**Guidance for Remote Learning – COVID19**

**April 2020**

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# **Purpose of this guidance**

During the continuing lockdown and partial closure of schools, the Government has made it clear that normal education across the country has been suspended. However, Essex schools have made it a priority to organise some form of home learning for their pupils and this will prove invaluable for children and young people, both in helping them manage the period of isolation and supporting their return to school and full-time education.

This guidance has been produced to support schools with suggestions and ways in which different schools are offering home learning and how the challenge can be managed. It is recognised that no two schools are the same; each has its own unique circumstances, unique cohort and unique community and it acknowledges that best practice in one context may not be best practice in another. Headteachers and leadership teams are doing a fantastic job in incredibly difficult circumstances and the Local Authority recognises this and wants to support you in any way we can.

# **Parental Expectations**

***DfE guidance April 2020: Are schools expected to provide education as normal to pupils who are in attendance?***

*We understand that these are extraordinary times. The most important thing is that children of critical workers, and vulnerable children, are supervised and properly cared for at education settings. Schools have flexibility to provide support, activities and education in the way they see fit at this time. No school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum during this period.*

Although it is important to continue to emphasise the importance of learning, it is also necessary to be realistic in our expectations of what pupils are likely to achieve at home. The circumstances of children vary widely, and most pupils will not have the same opportunities to share ideas and collaborate on work. For many parents and carers, they face the challenge of managing their children's education whilst trying to maintain their own workload. There may be several children in a family, each with their own needs, and the family may be sharing space, time and technology. Pupils may also have concerns about coronavirus or have been impacted by it directly, which may make it harder for them to concentrate on learning.

On 19th April, the Government issued further guidance for parents/carers which can be found here:

[**Children aged 2-4**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-aged-2-to-4-to-learn-at-home-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

[**Primary School Children**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

[**Children with SEND**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-with-send-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

Despite the difficulties of this period, most children will have the opportunity to explore human connections and experiential learning that typical day to day life does not often afford. The chance for families to bond further and ‘co-explore’ during this time should not be any less of a focus than academic study.

**Example School Approaches**

***DfE Guidance: What are the expectations on schools regarding staying in touch with parents whose child is at home?***

*We want to support schools and parents to ensure children and young people’s education can continue. To help our most disadvantaged young people access online learning, devices will be ordered for children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for exams (in year 10), receive support from a social worker or are a care leaver.*

*Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and children in year 10, do not have internet connections, we are providing 4G routers to them so that they can learn at home. And, the country’s major telecommunication providers will make it easier for families to access selected educational resources by temporarily exempting these sites from data charges.*

*We recognise that many schools have already shared resources for children who are at home and are grateful for this. Further support includes:*

* *a list of* [*educational online resources*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education) *which have been identified by some of the country’s leading educational experts to help pupils to learn at home*
* *enhanced education provision from the BBC to include daily lessons, starting from 20 April 2020*
* *a package of support by the Oak National Academy, a sector led initiative to support teachers educating their pupils remotely during the summer term*

*Schools should work with local authorities to monitor the welfare of vulnerable children who are not attending school, and other pupils they might wish to keep in touch with, for safeguarding purposes.*

Schools are employing a range of approaches to support pupils learning at home, for example:

* developing class pages and resources on the school website and signposting pupils to these pages;
* signposting pupils to online lessons and resources, including Oak Academy and BBC Bitesize;
* keeping in regular touch with pupils and their families, to give support and reassurance;
* making plans for remote learning delivered through live webinars;
* sending home printed learning packs;
* sharing learning activities on the school’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
* continuing to deliver lessons to pupils remaining in school, with pupils at home dialling into the lessons through various online tools.
* EYFS pupils - <https://www.easypeasyapp.com/> free until 31st May or Tapestry as needed;

Some of these facilities may already be set up by schools (particularly in secondary provision) and so established methods can continue; this may be much more of a challenge, or impossible, for some schools.

Even prior to the Government’s announcement of support, some schools have been able to support families with the provision of IT equipment and even internet access, through a variety of means, allowing all children to access online provision. Whilst clearly this is excellent practice, many schools will not be able to provide this level of access. Importantly, the provision of such IT support does not necessarily remove the barrier or challenge to home learning that some families face, specifically challenges related to SEND and Disadvantaged children. The DfE guidance is clear that there is no expectation that teachers should stream live or provide pre-recorded videos. The Government announced further support in this regard on 19 April 2020 and this guidance can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19

We are aware that some schools may be providing feedback to children in a variety of ways, ranging from responding to emails, supporting parents/carers in marking work at home, providing individual written feedback, to online group tutorials. Expectations must be reasonable in terms of the demands of staff, acknowledging that they themselves may be juggling home schooling their own children. **Work related to safeguarding and welfare of all children on a school’s roll, must take priority**, in line with the guidance outlined in the Children and young people’s Response Plan. The oversight of children’s engagement with home learning packages will form a key part in the welfare checks of all children on a school’s roll.

The Education Endowment Foundation has published a number of relevant guidance reports – in particular, *Working with Parents to Support Children’s Learning* which schools may find useful and can be found here: <https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/pupil-premium/Pages/default.aspx>

Schools must determine which home learning approach best fits their circumstances and clearly outline the approach and expectations to families, whilst ensuring appropriate support and checks are in place.

# **Supporting vulnerable pupils, particularly PPG and SEND**

For the most vulnerable, the value of relationships is paramount in supporting well-being and learning at this time. Feedback from learning undertaken provides vital motivation; this feedback is most beneficial when both parents/ carers and pupils are able to input into the feedback. For those with SEND this can help to identify further differentiation that may be required to ensure that the learning is accessible.

Examples of strategies schools have implemented so far to support PPG pupils include:

* Identification of key contact for PPG pupils – form tutor/ pastoral link to ensure relationships are maintained.
* Work focussing on consolidation and extension of learning with a clear focus on developing vocabulary and transferrable skills to ensure the gap between PPG and non-PPG is not widening at this time.
* Setting work from recommended age specific textbooks which are purchased and sent to PPG pupils removing the reliance on internet/ PC access throughout the day - with agreed points to upload photographs of work completed for teacher assessment.
* Reading of a class text online can also secure relationships and engagement. Copyright has been freed up on lots of texts, so teachers can record themselves reading.
* Loaning of school IT equipment and purchasing internet access for PPG families.

The Sutton Trust has compiled a COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief: School Shutdown and this can be found here: [https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.suttontrust.com%2Four-research%2Fcovid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ceb2f30ef6ecf4e816c5608d7e9d7eab9%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C0%7C637234986007590395&sdata=hYcJYeAb%2BibcDl%2FnMTnLiMwTV7rsplRpMGunjL5AOI8%3D&reserved=0)

# **Safeguarding home and remote learning**

Schools will already have measures in place in line with the initial guidance issued by Jo Barclay.

Schools will be following best practice to ensure safe remote learning based on their existing systems and safeguards.

The following is intended as a ‘checklist’ of key points. Although not exhaustive, it may be useful by schools in reviewing their current approach to ensure it mitigates the risks to pupils and staff as far as possible:

* Assessment of risk should have been undertaken and reviewed regularly;
* There should be a code of conduct for staff and pupils using online platforms, for example those with message boards; - it may be necessary to add an appendix to the current Staff Code of Conduct if it does not already cover this
* During online activity teachers should be in a neutral area, as should pupils (e.g. pupils should not be in their bedrooms) and all parties should be appropriately dressed. Pupils should be reminded how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils and teachers should use school-allocated email addresses, not personal ones, or use usernames and passwords – which must not be shared with others;
* School should remind students of who they can contact at school for help or support;
* Pupils’ personal information such as their location, date of birth or phone number should be kept private;
* Staff should already be familiar with the signs of abuse and how they should act if they suspect this, or receive information that suggests a pupil is at risk of harm – the school’s Child Protection policy (plus the interim Child Protection Policy to cover the closure period) could be re-issued to staff now with a request that they acknowledge receipt and confirm they have read it;
* The security measures and protection on existing programs and of new programs schools may consider using at this time should be checked to ensure they are fully up to date;
* If there are home school agreements in place covering the use of the internet these should be revisited to include the above points and all reminded of their role in keeping children safe online.

In addition, to ensure the wellbeing of children is not adversely affected, staff must take the usual care when producing learning materials, taking into account the difficulties individual children may have if a topic is personally difficult for them or may trigger a response which would need one to one support from a member of staff. It is important to note that children may be more vulnerable at this time due to the direct impact of Covid-19 on themselves and their families. Schools should ensure that activities sufficiently signpost to trustworthy sources of support available to pupils should they wish to discuss a topic further or get advice and help. Schools will be aware that without this in place, children may explore unreliable sources for information, support and guidance. Where schools are loaning equipment, basic but effective hygiene should be followed i.e. wiping equipment down.

***DfE Guidance: Children and online safety away from school and college***

*All schools and colleges should be doing what they reasonably can to keep all of their children safe. In most cases, the majority of children will not be physically attending the school or college. It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children’s social care and as required the police.*

*All schools and colleges should consider the safety of their children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the school’s or college’s staff behaviour policy (sometimes known as a code of conduct). This policy should amongst other things include acceptable use of technologies, staff pupil/student relationships and communication including the use of social media. The policy should apply equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which are introduced. Schools and colleges should, as much as is reasonably possible, consider if their existing policies adequately reflect the new reality of so many children (and in some cases staff) working remotely online. As with the child protection policy, in some cases an annex/addendum summarising key COVID-19 related changes may be more effective than re-writing/re-issuing the whole policy. The principles set out in the* [*guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings published by the Safer Recruitment Consortium*](https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/) *may help schools and colleges satisfy themselves that their staff behaviour policies are robust and effective. In some areas schools and colleges may be able to seek support from their local authority when planning online lessons/activities and considering online safety.*

*Schools and colleges should ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.*

The DfE issued further guidance on safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19) on 19th April and this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

# **Support**

School Effectiveness Partners are available to fully support schools with all aspects of developing, implementing and reviewing remote learning provision. Schools should contact their SEP for any advice and guidance; where specific issues arise with SEND provision, the SEP will liaise with Quadrant SEND teams who are also able to support.

A prompts and considerations checklist is included as an appendix to **support** schools.

## **Appendix: Prompts and considerations for remote learning provision:**

These are areas schools may want to take into account when planning provision:

* How designated staff (could be class teacher, LSA, SENCo, Learning Mentor, or another) are keeping in touch with all pupils/families – this might be by class, family, vulnerability group etc.
* How the approach is clearly communicated with families, with regular updates when needed.
* How the work is being set for pupils at home (this may vary according to year group, accessibility and school context, systems that have been previously set up or have been recently introduced).
* How often the school will update home learning resources.
* The system to help school know whether pupils are accessing the work.
* Whether any work set will be marked. If so, how this will be achieved.
* What feedback will be given to pupils, if any, including opportunities to give praise for work well done.
* The system in place to respond to pupils’ questions and concerns about work that has been set.
* How the school is supporting pupils to stay safe online.
* What systems the school is using to make sure that those pupils who do not have access to the internet, wi-fi or a computer/laptop/tablet can access home learning.
* How the school is trying to engage those families who do not appear to be accessing any home learning opportunities/tasks/work set.
* Systems in place to make sure that SEND pupils have access to appropriate learning activities at home.
* How Teaching Assistants/Support Staff are involved in home learning, if this is part of the school's operation.
* The mechanisms in place to support the pupils’ well-being (including mental well-being) during this period of school closure.
* How to use Pupil Premium funding in innovative ways to support disadvantaged pupils with home learning.
* The support the school can access to support home learning:
  + the School Effectiveness Partners;
  + other schools, including those in any partnerships;
  + online learning;
  + social care workers.