

## **EIS Guidance to Members Working at Home During School Closure**

With schools closed for the foreseeable future, teachers across the country are engaged in delivering as effectively as possible remote learning opportunities for pupils. The following guidelines are intended to support this process, striking a balance between what is desirable, achievable and sustainable.

### **Managing Expectations**

1. Whilst there is a shared commitment to ensure a continuity of education provision during the period of school closure, there should be no expectation that the contingency measures being put in place can replicate normal education delivery.
2. Local Authorities, all school staff, pupils and their parents should understand that while all efforts are being made to offer some learning to young people while they are at home, it is unrealistic to expect normal service to continue and be maintained at this time.
3. Focussing on what can be delivered effectively is likely to be a more productive approach than over-stretched ambitions. Key elements will be varying approaches based upon the targeted year groups and factoring in potential parental support to sustain pupil engagement.

### **Looking After Your Health and Wellbeing**

4. Taking care of our physical and mental health is crucial at this time, when there are many social, emotional, health and practical challenges facing all of us: children, parents and teachers. Keeping minds active and happy, ready to return to school when the time comes is an important factor. Within this, teachers should be mindful of their own health and well-being.
5. Teachers, therefore, are advised to ensure that a healthy work-life balance is achieved and maintained during what is likely to be an extended period of homeworking for many. Most teachers already work significantly in excess of 35 hours per week. The danger is that this will be exacerbated in the absence of physical boundaries between home and school. Take steps to prevent this happening.
6. The working day should be punctuated by regular breaks during which some physical activity and time outdoors, within the limits of current national guidance on social distancing, is recommended. Learners should be encouraged to do the same.
7. Where home circumstances allow, teachers should seek to create an in-house work-zone that is separated in some way from the other areas of the home where family and domestic life occurs. (Where it is not possible

to work in an entirely separate space, this will have a bearing on what teachers can provide in the way of remote learning opportunities for young people. For example, video lessons may present particular difficulty. Any such issues should be raised with the appropriate line manager.)

8. Whilst it can be tempting to keep working beyond the hours usually allocated for a particular day, especially in light of other activities beyond the home being severely restricted, teachers should avoid doing so. It is important to ensure that a healthy amount of time is spent on rest and relaxation, with others in the home, and with friends and family by digital means in the context of current social distancing measures.
9. Social isolation arising from the current social distancing context is likely to be felt by many teachers over what is likely to be a lengthy period of school closure. Employers retain a duty of care towards staff at this time. To help counteract the mental and emotional health impact of isolation, teachers are advised to stay in touch with colleagues and line managers during the working week, for example, through virtual coffee and lunch-breaks; virtual informal departmental and/or stage partner meetings as appropriate. (It may also be helpful for such meetings to occur on a more formal basis for the distinct purpose of collegiate professional dialogue in relation to the provision of remote learning; however, such meetings should be scheduled on the basis of agreement among all staff involved.)

### **Homeworking and Equality**

10. Employers should be live to the equality impact of homeworking arrangements in light of the particular difficulties that will be faced by teachers with caring responsibilities, the majority of whom are likely to be women; and those who are disabled, including those with disabilities related to mental health, who may require further or altered reasonable adjustments that take account of the new arrangements for learning and teaching at home; and those who live with an abusive partner or family member.
11. Additionally, teachers are likely to have variable access to and experience in using ICT devices and associated software. Teachers should advise the school of any support and professional learning needs that they may have in this regard with a view to provision being made or alternative arrangements for homeworking put in place.
12. In the absence of timely application of Equality Impact Assessments, teachers should advise the school of any difficulties that they may be experiencing in relation to childcare at home and/or caring responsibilities for elderly or vulnerable relatives/friends; and/or in managing individual tasks and/or general workload; in living and working in the home

environment in the context of an abusive relationship, with a view to the necessary adjustments and accommodations being made.

13. The equality impact of learning at home for children and young people should also be a consideration to minimise disadvantage to those living in poverty; and/or with a disability; and/or who have English as an additional language; and/or who are Looked After or young carers.

### **Managing Workload**

14. Workload control measures are still operable in the context of working at home. Management of teachers' working time should be within the parameters of the 35-hour working week, and collegiate discussion and agreement around the use of collegiate time in the current new circumstances. A common-sense approach should prevail and should take account of the highly exceptional and very challenging conditions in which all are working.
15. Adjustments to the balance of normal pupil-contact time are recommended for digital learning contexts- neither children nor teachers should be engaged for 4.5 hours per day (daily average of 22.5 hours pupil contact time per week) in screen-based learning and teaching. This would be an excessive and unhealthy demand to place upon pupils and is not conducive to maintaining good health and wellbeing among teachers working in relatively restricted conditions at home and without the usual supports from colleagues and senior management being in place.
16. Teachers who are volunteering to work in Hub/ASN provision for the children of Key Workers and vulnerable children should not also be asked to provide online learning experiences for their own classes on days when they are rostered for Hub provision.
17. Teachers, as trusted professionals working to the school's agreed priorities and on their own CPD, can manage workload, adjusting priorities as necessary in the context of homeworking, as they would under normal circumstances when working in school or when working in a place of their choosing when not class-committed.
18. The principles of collegiate working should continue to apply, with teachers involved in all decision-making which impacts on remote learning and teaching. Although our recent survey indicated that most teachers had yet to engage with the Empowering Schools Agenda, the current situation should allow for one of the key principles of that approach – increased professional autonomy – to be enacted. The concomitant of that is professional trust.
19. There is absolutely no requirement for teachers to submit daily or weekly records of work, or weekly forward plans. Such activity is a generator of unnecessary bureaucracy and workload. The principles of professional

trust and professional dialogue should continue to apply in the context of remote working. As in normal circumstances, forward plans are professional tools for teachers' own use and to provide a basis for professional dialogue. A weekly or fortnightly online or phone discussion / catch up with a line manager colleague (i.e. a collegiate professional dialogue) would be a useful approach to adopt to ensure a level of coordination and continuity in learning.

20. The main priority of teachers, as when working in school, should be learning and teaching. When working at home, time spent on work-related activities of a bureaucratic nature that contribute little or nothing to the quality of learning and teaching, should be minimal to zero.

## **SQA**

21. The SQA will soon announce its plans for this year's accreditation process. Whilst the precise detail of this is not yet known, it is clear that the system that will be applied will be one which strongly features teacher professional judgement based on young people's **actual prior** progress as evidenced by classwork, coursework in various stages of completion, in-class assessments, prelims, etc.. A Post Results Service will operate from August on the basis of the current 'exceptional circumstances' arrangements.
22. With this in mind, teachers should not be being asked to hurriedly submit estimate grades at this point or to go into schools which should be closed, to pick up materials for the purposes of marking, grading, or providing estimates.
23. The submission of estimates when the specific arrangements and deadlines are made known by the SQA, should be by electronic means only.
24. Teachers should not be asked to engage in activities associated with SQA verification of internal assessment since this process cannot go ahead as planned while current social distancing measures are in force.

## **Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Online**

25. Whilst teachers may use their own computer devices and smartphones, online communication with pupils as part of the school's agreed approach to continuing education delivery, should be through agreed official channels only- i.e. work email addresses, GLOW or other local authority-endorsed digital platforms.
26. Employers' policies, guidance and protocols relating to online learning should be shared with teachers and strictly adhered to; and the EIS Social

(<https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/Aberdeen/images/EIS%20Social%20Media%20Policy%202019.pdf>) and the GTCS Professional Guidance on Electronic Communication and Social Media should be borne in mind. (<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/teacher-regulation/professional-guidance-ecomms-social-media.pdf>)

27. It may be that other safe platforms will be developed by bodies such as Education Scotland, as the current closure continues – these may prove useful. Members are advised, however, to be mindful of safeguarding private personal details.
28. Teachers should be aware of the risks involved in live-streaming lessons from their homes for pupils. Where it has been agreed that this will be part of a school's approach to the delivery of remote learning, this should proceed only where secure platforms such as GLOW can be used and according to agreed protocols.
29. Where lessons are being streamed or video recorded for sharing as saved digital files with pupils, teachers should take all appropriate measures to protect their personal privacy and safeguard their professionalism, for example, by ensuring neutral backgrounds and appropriate dress.
30. Teachers should not share, or be asked to share personal email addresses or social media IDs with pupils or their parents.
31. Any school which is delivering learning online must have protocols in place to protect staff and safeguard pupils. No teacher should be expected to carry out any online teaching with which they feel uncomfortable, or in the absence of agreed protocols, including measures for handling incidence of pupil behaviour which is disrespectful of others, including the teacher, or is disruptive of learning.
32. Teachers should be aware that nothing that is shared online is private.

### **Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Phone Calls**

33. Teachers should not be routinely in phone contact with young people who are learning at home for the purposes of checking progress with learning activities.
34. A degree of regulated contact, maintained by staff who are experienced in pastoral care, and within clear protocols which safeguard both pupils and teachers, could be an acceptable part of supporting the emotional wellbeing and learning needs of young people who are particularly vulnerable.

35. Where phone contact is judged necessary on the basis of an evaluation of pupil need, and subsequent identification of pupils for whom wellbeing considerations are significant, this should be done by staff who are well experienced in making phone contact with home in relation to pastoral care matters.
36. In a Primary setting, this should be the Head Teacher or a designated promoted member of staff. In the Secondary setting, any phone calls to pupils deemed necessary should be made by the Depute Head who has responsibility for Pastoral Care and/or Guidance/Pastoral Care Teachers. Main Grade Teachers should not normally be involved in making such phone calls directly to pupils and parents at home. If asked to do so, this should be in accordance with agreed protocols
37. All such telephone contact with pupils learning at home should be with the most vulnerable young people, should occur during working hours and should be arranged in the context of liaison with colleagues from Social Work and Health in the interests of avoiding duplication of effort and/or over-intrusion into home and family environments.
38. Where staff who have Pastoral Care on their remits are asked to make such calls from home, they should be provided mobile phones for this specific purpose. Teachers should not be asked to use their own mobile devices to carry out such pastoral care duties and should not share, nor be asked to share, their personal phone numbers with pupils or parents/carers.
39. Where any teacher has a concern, about any aspect of a phone conversation with a pupil, other than those related to Child Protection for which separate procedures apply, this should be reported to the appropriate line manager.

### **Online and Telephone Communication and Parents/Carers**

40. In the event of a parent/carer seeking to engage a teacher in discussion about their child's learning, they should be directed to the school website where all relevant contact details should be clearly available. Teachers should not feel pressure to respond to any parent/carer comments, requests or complaints made through online channels which have been set up for the purposes of maintaining learning at home amidst the current public health crisis.
41. Teachers should not engage in any phone or video-calling with parents unless this has been arranged through the school, and with the knowledge and/or participation of the appropriate line manager. As referenced elsewhere in this guidance, phone calls to children and young people at home should only be arranged as necessary to address specific wellbeing or learning needs, and should be handled by promoted staff who have Pastoral Care within their remits and within agreed protocols.

## **Teachers' Use of ICT**

42. As far as possible where digital technology is being used to support learning and teaching at home, this should be familiar and accessible both to teachers and pupils. Teachers cannot be expected to be adept at using digital learning platforms without the requisite training, nor can they support such learning without access to the necessary devices.
43. Education Scotland is currently providing some training on the use of GLOW for the purposes on remote learning. Where schools/ local authorities use other digital platforms, the associated learning should be made available. Where teachers are unable to access this learning, alternative activities should be agreed. These might include a different means of supporting contingency education delivery at this time; or carrying out manageable curriculum development work; or engaging in additional professional learning.
44. Where teachers have concerns about the use of particular software, for example, in relation to the capacity of companies to access and harvest personal data, these should be raised with the SMT with a view to alternative possibilities being explored.
45. The classroom environment has extended for many into a virtual space which can be accessed by multiple users. Whilst it may be appropriate in some circumstances for colleagues to work together on providing remote learning, the use of digital platforms for the purposes of quality assurance of learning and teaching in the context of these contingency arrangements, is not appropriate and should be resisted.
46. Where teachers have no internet access at home or poor connectivity, this should be raised with the school management team, with a view to the local authority exploring the possibility of providing/enhancing internet access for teachers in that situation, for example, through the provision of mobile hotspots. In the event of the local authority being unable to enable internet access for teachers who are experiencing difficulty, there should be no additional expectation that these teachers will volunteer to join the staffing of Hubs and alternative homeworking priorities should be agreed.

## **Learning and Teaching**

47. The principles of Empowering Teachers and Teacher Agency should apply to remote working and digital learning contexts in all aspects of learning and teaching.
48. As would be expected when working in the normal environment of school, teachers should be involved in all decisions about the curriculum- in this case, the activities that children and young people will be offered while learning at home. What is provided by teachers should be by agreement following a collegiate, professional dialogue with the senior management

of the school or line manager as appropriate. Collegiality rather than instruction and prescription is key.

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50. As in the classroom context, teachers know the children that they teach well and are therefore best placed decide upon the nature, volume and frequency of the learning activities provided.
51. Learning activities that do not need the internet or a device such as a laptop or tablet to access them are preferable, as many children and families will not have sufficient access to devices or internet access.
52. Many children may struggle simply to have a quiet space to study / work.
53. Tasks should suit the age range and capabilities of the children and expected outcomes should be flexible. A good strategy is to set tasks that enable differentiation by outcome, that all pupils in a class, including those with additional support needs, can complete with some degree of success, with extra and more stretching activities for progression.
54. It can be beneficial to provide a list of flexible tasks that cover different areas of the curriculum/course and which allows learners to choose the activities that interest them and with which their parents might be able to help.
55. Offering a variety of learning activities, covering a range of subject areas and involving different skills, is recommended. Creative activities involving music and dance, art, writing stories, songs and poetry, and making things are likely to motivate and be welcome distraction for learners, particularly in the current worrying climate.
56. Work that can be done by pupils in bite-sized chunks is more likely to be completed than longer tasks. If there are projects, suggest how these could be broken down.
57. Learning activities should be centred on ground previously covered in class, and as far as possible which learners can progress with independently. Overly complex tasks including those that seek to introduce new learning should be avoided in these circumstances, especially where young people have additional support needs.
58. Many parents are also trying to work from home, and some parents might struggle to assist with schoolwork for a number of reasons besides.

Expectations of young people and their parents need to be realistic and fair, as would also be advised when in normal circumstances, approaches to homework are being considered.

59. Given that there has been a commitment made to continue to provide education on a contingency basis during this period of school closure, and given the inequalities that already exist arising from socio-economic factors, the gap between the most and the least affluent is likely to be exacerbated over this period of closure. Scottish Government, local authorities and schools should be live to this and the need to provide remedy when normal service resumes.
60. Provision of feedback on home learning activities by teachers should be concise, focused, bureaucracy-light and given through the agreed channels. Feedback should be given in line with good formative assessment practice with a view to ensuring that any feedback given is meaningful for young people. With this in mind, teachers should be also free to use their professional judgement in terms of the amount and frequency of feedback that they give their pupils.

### **Secondary School Timetable Change**

61. Bearing in mind the key principles set out in relation to remote learning and teaching, and given the advice above about inequities of young people's home environments, there are challenges associated with Secondary schools seeking to continue with plans for summer timetable changes or indeed to accelerate them.
62. Whilst it may make sense for senior students who have completed courses to move on with their learning in some **modest** way, this can only occur if everything is in place in each of the school's subject departments to enable even that modest progression: materials ready, digital versions and ways of sharing learning materials online available, and enough teachers being well enough and available to support what would effectively be new learning.
63. There is no urgency or necessity for BGE learners to formally move to Senior Phase courses at this time. Some preparatory curriculum content may be useful but formal transitions would seem to be an unnecessary bureaucracy challenge at this time.
64. Readiness to facilitate progression for senior students will depend on how far on in their preparation faculties/ subject departments are. Many departments would have progressed work on this during exam leave; that time will now not be available while remote learning arrangements are in operation.
65. For some schools, the move to digital learning has been swift amidst the current public health crisis and without staff having had training in

delivering it. Therefore the expectation that all Secondary staff can simply move to teaching what would have been taught face to face in classrooms at the beginning of what will be new and unfamiliar courses for students and for some teachers, to online digital material, is unrealistic.

66. Aside from the curricular concerns, there is also the matter of managing the bureaucracy of timetable change on a remote basis. For example, the placement of students in particular classes often requires detailed face to face discussion between teachers and students;
67. There are also implications for ethos and relationships. A large focus of beginning new courses is students getting to know one another and teachers getting to know their students- positive relationships as a context for learning moving forward.
68. In light of the many variables that there are, it is advised that decisions around timetabling arrangements for the summer term are taken following collegiate discussion involving all teachers, and in the knowledge that significant time and resource could be spent on this for little return in terms of impact on learning. As in normal circumstances, priority should be given to ensuring quality in learning and teaching.

#### **Further Advice**

69. **Should any member be concerned that the principles outlined here are not being sufficiently applied, they should raise the matter in the first instance where possible with their line manager, and with the School Rep and/or the Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.**
70. The EIS is developing an online Working at Home resource which will provide further ideas and guidance on working for an extended period at home and will be available on a staged basis in the coming weeks.