

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for schools and school leaders

### Details

The following guidance has been written to support school leaders and teachers develop contingency plans that consider distance learning to continue education in the event of any closure. We will continue to update this guidance in the next few weeks.

This guidance is intended to facilitate strategic discussions within schools about next steps, support decisions that enable effective remote working arrangements, and minimise disruption to education.

If you have any concerns or would like to speak to the Department for Education about the impact of coronavirus on education, please contact the helpline on **Irrelevant & Sensitive**. **Irrelevant & Sensitive**. Advice is available to anyone working in early years through to universities and also for parents.

### The role of schools

Schools have a responsibility to, wherever possible, support pupils' education during any closure period. The following five-point plan should help teachers and school leaders implement an effective remote working strategy.

In the development of a strategy, schools should liaise with the relevant agencies to ensure that remote working arrangements support vulnerable children and children with SEND. This should give consideration as to how children will access support and guidance from Health and Social Care, and access therapies and medical interventions.

In preparing for closure the safety and wellbeing of all school staff and pupils is of the highest priority. This must be taken into account in any planned closures

### Step one: Develop a communications plan in preparation of school closure

*Establishing a robust communication plan between school leaders, staff, governors and parents throughout the period of closure is critical. Communication plans should ensure that timely updates on the status of school closure are provided, and the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils is protected. Where possible, schools should:*

- Develop a communications protocol that can be enacted at the point of school closure. This should include plans on how and when messages will go out, and how day to day decisions are made throughout period of school closure
- Establish the mechanisms for communication between pupils, parents and staff, considering the options already available to you (e.g. webmail and parent-teacher applications)

- Set clear roles and responsibilities of your senior leadership team, including Online Learning champions and Support. As part of this, ensure that you have a designated safeguarding lead in place for the duration of your school's closure and plan for the eventuality of a member of staff being off sick or having to self-isolate

### **Step Two: Prepare for different home learning environments**

*Remote working plans should acknowledge that not all pupils (e.g. SEND and vulnerable students) will have access to devices, technology or the necessary support in the home to ensure that remote working strategies are effective.*

*Strategies should strive to ensure that all pupils, regardless of circumstance, have fair and equal access to education. Where possible, schools should:*

- Understand the technology available to staff and pupils to ensure that your strategy works for all as far as possible. This could include, for example, an audit to understand pupil the extent of access to the internet and devices
- Outline how pupils can access existing or new platforms that support learning. In any guidance, schools should ensure that the safeguarding of children remains a priority. For example, keeping pupils safe online, providing guidance to parents on how to put "parent locks" on, and ensuring any platforms used to share information and promote collaborative working should be done so securely. Additionally, where possible, pupils who use assistive technology should be helped to access the same technology at home.
- Issue advice and guidance to parents and carers to ensure they understand what their children are being asked to do. This could include, for example, advice for households with multiple children at various learning stages with access to only one device. This may also include reminders to ensure devices such as tablets/phones are suitably charged so learning can take place.

### **Step Three: Create a shared vision for remote access**

*To enable ongoing education to pupils, the school should develop a shared strategy for remote learning that feels familiar to teachers, parents and pupils to minimise disruption in education. This may, for example, mirror existing home-learning structures; for example homework. Where possible, schools should:*

- Provide guidance to parents on how they can support their child to learn at home, including allocating specific studying time for children. Helpful guidance from UNESCO can be found [ins. Link]
- Ensure that all staff are clear of the learning goals and intended outcomes for all pupils throughout school closure, paying particular attention to the varied learning needs of pupils

- Prepare pupils for the possibility of school closures in terms of what expectations are and how they can communicate with their peers if needed to support wellbeing and safety at a time of isolation.

#### **Step Four: Implement positive teaching and learning environments:**

*Schools should continue to provide teaching and learning (including feedback) in the event of school closures, particularly for students sitting exams in summer 2020 and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Ensuring safeguarding and data protection requirements continue to be met during school closures is also essential for the safety and wellbeing of children. Where possible, schools should:*

- Decide on a core set of teaching tools and provide access to any curriculum tools and services already used by the school, particularly ones that help support revision for pupils sitting exams in summer 2020.
- Provide offline digital resources or printed workbooks and worksheets, including pens and pencils if needed. If possible and where appropriate, a loan scheme of portable devices should be considered for children who do not have access to suitable technology away from the classroom and resources should be provided in accessible formats for pupils with SEND.
- Ensure students and parents are aware of any accessibility features, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and that all tools adhere to GDPR and data security standards.

#### **Step Five: Ensure teachers have the tools needed to support learning**

*Ensure that teachers have the tools and support they need to communicate and collaborate in the event of school closures, being aware that transitioning to distance/remote teaching and learning will likely require time to adjust to. Where possible, schools should:*

- Clarify when and if staff are expected to still be working on the school premises or at home and prepare teachers for teaching remotely. This may include, for example bite-size training sessions on how to teach from different locations or the use of free online courses funded by government to staff and leaders.
- Leverage the use of the digital tools already used or look to free options being provided by EdTech companies, considering how they can be used to collaborate and work flexibly on and off site or support virtual meetings. Staff should be well supported in understanding how to tools, and time should be taken to provide the necessary training. .
- Ensure staff, governors, pupils and parents know their sign in details and make clear who to contact if there are any issues.

#### **Additional support available**

There are a range of organisations ready to support schools in the event of closure; from quick tutorials to support staff, pupils, and parents get up and running on cloud devices swiftly, to simple and practical ways to deliver the curriculum remotely. You may wish to consider enlisting the support of industry to:

- Improve capabilities for sharing information
- Improve access to the curriculum
- Support pupils through revision
- Support pupils with special educational needs
- Facilitate virtual lessons

Directories of support can be found via BESA and EdTech Impact