



## Remote Learning Update – January 2021

### What is remote learning and what expectations are placed on the school?

The purpose of remote learning is to deliver the curriculum away from school, during a period of closure or when a group is required to self-isolate, as fully and as effectively as possible. As with all areas of our provision, we continually evaluate its effectiveness and develop our practice accordingly. Since the first national lockdown and enforced school closure in March 2020, we, like many schools, have been developing our understanding of remote learning and improving our strategy for it. We have taken account of work in other local schools and of guidance from the Department for Education (DFE), OFSTED and the local authority, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). Excerpts from recent publications by DFE, OFSTED and HCC are set out below.

*The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has found that the effectiveness of remote teaching is determined by many of the same factors as determine the effectiveness of live classroom teaching. For example:*

- *ensuring pupils receive clear explanations*
- *supporting growth in confidence with new material through scaffolded practice*
- *application of new knowledge or skills*
- *enabling pupils to receive feedback on how to progress*

*These characteristics of good teaching are more important than the medium of delivery, be it in the 'live' classroom or through remote provision (whether or not that remote provision is live or pre-recorded). It is important that schools consider how to transfer into remote education what we already know about effective teaching in the live classroom.*

DFE, October 2020

*In developing their remote education, we expect schools to:*

- *teach a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practised in each subject so that pupils can progress through the school's curriculum*
- *select a digital platform for remote education provision that will be used consistently across the school in order to allow interaction, assessment and feedback and make sure staff are trained and confident in its use.*

DFE, January 2021

*Remote education: a broad term encompassing any learning that happens outside of the classroom, with the teacher not present in the same location as the pupils.*

*Remote education is a means, not an end. The aim of education is to deliver a high-quality curriculum so that pupils know more and remember more. Remote education is one way of doing so.*

*This means that everything we know about what a quality curriculum looks like still applies. The remote education curriculum needs to be aligned to the classroom curriculum as much as possible. And, just like the classroom curriculum, it needs to be carefully sequenced and ensure that pupils obtain the building blocks they need to move on to the next step. Curricular goals should be made as explicit remotely as they would be in the classroom.*

OFSTED, 11 January 2021

*Schools are not required legally to deliver 'live' lessons, nor is there any evidence that live teaching delivers higher quality outcomes for learners. Remote learning does not need to be online or 'live' to be impactful and real-time or live teaching is not necessarily preferable to recorded lessons or worksheets. What is vital is that it is pitched right for the learner, that the teacher feeds back on the learner's work.*

Letter from HCC, 11 January 2021



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### Our remote learning journey

#### 1. Unexpected period of closure in March-May 2020.

We were able to implement *Purple Mash* quickly and it was easy to use for teachers and pupils. However, it did not provide a strong enough longer-term solution for the following reasons:

- Activities needed to be longer and more challenging
- Difficult for teachers to design own input to teach our curriculum and key priorities for our children
- Difficult to maintain feedback dialogue.

We made some improvements overtime, such as the inclusion of blogs and the use of some teacher voice-overs and videos, but decided to seek something better going forward, alongside *Tapestry* in Reception that already provided a platform for setting activities and uploading videos.

#### 2. Selecting a new remote learning platform for Years 1 to 6

We looked at *Google Classroom*, *Teams* and *Seesaw* and selected *Seesaw* for the following reasons:

- The most intuitive and user-friendly for primary age children
- Has implications for use in school in *normal times*. This meant we could train staff and pupils to use it during the Autumn term 2020.
- Teachers able to construct lessons, sometimes with videos or voice-overs by the teachers which can be followed flexibly at home by pupils dependent on availability of devices and parents' working patterns and can be pause and revised as necessary.
- Ability to have on-going dialogue with pupils through comments and setting follow-up tasks

#### 3. Second school closure – January 2021

We are required to remain open *the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils*. This is challenging both in terms of staff safety and wellbeing and of the logistics of managing both remote and in-school learning.

- We now have about 70 pupils in school and are at capacity, in order to safely maintain the requirements of the lockdown and school closure.
- Teachers and support staff are alternating working at school and home with half supporting online learning and half supporting pupils in school. These pupils are receiving the same content as those at home, using *Tapestry* and *Seesaw*. This means that, whilst your child's teacher is working in school, more lessons might be prepared by the other class teacher and responses may be from either teacher or from teaching assistants working at home.
- *Seesaw* and *Tapestry* have been used successfully since 5 January to deliver lessons for remote learning. These are well matched to the pupils' needs and our curriculum and many of these include video content or voiceovers.
- Live year group assemblies took place during the week beginning 11 January to pilot the inclusion of some live sessions in the remote provision.

#### 4. Evaluating remote learning in the second lockdown so far for both *Tapestry (Reception)* and *Seesaw*

Feedback directly from parents and via the class reps, was exceedingly positive with strong agreement that we are delivering the curriculum more effectively than before and a real appreciation of how hard school staff are working. The activities are better matched and more challenging, and the materials are more engaging because of the more visible presence of the staff through their lesson input and the various modes of feedback. The following challenges or suggestions for improvement were identified:

- Developing an element of live sessions or even live teaching
- The impact on wellbeing and general motivation of seeing or speaking to school staff
- Opportunities for clarification about what is expected in a task or how much work to do
- Managing workload for teachers and the risk that the amount of work into constructing dynamic lessons is unsustainable
- Providing activities that are non-screen-based and potentially more chosen or open-ended



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### 5. Next Steps

We believe that teaching live lessons (for example in English, mathematics and topic or science) is not right for us for the following reasons:

- They will not provide the same outcomes as live lessons in an in-school context, because the teacher is not able to interact with pupils in the same way. In this way, outcomes will be no better than pre-constructed lessons with elements of voice-over, video or links to other resources. In-fact these may lead to better outcomes, as they can be paused and replayed to ensure the learner understands what to do.
- Pupils would still need parental support in accessing live lessons. Sadly, this is the nature of the lockdown, which is putting a great deal of pressure on family life. However, the use of pre-constructed lessons may lessen the stress to some extent, as they can be accessed by pupils at a time that suits their family circumstances. This may be to do with a parents' working pattern or having to support more than one child at home; to do with sharing a device.

However, we do recognise that there may be some benefit to pupils and staff in having an element of live interaction, helping to address the points noted at no. 4 and plan to pilot further sessions from week beginning 18 January 2021, with the aim of building up to the following:

- Continued year group assemblies
- 2 or 3 short check-in sessions to discuss recent learning and activities coming up next. These may need to be with each year group and led by the teacher not working in school.
- A longer weekly story session or similar with each class led by the class teacher or teaching assistant

We are keen to protect the wellbeing of our teaching staff and note that the time spent doing live sessions may result in a reduction in some of the more time-consuming elements of the pre-constructed lessons, such as the use of video or voice-over.

Please visit the [pupil pages of our website](#) for more information on our remote learning platforms.