

VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE SAFEGUARDING Q&A



For schools and colleges

We understand that the safety and wellbeing of young people is the main priority for their teachers and responsible adults. As we work with so many schools across the UK, many of whom differ in what they consider to be best practice, we want to be transparent around the processes and checks that are put in place by Speakers for Schools to make sure students are safe during placements.

Whilst we at Speakers for Schools recognise that students are safeguarded by schools' existing policies, please be assured that we are committed to adding extra protective measures to ensure the wellbeing of your students during their time on placement with us.

We are committed to raising awareness of effective safeguarding within our organisation, in our partnerships with employers and every aspect of our service delivery. We would encourage all of our employers delivering any events with Speakers for Schools, as a matter of best practice to have in place a safeguarding policy with clear procedures for their employees. We provide guidance on this, and ensure they are provided with contact details in case of any concerns.

We provide regular and thorough safeguarding training and ensure that all members of staff are aware of how to respond to and refer any situations that may arise. The team at Speakers for Schools are aware of the benefits of multi-agency working and will contact the school as quickly as possible if an issue should occur concerning one of your students.

The following procedures have been put in place to help schools meet their safeguarding requirements:

Minimum cohort sizes

We only facilitate placements for five or more students. These students may be from different schools, rather than just your own. This minimum placement cohort means students will never be in one-to-one calls or online meetings with employers.

Code of conduct

Before the placement, we ask all participating employers involved in direct delivery of the placements to students to read and sign a code of conduct, which outlines how they should interact with students and responsible handling of data.

We also ask all students to sign a code of conduct relating to professional behaviour and keeping themselves safe during placements. We make it clear to students that they should report anything unusual or uncomfortable to their teachers and Speakers for Schools as soon as they can.

Temporary email accounts

We generate temporary G-Suite accounts for all students so that employers cannot view their personal contact details.

Oversight

We run the placements through our own Google Classroom account, meaning we have full visibility of all interactions taking place between employers and students.

Students should not share personal contact details with adults or other students, instead using the Google Classroom accounts which we provide.

For the Virtual Work Experience, we ensure that students are aware of safeguarding procedures when accessing the livestream events.

FAQs

Speakers for Schools has previously required a school reference to support any student work experience application on your website. Is this still the case in this virtual world of work?

Yes, we would require a staff member at the school to approve all student applications, confirm that they will be available to attend the placements and provide any information required by the employer.

What health and safety checks are done by your charity with employers before you advertise their opportunities?

Before the placement, we ask all participating employers involved in direct delivery of the placements to students to read and sign our code of conduct, which outlines how they should interact with students and responsible handling of data. Most of the employers we work with are leading employers including Bank of England, bp, Tesco, Morgan Sindall, V & A Museum. We do not carry out health and safety checks on these employers who are based in every corner of the UK. You will therefore need to conduct your own health and safety checks following your usual procedures for school trips and/or work experience placements.

Is there certain criteria employers need to demonstrate to you regarding internet and data safety for their virtual opportunities to be advertised through your site?

We run the placements through our own Google Classroom account, meaning we have full visibility of all interactions taking place between employers and students. We give all participating employers and students temporary email addresses with which to access the classroom so that no personal contact details are shared, and we delete the temporary email addresses after the placement. Only users with email addresses from our own domain can access the classroom. We also ask employers to sign our code of conduct before the placement. These procedures mean we are confident we have done everything we can to ensure students are safe during placements.

Is there an opportunity anywhere for parents of students under the age of 18 to support the application or will schools always need to support an application?

Schools should secure parental permission – this is because we are able to verify school contacts. We would not be able to verify the identity of a parent or guardian – schools hold this information.

Are the placements run through the companies own website or does it run through yours?

The placements are delivered through the Google Classroom platform, which is provided by Speakers for Schools.

Are there any costs involved for parents or schools?

Virtual Work Experience opportunities are completely free for schools, colleges and academies thanks to the generosity of our funders and supporters of the charity.



If there is any unsafe or inappropriate behaviour by a student, would they be removed from the session and if so, who holds those privileges?

We ask all students to sign our code of conduct before the placement, which includes:

- Asking students to ensure they are in a quiet space with a neutral background during all calls.
- Ensuring they are dressed appropriately if cameras are on.
- That they need to tell a member of their school staff and a member of the Speakers for Schools team if anything makes them uncomfortable during a group call. We have a minimum cohort size of five, so students are never one-to-one on calls with employers and employers have the right to mute a student and terminate a placement if a student does not abide by the code of conduct.

If a student placement is terminated as a result of unsafe or inappropriate behaviour, Speakers for Schools would ensure the key staff contact at the school is contacted immediately. Speakers for Schools will take action through its own safeguarding policy and procedures where necessary.

Do all employers have an up-to-date DBS check, and will these be passed on to schools?

Employers who are providing work experience placements are not normally asked to provide DBS checks for each employee who will be working with students. Speakers for Schools staff do have DBS checks, and the placements are set up to minimise risk to young people and vulnerable adults, as described previously.

Do we provide guidance to employers around social media?

We ask employers not to take or share images of the young people who take part in any work experience placements, without written permission from Speakers for Schools. Speakers for Schools may seek to secure appropriate permissions from young people and their parents/carers in order to compile case studies. We will advise if this is the case, and how any such material may be shared.

For more information, please see the Virtual Work Experience educators guide [here](#).

If you require further assistance, you can reach a member of the team by emailing experience@speakersforschools.org