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Guidance

Remote education good practice

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This good practice guide should be used by staff responsible for the curriculum and its delivery in schools. It offers suggestions to help schools meet the requirements for remote education set out in the guidance for the pandemic. These suggestions are non-statutory.

We recognise that schools vary significantly in context. This may mean that what works well in one type of school may not be suitable for other types of school. However, the principles below apply in many contexts, and some approaches have worked well across a wide variety of schools.

Ensuring access to remote provision

Most pupils returned to school full time at the start of the autumn term 2020. But, as of September 2020, there remained a significant proportion (between 10% to 20%) of school numbers of individual pupils being unable to attend school. So we expects schools to plan for any disruption to schooling during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

The period since 23 March 2020 has been one of great innovation in remote education. A wide range of approaches has been developed, tested and refined. Despite the challenges, remote education has made a significant contribution to maintaining pupils' learning and their well-being and mitigating any widening of the attainment gap for the disadvantaged.

Where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there are local restrictions requiring pupils to remain at home, we expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education. For details of the remote education expectations schools are required to meet, read the guidance for full opening.

What matters most in remote education

This good practice guide for remote education focuses on approaches to the delivery of live or recorded lessons. It recognises clarity about what is to be taught by teachers and learned by pupils in a carefully sequenced curriculum.

Further support for planning a sequenced curriculum that is adapted for remote delivery will be published separately during the autumn term.

Replicating the classroom remotely

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has found that the effectiveness of remote teaching is determined by many of the same factors as determine the effectiveness of live classroom teaching. For example:

- ensuring pupils receive clear explanation
- supporting growth in confidence with new material through scaffolded practice
- application of new knowledge or skills
- enabling pupils to receive feedback on how to progress

These characteristics of good teaching are more important than the medium of delivery, and they are the same in school as through remote provision (whether or not that remote provision is live or pre-recorded). It is important that schools adapt their teaching to the new circumstances and that we expect high effective teaching in the live classroom.

Live classrooms enable important interaction between teachers and pupils through, for example, questioning, eliciting and effective discussion. These complex teacher skills in the live classroom are not always easy to recreate in a remote environment. But, with careful consideration, including how the aspects of this interactivity and intentional dialogue, teaching is likely to be more effective, sustained and rewarding for pupils.

Pupils in the early stages of their formal education are likely to have particular difficulties with learning in a remote environment. This is also true for some pupils. Likewise, some pupils with SEND will require specific approaches tailored to their circumstances. Some suggestions are given for these cases later in this document.

Access to appropriate devices and connectivity is essential for technological approaches to remote education. However, securing access for all pupils is a significant challenge in many contexts. As schools plan for potential future disruption, it may be helpful to:

- maintain an up-to-date record of which pupils and families do not have adequate home learning
- consider with remote technology resources could be used in future to support pupils without sufficient remote facilities. This could include preparing to provide pupils and chargers to identified families with any usage or loan agreements necessary to help safeguard school property
- review the DfE's guidance on providing access to the Department's technology programme is clearly identified and ready to be implemented in a similar purpose

You should also review the Department's guidance about planning for local restrictions including Tier 2 restrictions.

Effective remote teaching provision

While pupils experienced disruption to their education from 23 March 2020, a number of different approaches were used by schools to continue their education. Many schools reported their experience of remote learning has broad pace and parent feedback and improved their provision as the weeks passed.

While there are a number of ways to implement high-quality remote education, remote access technology offers many advantages which enable schools to continue a relatively normal programme of teaching across all or most curriculum subjects.

Interactive platforms

Many schools have been able to use a single, interactive platform such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom for their remote education provision. By using these and similar systems, it is possible to create virtual classes by drawing information from school. Management information systems, enabling a single point of access for all lessons and resources and allowing teachers to host both live and recorded explanations and activities.

Schools can apply for government funding support through The Key for Schools to ensure that all pupils have access to the right technical support and advice for Education or Office 365 Education. To help applicants make the most appropriate choice for their school, The Key also provides feature comparison and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms.

Linking platforms to applications

It is possible to enhance these platforms by using applications which allow for easy video recording of teachers teaching, explaining and questioning. Loom is a popular video recording application which many teachers find straightforward to use and can easily be linked to platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

Tools and quizzes are an important part of effective teaching and can be easily integrated into a remote education programme. Many of these tools are provided for teachers to question individual pupils and for pupils to answer questions to teachers or peers, for example using the 'Chat' function. Google forms, Kahoot!, Socrative, Seesaw, Padlet are just some of the different other software which work well for rapid feedback and allow live marking.

Schools can use these tools regularly to deliver much of their curriculum planned curriculum, and where available and relevant, textbooks (both 'hard' and 'digital') and other resources. Schools could use it at home to complement and support learning.

Where lessons are recorded, they can be accessed later by pupils, making flexible use possible for pupils who are ill or unable to attend lessons. These and similar platforms can make it easier for teachers to monitor pupils' progress because work can be viewed and marked by teachers at a later stage. This in turn may make it easier for teachers to adapt work in the light of pupils' progress.

Other resources, including other good quality online resources (such free to view and subscription based) can be linked or embedded.

Because these platforms enable the creation of simulated or virtual classrooms, it is possible to replicate many of the interactive elements that flow from the live in-school environment. This can include live teacher explanations of new content which are sequenced to build on previous learning, targeted questioning, and scaffolded practice.

Maintaining aspects of school life online

These platforms can also be used beyond the individual lesson context for pupils and staff. For example, for staff meetings, professional development sessions, and for teachers to lead events such as year or whole school assemblies. It is important that these aspects of school life are maintained during any period of disruption.

In some cases it is possible to expect a normal school day to be worked remotely by both pupils and teachers. Recognising that this will not always be practical, where it is possible the routine can prove beneficial to pupils and support them in the management of their work and time.

Often, it is necessary to operate more flexibly, for example to accommodate pupils who are working from home with their parents, or sharing a device, meaning that access to remote education is also needed. However, frequent contact between pupils and teachers is crucial. This contact may, for example, be through presence in a remotely delivered lesson, questioning, feedback or some other form of or other exchange about schedules.

Continuing the planned curriculum

Continuing to teach all or most of the normal planned curriculum in the remote environment is important. Subjects where this is more challenging are those that would normally include significant elements of practical work in the live classroom. Practical work in science, for example, or design and technology, and in other cases, video demonstrations (that are equally accessible to pupils who are linked to the curriculum available on platforms such as YouTube) can substitute well for practical work, particularly if accompanied by teacher explanation, commentary and a text-based or electronic resource.

Communication

It is essential for staff, and preferable for pupils, to use school email addresses. Groups can be set up to streamline communication for example with a whole class. Existing online resources and packages with a school as teacher-led resources, can be used, for example, worksheets, tests and quizzes, as well as more complex packages which include interactive elements such as YouTube or available on a school, remote access area.

It's important to note that high quality remote teaching is far more than setting work for pupils to complete, although setting tasks to complement sequences of teaching plays an important role. Evidence shows that simply or open-ended projects in research activities are in most cases less beneficial than strong progress in outcomes. Such approaches should generally be avoided for pupils of any age, but particularly for those approaches to delivering the school's planned curriculum described above.

Finding solutions in remote provision

Schools identified some common challenges in the provision of remote education during the summer term of 2020. Here are some suggested solutions to those common challenges.

A lack of devices

Schools can distribute school-owned laptops accompanied by a user agreement or contract. They can also remind pupils that access is also possible through large screen smartphones. Affected pupils can be supported to come into school to use school resources where it is safe to do so.

Additionally, textbooks can be used at home to provide a structure to learning, supplemented with other free resources. Communication to keep pupils and their answer questions about work.

Where mobile phones are being used by pupils to access content (and where pupils are having to rely on mobile phone connectivity) there may be limits to what can be accessed. Ofcom has set up a page to help parents and Schools can get technology support from DfE for issues with devices and internet access.

Pupils having difficulties submitting work

Multi functional remote platforms allow for the submission of most kinds of work. Email can also be used to enable teachers to receive and feedback and screenshots can be taken and emailed as attachments. Additionally, smartphones can be used to photograph work which is difficult to submit in other ways. Post or school drop off points can also be considered.

Keeping pupils motivated and engaged

As set out in the guidance for full opening, schools should monitor pupil engagement with remote education provision. Schools can be significant and motivation levels and feedback to parents, either individually or formally. Schools can use the DfE's guidance on attendance and contact to parents to explore ways to improve engagement.

Schools can create whole-class or whole-school feedback loops. For example, a weekly newsletter which pulls together examples of excellent work and awards points and rewards for excellent engagement or outcomes. This could be emailed to all parents and pupils, or posted to those without digital access.

Assessing pupils' progress

Teachers can use quizzes or tests on core content on a regular feature, asking pupils to complete independently and return to teachers for review. As with features of a much functional platform, teachers can create regular, pre and post lesson quizzes. Consideration should be given to ensuring availability for pupils without ready online access, including through distribution of hard copy materials.

Organising structured remote teaching suitable for very young pupils

It is recognised that very young pupils are likely to have particular needs which cannot easily be met in some of the ways described above. For such pupils, it is helpful to provide structure to their day, and to ensure that they have access to appropriate reading books and resources for early readers should be considered as part of contingency planning.

Helping parents, carers or other adults at home to continue to support children in their early reading, where appropriate and practical through structured practice of phonics sounds, is another important part of a contingency planning for children at this stage. Other content for these pupils is likely to include phonics and early reading activities and tasks to ensure that time is used productively and developmentally as possible.

Supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

For many pupils with SEND, the teaching envisaged by this guidance would need to be adapted. SEND pupils have a wide range of specific needs. They may need more time to complete tasks, or need tasks to be broken down into most effectively that to ensure pupils continue to make progress whenever possible if they are not able to be in school.

It is likely that more individualised programmes may need to happen in many cases, and that the support of adults in the home will be a significant advantage where that is possible. However, in some cases, the support required for guidance may also be useful for pupils with SEND and so should be considered on their needs.

Teachers having difficulties creating online content

While many schools will want to make the trial and individual lesson resources they already use, some may find it helpful to use resources such as Oak National Academy lessons, supplemented by other free or low cost sequenced curriculum, with some components their own content. This will be flexible by schools as their main remote provision - or to complement other parts of remote provision.

The curriculum is published on the Oak National Academy website, so schools can consider how it aligns with their curriculum plan. Lessons are in small lessons are available from reception to year 9; are free to use, and can be integrated with platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom.

Teachers can easily collect results of online quizzes and tests to monitor progress and to inform subsequent teaching. Schools may also wish to include in contingency planning, but freely available online resources such as commercial, educational resources available. The British Educational Suppliers Association's LearnFF website, for instance, provides a searchable list of resources for remote education.

If parents are not able to effectively support remote education

Good communication between schools and parents (about the approach the school is taking) can help. This could include, where appropriate, group sessions, briefings using platforms such as Zoom, or one-to-one telephone calls where necessary. In others parents and elicit their support.

1. See: Kraneborgen, E.H., Van Lyd, J.E.H. & Thues, C.J.H.; Effectiveness of Remote Teaching Compared to Teaching in the Classroom for Upper Secondary Students in the Netherlands (2020); Khan, Z. & Kagan, V.; The Effectiveness of Learning Paths in Early Science Education, (2006); and OECD (2006), PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en 17

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