addition to this, we have in the meantime been researching different ways of providing online teaching to students.

The government has been working alongside a number of schools and teachers to create a national platform which **we encourage all students to access** - www.thenational.academy.

The curriculum provided by the platform is very similar to that which we follow in school and will allow students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the key subjects and concepts already taught.

In addition to this the BBC have also launched a daily virtual school platform which parents and students may wish to access.

Mr Leach, Deputy Head Teacher, will be in touch shortly with an overview of what's on offer and how to access it.

3. **Why are teachers not teaching virtual lessons on Zoom?**

We have chosen not to teach via this platform because at the start of the school closures many schools and teachers went online to deliver virtual lessons. This led to a phenomenon known as "Zoom bombing" where an unknown adult hacked into lessons and exposed their genitalia to students.

We decided therefore not to use zoom for lessons in order to safeguard our students.

An e-safety leaflet about Zoom is attached to the end of this letter.

Mrs Richardson, Deputy Head Teacher, will be in touch shortly with a guide to keeping safe online and at home during the Covid-19 lockdown.

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.

National Online Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

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