



Ben Madigan

Preparatory
School

REMOTE LEARNING POLICY - COVID 19

November 2020

Remote Learning Policy

The underpinning principle is that all children will receive the highest quality of education possible with the provision of excellent learning and teaching opportunities both in school and at home.

Possible scenarios for the 2020/21 school year:

- Whole class/school to isolate at home for a period of time;
- A number of children within a class learning at home due to medical conditions or isolation;
- Online homework provided in place of traditional paper homework to avoid unnecessary transmission of infection from school to home and vice-versa.

Context

Remote or distance learning, online learning, and blended learning are often used interchangeably but they are not the same.

Remote Learning describes any learning where the teacher and the learner are not physically together. The pandemic created the need for a period of emergency remote teaching, whereby both teachers and learners had to adjust very quickly to a new way of communicating with one another. Remote learning is the method of teaching which will be used in the event of a prolonged period of school closure or in the event of a class/teacher having to isolate for an extended period.

Online Learning is a generic term which refers to any learning via digital resources. It encompasses learning entirely via a digital format and also learning digitally within a broader learning programme. Online learning can be completely self-directed, or it can be structured by someone other than the learner. Online learning is used throughout the school year both at home and in school.

Blended Learning is where the learning is structured to blend face-to-face learning and teaching with remote/online learning. This may involve using digital tools and other educational resources. It is a very specific type of learning and requires some changes to pedagogical approaches from both the teacher and the pupil, as the lead learner. It requires less interdependence between learner and teacher, whilst developing independence for learning. The aim of blended learning is to maximise the time in the classroom to ensure the learners are equipped to maximise the independent learning time between lessons. Blended learning is a system which may be deployed if children are required to attend school on a staggered basis.

Approaches to learning

- **asynchronous approaches** where teaching materials, which may include video/audio clips, are posted online and learners work through these materials in their own time, communicating with each other and the teacher via discussion forums or email.
- **synchronous approaches** where the teacher is present at the same time as the learners through the use of video conferencing and live chat or instant messaging.

Asynchronous approaches provide greater flexibility as learners can work at their own pace and at times of the day which are convenient for them and their parents; they are easier for parents/carers/guardians to manage at home. These should therefore remain prevalent when organising remote/online learning.

Department of Education guidance states '*there is no compelling evidence to indicate that synchronous learning is more effective at improving pupil outcomes than asynchronous approaches*'. It also draws on the conclusion that not all children would be able to access synchronous learning at the same time. There are also considerations to be made in relation to synchronous learning regarding child protection and safeguarding.

The use of Seesaw provides asynchronous learning and allows the best delivery of learning for primary school pupils on a platform which they are familiar with and which can be accessed by the pupils and their parents/guardians, at a time appropriate for family circumstances.

Teachers will use a variety of resources to support learning through Seesaw which may include:

- website links;
- online video resources;
- Numeracy/Literacy games;
- Teacher-created support videos;
- Textbook resources;
- Other appropriate resources as used in school.

Synchronous approaches provide the benefit of allowing social interaction between classmates and can also provide a level of accountability and therefore motivation. Where appropriate, teachers at Key Stage Two will engage in live video calls in order to facilitate the teaching of new concepts. This will remain subject to review.

Flexibility of Learning

- We realise that the circumstances which cause our school to close will affect families in a number of ways. In our planning and expectations, we are aware of the need for flexibility from all sides.
- Parents may be trying to work from home and therefore access to technology as a family may be limited.
- Parents may have two or more children requiring access to technology and therefore have to prioritise the needs of their other child(ren) in different year groups at times.
- Teachers may be trying to manage their teaching from home as well as managing their own children's learning.
- Online platforms/systems may not always function as they should.
- An understanding of, and willingness to adapt to, these difficulties on all sides is essential for success.

Delivery of Remote Learning

Platform

Ben Madigan Preparatory School has invested in the 'Seesaw for Schools' licence to facilitate the delivery of remote learning. Seesaw is a platform which has been used in school for a number of years by both teachers and pupils and it provides a familiar environment for learning.

Seesaw can be accessed via a wide range of internet-enabled devices including tablets, laptops/desktop computers, smartphones, Smart TVs, and games consoles with internet browsers.

Each pupil has a unique Seesaw home learning code which allows them access to their profile whilst ensuring that they cannot see the work of others, nor can their work be accessed by other pupils.

Curriculum

Remote Learning will encompass a broad curriculum, where possible, with an emphasis on the core curriculum subjects. Pupils will be assigned a minimum of one Numeracy and one Literacy activity per day. These activities will be accompanied during the course of Remote Learning by a range of other learning opportunities including Spellings, Reading, World Around Us topic work, PE, and Arts, in fitting with the curriculum.

The activities designed and delivered by teachers will include a mix of learning approaches which enable them to be completed online or offline to facilitate those pupils who may not have access to a device which allows completion of activities online.

In the event of whole-school remote learning, devices will be made available in school for pupils whose parents are key workers and for vulnerable children, to enable them to complete school work whilst attending school.

Homework for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Due to the COVID-19 guidance from the Department of Education (August 2020), it is recommended that paper sent between school and home, and vice versa, is kept to a minimum.

As a result of this guidance, homework and accompanying learning resources will be assigned through Seesaw. This will remain subject to review. In a small number of cases where it is more appropriate, homework may need to be sent via a paper copy - eg Foundation Stage, Primary 7 AQE/GL preparation.

Reading Books in Primary 1 – Primary 4 will also be sent home on a weekly basis and quarantined on return.

Whole School/Class Learning at Home

In the event of whole school/class remote learning being deployed, learning will take place via the Seesaw platform.

- Activities will be assigned to pupils on a daily basis on the Seesaw platform before they are scheduled for completion.
- Pupils should complete the activities on the day for which they have been assigned and return the completed work for marking/review by their class teacher.
- Marking of pupils' work will take place where possible on the day on which it is returned or during the next school day.
- Activities will remain assigned on Seesaw throughout the week for which they are assigned. This will allow pupils to catch up on any work they may have missed due to circumstances at home.
- Parents should monitor the work of pupils where possible. Pupils may need help with the reading of instructions or explanations of new concepts. Pupils' work should be checked before being submitted to teachers.
- Teachers will be available on Seesaw throughout the school working day. They will not respond to messages outside of school hours but will endeavour to answer on the next working day.

Children Learning at Home Due to Isolation/Medical Condition

In the event of a child having to learn at home due to a period of isolation or a medical condition, learning will take place via the Seesaw platform.

- Activities will be assigned to pupils on a daily basis on the Seesaw platform before they are scheduled for completion. It will not be possible to assign all activities usually completed in class as some will not be compatible with remote learning.
- Pupils should complete the activities on the day for which they have been assigned and return the completed work for marking/review by their class teacher.
- Marking of pupils' work will take place where possible on the day on which it is returned or during the next school day.
- Activities will remain assigned on Seesaw throughout the week for which they are assigned. This will allow pupils to catch up on any work they may have missed due to circumstances at home.
- Parents should monitor the work of pupils where possible. Pupils may need help with the reading of instructions or explanations of new concepts. Pupils' work should be checked before being submitted to teachers.
- Teachers will not be available to contact through Seesaw during the school day as they will be teaching the remainder of the class who are working in school.
- Pupils learning at home will also be able to complete homework activities which are assigned via Seesaw for the duration of the school year.
- Pastoral calls will be made regularly by both the Class Teacher and the Principal.
- Where it is more convenient for a parent to collect work from school this will be arranged, particularly during periods of prolonged isolation.

Expectation Management

We believe that it is in the best interests of our children that we continue to provide structured support to the best of our ability during periods of disruption to 'normal' school learning. It must be noted that the work which children engage in during a period of closure will be part of current planning and therefore cannot be considered as optional. Children and parents should consider the arrangements as set out in this document as highly recommended.

Teaching staff will:

- Share teaching and activities with their class through Seesaw;
- Continue teaching in line with current, extensive planning which is already in place throughout the school;
- Accept that learning remotely will be more difficult, so tasks will be set in smaller steps to allow for this;
- Keep in contact with children through the Seesaw App. This will include replying to messages about assigned activities, set work, and provide feedback on activities during the normal teaching hours;
- Allow flexibility in the completion of activities, understanding that the circumstances leading to our closure will affect families in a number of ways;
- Take regular breaks away from the computer or iPad to engage in other professional duties as much as circumstances allow, e.g. Policy Development;

- If unwell themselves, be covered by another staff member for the sharing of activities. Follow-up of messages on Seesaw app during this time will not be undertaken until the teacher is fit to work.
- Monitor levels of engagement and follow up with a pastoral call.

Children will:

- Be assured that wellbeing is at the forefront of our thoughts. Pupils need to take regular breaks, get fresh air, exercise, and maintain a reasonable balance between online engagement and offline activities;
- Potentially work a day or two behind what has been shared through Seesaw;
- Only send messages and queries which are in relation to tasks set by the teacher or in response to questions the teacher may ask them directly;
- Only access the material shared by their teacher and ask for parental permission to use technology for anything beyond that;
- Read daily, either independently or with an adult;
- Consider using the school closure time to learn a new skill, follow their own interests to discover more about the world around us or just be creative.

Parents will:

- Support their child's learning to the best of their ability;
- Encourage their child to access and engage with Seesaw posts from their teacher. Remote Learning is not optional but rather an adaption of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- Refrain from taking screenshots of, or copying, any information, messages or posts to share on social media or any other platform outside of the Seesaw App;
- Know they can continue to contact their class teacher as normal through the Seesaw App during the school day or contact the school office;
- Check their child's completed work each day and encourage the progress that is being made;
- Be mindful of mental wellbeing both for themselves and their child and encourage their child to take regular breaks, play games, get fresh air and relax.

Provision for Key Worker/Vulnerable Children

- All pupils attending school will be supervised by a member of staff. They will also complete the work set on Seesaw;
- Strict adherence will be made to appropriate social distancing.

Pastoral Care

Ben Madigan is committed to providing exemplary pastoral care, and this will continue during any period of school closure or remote learning. In event of a school closure, the primary responsibility for the pastoral care of a pupil rests with their parents / carers. However, teachers will be keeping an eye on engagement with remote learning and responding to any messages from parents and pupils. Teachers will be expected to pass on feedback to Mr Coulter, particularly if there are concerns or a lack of communication. The global pandemic has increased anxiety levels and stress for everyone, children are not exempt from this. It is important that we each work together and support each other throughout these days as part of the Ben Madigan family.