



St Benedict's College

Remote Teaching and Learning Policy – January 2021

1. Context

The National Lockdown and subsequent closure of schools has resulted in all learning being moved online. All students are now required to engage in Remote Learning.

Remote Learning describes any kind of learning where the teacher and learner are not physically together.

2. Overview

The school has chosen the **Google Classroom** platform as its main means of communication during this and any other remote learning period. It must be noted that the teaching experiences will not all look the same – as with pupils when working at home, teachers have varying access to high quality broadband or they may be in school supervising other pupils (vulnerable children and/or children of key workers). Moreover, teachers and pupils cannot be expected to cover the same amount of material as they would in a face-to-face teaching environment:

‘One key learning point that has emerged worldwide...is that schools should not expect to make similar progress to taught lessons in any given period of remote learning.’

Department of Education, NI, *Guidance for Schools on Supporting Remote Learning*

Therefore, there is a need to take a pragmatic approach, whilst ensuring that core teaching and learning is maximised in the context.

3. Remote Teaching and Learning

There are key principles for staff, pupils and parents in any period of remote learning to make the experience as meaningful as possible. It should be noted that the virtual classroom is an extension of the physical classroom and the normal rules, codes of behaviour and protocols apply between staff and pupils, as well as staff and parents.

3.1 Teaching Staff – Key Principles for Remote Teaching

Teachers should:

- Ensure that all interactions with pupils are in line with the school's Acceptable Use of IT Policy for staff
- Recognise that the pupil-teacher relationship remains central and helps support pupil motivation with remote learning – encouragement and reassurance is important
- Keep learning purposeful, so that pupils have an understanding of the core learning requirements
- Aim for clarity of explanation, recognising the increased complexity of processing required from a pupil in remote learning. Aim to provide information and text in manageable chunks

- Avoid long extended tasks, unless the task is broken down into interim steps and deadlines
- Give consideration to the balance between online and offline learning in the tasks set for pupils
- Combine explanation with opportunities to practise key knowledge and skills
- Give consideration to effective methods of feedback – this may include whole class feedback, use of quizzes and/or individual feedback to pupils
- Provide feedback which recognises pupil achievements as well as areas for improvement
- Provide regular opportunities to allow pupils to reflect and review their learning, identifying where issues lie
- Recognise that 30 – 45 minutes is the optimal timing for online learning per class at a post primary level
- Follow school referral procedures for pupils who are not engaging with work set

3.2 Pupils – Key Principles for Remote Learning

Pupils should:

- Be familiar with the **Parent/Student Classroom Guide to Google Classroom**
- Log on to Google Classroom on a daily basis to help prevent work building up or becoming overwhelming
- Check into each classroom on their timetable, rather than relying on the Google Classroom 'To Do' list. As the 'To Do' list prioritises work coming up to deadline, if a teacher sets work over the course of a week, with explanations and interim steps in the Google Classroom, the pupil will be overwhelmed if they only pick it up before it is imminently due
- Establish a routine for their learning which includes breaks and time away from the screen – in particular allow time for exercise
- Consider how they can best minimise distractions in their home environment to help with their learning
- Recognise that the online classroom is an extension of the physical classroom and that the normal rules in terms of respectful communication apply
- Engage in all tasks set to the best of their ability – where there is an issue or they are unsure, consider the support resources available to them. These may include taking time to re-read/re-watch/re-listen to the instructions; contact with peers who are undertaking the same task; advice from a parent/guardian; reference to the **Parent/Student Classroom Guide to Google Classroom** for technical support; request for further clarification or information from the teacher
- Recognise that some tasks will feel very challenging when they are working independently and that is okay. They should not panic if it does not come easily and they don't understand. They should keep at it and ask for help if they need it
- Recognise that teacher feedback will often include actions for improvement that need to be followed up on. They should not feel that this is personal or respond defensively but recognise that this is a vital part of how we all learn and an important function of any teacher's role
- Seek support if they are feeling overwhelmed – speak to an adult or make contact through Google Classroom

- Stay connected to friends/peers to support their own mental health and wellbeing

3.3 Parents – Key Principles for Remote Learning

The need to be pragmatic in our approach to remote learning extends to parents. We recognise that parents are not replacement teachers – we also recognise that they will have competing demands in terms of their own work and care for others in the household; some Key Workers may not be present during the day when remote learning is happening. However, parents can help to make the process of remote learning more effective.

Parents should:

- Ensure their child is familiar with the **Parent/Student Classroom Guide to Google Classroom**
- Review the Online Safety at Home Guidance available on the school website, under the online learning tab
- Discuss their child's working environment to make sure it is suitable. Have a discussion with them about how they will manage distractions
- Encourage a routine – in particular, regular morning start times and reasonable bedtimes
- Discuss their child's learning – this does not need to be in-depth – it can be as simple as asking about what classes they had that day and what tasks they found tricky or enjoyed. Research indicates that this helps build pupil motivation. This will also allow a parent to be more aware of potential concerns such as non-engagement or a child feeling overwhelmed
- Encourage problem-solving – emphasise it is okay to find tasks difficult or not to understand. This will help support a child who may be inclined to panic and help develop their independence and resilience. Calmly work through the strategies they have tried such as re-reading tasks, peer support, online videos and contact with the teacher – encourage them to attempt the task even if unsure. If they cannot attempt the work at all, the parent can contact the school to make them aware of the issue
- Recognise that teacher feedback to their child may involve steps/actions for improvement – encourage them not to take this personally or feel criticised – this is normal and a vital part of the learning process
- Notify the school, if anything is preventing their child engaging with remote learning, such as a house move, illness/other family circumstances or loss of internet connection. Please note, teachers will follow up non-completion of work and if they are unaware of difficulties at home, this can lead to additional stress
- Recognise that normal protocols apply and they should contact the school to raise any concerns – a teacher, subject leader, year head or member of the senior staff will be in touch with them to discuss these concerns. Parents must understand that the Google Classroom is an extension of the physical classroom and it is not appropriate for them to intervene directly online at any point
- Encourage their child to maintain contact with peers, to take regular breaks away from screens and to exercise to support physical and mental wellbeing

4. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Vulnerable Pupils

If the context requires a return to remote learning, pupils with special educational needs and those designated as vulnerable will have specific arrangements in place as directed by the Principal and SENCO. This may involve:

- Enhanced monitoring of pupil work completion and support phone calls home
- Remote support from classroom assistants to encourage pupils to organise their work and stay engaged
- A request for a pupil to complete learning in school where that is possible and deemed appropriate

5. Non-engagement by pupils with Remote Learning

The Department of Education NI, has made it clear that non-engagement with remote learning should be followed up with pupils and their parents as it has the potential to hinder a pupil's long-term engagement with education and lead to undue stress on their return to full time schooling. In the event of full remote learning, the school will implement the following referral procedures to follow up on non-engagement of pupils with their learning.

Pupil is not engaging in tasks

- Subject Teacher contacts pupil through Google Classroom
- If there is no improvement, Subject Teacher/Subject Leader emails parent
- If there is no pupil engagement after a reasonable time frame, subject teacher informs Year Head
- Year Heads keep records and contact parent through email/phone to discuss
- If non-engagement continues, the Year Head informs the Head of Pastoral Care. The Head of Pastoral Care contacts parents to discuss continued concerns
- Principal is informed

6. Return to school following a period of Remote Learning

When a return to school happens after any period of remote learning, teachers should take time to reassure and encourage pupils; there may be a period of readjustment required. Teachers should avoid language which focuses on catch up, missed work and an emphasis on being behind which can add additional pressure and reduce motivation or risk further disengagement from pupils.

Where courses build on prior learning, teachers should take time to consolidate and check what learning is secure from the remote learning period and what aspects may need additional support. This may mean adjusting the subject curriculum to remove content if this is appropriate. However, where a pupil has not engaged, it is unrealistic for a teacher to re-teach all of the material covered during lockdown. Instead, they will identify key concepts and support/practise materials to be prioritised – the focus should not be on blame or what has not been done but on a way forward and what can still be achieved.

