Online Child Safety for After School Programmes
[during COVID-19 and after]

by

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Irrespective of age, the South African Schools Act identifies any person going to school as a child.

Whether in the family, at school, or even online, children should be fully protected so they can be safe in order to grow, learn, and develop to their fullest potential.
SA is not entirely equipped to deal with the rapid influx of children moving to online platforms.

Children now are more at risk of being exposed to cyber bullying, social media hackers, sexual & violent content, human trafficking poachers, and so on, even in the comfort of their homes.
In the time of COVID-19, a number of organisations in the After School sector have transitioned to continue programmes through online platforms. As practitioners who have direct contact with children outside of their parents and teachers, it becomes even more important to ensure children remain safe and protected.
The following slides provide important considerations for using online platforms to engage with children in your programmes.
Practitioners must be well equipped for the online platform they are working on, including an understanding of,
1. the actual navigation and features of platform,
2. privacy and security settings,
3. limitations of the platform (e.g. does it allow for media sharing), and
4. access options of the platform (e.g. does it require subscription).
Practitioners must be informed & trained into the **online procedures**, including information on **policies** and **potential risk-guides**.

Practitioners must understand that **professional boundaries** still apply online, and must have clear **communication channels** should problems arise.
Request consent from parents/guardians when working with their kids online, either digitally or telephonically (and then record on form).

Consent form should state which mobile or web-applications your programme needs to connect with the learner and how.
CONSENT

Parents should be aware of children’s online activity, including,
✓ When you will have contact with the child
✓ Assurance that your sessions will not impact on a child’s other activities
✓ Which facilitator/tutor will be dealing with the child
✓ Contact details of organisation should any complaints or questions arise
✓ Contact boundaries, session times, content outline, etc.
MODERATION

All group sessions should include at least one **member of staff** (besides tutor or volunteer), and record learner **attendance** consistently.

Learners and tutors/volunteers should not chat one-on-one outside of a staff or practitioner’s **supervision**, in order to **safeguard** learners.
Rules of engagement should be established early. Sessions should be monitored for inappropriate language and conduct regularly. If a learner is consistently disengaged, a follow-up should be conducted with the parents/caregivers to determine any obstacles.
Ensure that all your learners have **functional access** to the platforms they’ll be using, including,

1. **Data** to go online or download material (if relevant)
2. **Good network connection**
3. **Security settings** (login details)
4. Meeting **age requirements** (e.g. only certain age groups can subscribe to Facebook)
There are other important considerations from existing policies within an organisation that should still be in effect in this time to guide staff.
**CHILD PROTECTION**

The Child Protection policy should be readily available to all staff and detail clear procedures to be taken should a violation occur.

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**CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Code of Conduct must be linked to the disciplinary procedure. It should outline how violations would be addressed and timeframes.
Ensure your policy includes **consequences** for violating **Child Protection** and **Code of Conduct**. Staff must be well **trained** in HR policies.

Trainings need to be given to staff for all **existing and revised policies**. Staff should sign a register to indicate **participation** and **accountability**.
If you’d like more information on implementing Child Safety and Protection measures in your organisation, contact Cassandra via email on, cass@schoolofhardknocks.co.za

The Learning Trust promotes engaging children in diverse learning activities including drawing, puzzles, indoor sports, creative writing, and performance. Visit our Treasure Box to explore these and more.