

EIS Guidance to Members Working at Home During School Closure

12th January 2021

With schools closed until at least 1st February 2021, in the interests of controlling the pandemic, teachers across the country are again engaged in delivering remote learning opportunities for pupils. The following guidelines are intended to support this process, striking a balance between what is desirable, achievable and sustainable in the current context.

Managing Expectations

1. Whilst there is a shared commitment to ensure a continuity of education provision during the period of school closure, it should be understood that the contingency measures being put in place, whilst offering valuable learning experiences for young people, cannot and should not seek to replicate normal education delivery.
2. With the majority of pupils learning at home, and with teachers supporting young people in a range of ways, a balance of approaches to learning will be needed, that take account of the age and stage of learners, and the home circumstances and health and wellbeing needs of all. Local Authorities, all school staff, pupils and their parents should understand that while all efforts are being made to maintain young people's learning while they are at home, it is unrealistic to expect the equivalent of normal service within the current circumstances.
3. Education Scotland's recently published advice on [remote learning](#) clearly states that 'remote learning will not replicate face to face in school teaching – in style, approach or hours of delivery'. The guidance is clear and the EIS agrees that 'Whilst remote learning is not a substitute for full time classroom-based learning and teaching, effective remote learning can mitigate some of the adverse impact of a reduction in face-to-face learning in a variety of ways.'
4. Focussing on what can be delivered effectively in the context of remote learning and teaching is likely to be a more productive approach than over-stretched ambitions. A collegiate approach to determining what will be offered to pupils while they are learning at home is advised. Colleagues will feel better supported to and more confident in, providing a range of remote learning experiences in circumstances where professional dialogue has already taken place among colleagues, including senior managers, and where this is ongoing as required,

Looking After Your Health and Wellbeing

5. 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. The EIS view is echoed by Education Scotland in advice which highlights that health and wellbeing remains a key element of the recovery curriculum for young people and the importance of this is clearly stated: 'We need to be mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people, many of whom may have suffered loss and trauma as a result. For all learners a key focus during this period of remote learning needs to be health and wellbeing. It will be essential that remote learning approaches reflect this.' Equally, teachers should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

6. Teachers, therefore, are advised to ensure that a healthy work-life balance is achieved and maintained during this period of homeworking. Most teachers already work significantly in excess of 35 hours per week. As was the case during the first period of school closure, there is a real risk that this will be exacerbated in the absence of physical boundaries between home and school. Take steps to prevent this happening.
7. The working day should be punctuated by regular breaks during which some physical activity and time spent outdoors, within the limits of current national guidance on social distancing, is recommended. Learners should be encouraged to do the same.
8. 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. Further information on this can also be accessed in our [Advice](#) on Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
9. 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 beyond your household, within the parameters of current restrictions and/or by digital means.
10. Social isolation arising from the current social distancing context is likely to be felt by many teachers during this 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; and virtual informal departmental and/or stage partner meetings as appropriate. It may also be helpful for such virtual 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

11. 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; those who are disabled; and those who live with an abusive partner or family member.
12. Employers have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantages disabled workers may face, including ensuring accessibility for virtual staff meetings. Existing and new requirements for reasonable adjustments should be addressed as a matter of priority so as not to unfairly disadvantage disabled teachers. This includes 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.

(TUC guidance on reasonable adjustments during covid19 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/covid-19-and-reasonable-adjustments-guide-reps>)

13. Additionally, teachers may 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, as well as any specific access requirements they have, with a view to appropriate provision being made or alternative arrangements for homeworking put in place.
14. Where local authorities have yet to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on the impact of homeworking on people who share a protected characteristic that is covered by the Equality Act 2010, 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 any disability; 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.
15. 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 or other additional support need; and/or who have English as an additional language; and/or who are Looked After or young carers.

Managing Workload

16. 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 circumstances. A common-sense approach should prevail and should take account of the very challenging conditions in which all are working.
17. Adjustments to the balance of normal pupil-contact time are recommended for digital learning contexts- neither children nor teachers should be engaged for the duration of the normal pupil day in screen-based learning and teaching. This would be an excessive and unhealthy demand to place upon pupils, is pedagogically unsound 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.
18. This view is shared by Education Scotland. Their advice is that 'Learners should not engage in online learning for the entirety of the school day. Learning may include activities such as research tasks, project work, practical opportunities, discussions and other activities that can be carried out away from a digital device.'
19. Teachers who are attending school for the provision of education to 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 this provision.
20. 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.
21. The principles of collegiate working should continue to apply, with teachers involved in all decision-making which impacts on remote learning and teaching. Although an EIS survey conducted towards the end of 2019 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.
22. 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.

23. 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.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Online

24. Whilst teachers may use their own computer devices and smartphones if they wish to, 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. It should also be understood that teachers are not compelled to use their own digital devices should they not wish to do so. In these circumstances, the onus is on the local authority to provide any devices as necessary to support remote teaching.
25. Employers' policies, guidance and protocols relating to online learning should be shared with teachers and strictly adhered to; and the EIS Social Media Policy ([Communication Technologies \(eis.org.uk\)](https://www.eis.org.uk/communication-technologies)) and the GTCS Professional Guide, 'Engaging Online – a guide for teachers' (embed link) should be borne in mind.
26. Where it has been agreed that live-streaming of lessons will feature as one 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, including those in relation to the roles and responsibilities of parents in supporting their children with remote learning generally, and specifically to access any live lessons.
27. 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.
28. Teachers should not share, nor be asked to share personal email addresses or social media IDs with pupils or their parents.
29. 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. Such protocols should include measures for handling incidence of pupil behaviour which is disrespectful of others,

including the teacher, or is disruptive of learning; and for responding to incidences of inappropriate parental intervention

30. Teachers should be aware that nothing that is shared online is private.
31. Further advice in relation to the Do's and Don'ts of Online Teaching can be found in the EIS Advice on Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic (embed link).

Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Phone Calls

32. 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.
33. To support the emotional wellbeing and learning needs of young people who are particularly vulnerable, a degree of regulated contact, maintained by staff who are experienced in pastoral care, and within clear protocols which safeguard both pupils and teachers, would be appropriate.
34. 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.
35. 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 by the school, this should be in accordance with agreed protocols.
36. All such telephone contact with the most vulnerable pupils learning at home should occur during working hours and should be arranged in the context of liaison as appropriate with colleagues from Social Work and Health in the interests of avoiding duplication of effort and/or over-intrusion into home and family environments.
37. 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.
38. 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.

39. Further advice in relation to the Do's and Don'ts of Online Teaching can be found in the EIS Advice on Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic (embed link).

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. Where schools/ local authorities use digital platforms for the delivery of teaching and learning, the associated training 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. Whilst it is understood that senior managers have a responsibility to quality assure learning provision, this should be done on the basis of collegiate, professional dialogue with teachers. All staff should be involved in collegiate discussion about what the school's remote learning offer will be and opportunities for professional dialogue among colleagues, including senior managers, should be created ongoingly throughout the period of remote learning and teaching. It is not acceptable for quality assurance processes to be in the form of observation of live virtual lessons.
47. 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 attend school settings more regularly than their colleagues. Any alternative to the provision of online learning by teachers should be agreed through a collegiate approach.

Learning and Teaching

48. The principles of Empowering Teachers and Teacher Agency should apply to remote working and digital learning contexts in all aspects of learning and teaching.
49. 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.
50. As in the classroom context, teachers know the children that they teach well and are therefore best placed to decide upon the nature, volume and frequency of the learning activities provided.
51. An appropriate range of learning activities should be considered, particularly in light of the fact that many children and families still do not have sufficient access to digital devices or internet access. Education Scotland has advised that 'Remote learning can be delivered in a variety of ways. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating with some of the best learning

examples not requiring technology at all, although in the current context, digital and online approaches will be commonly used.'

52. It should be borne in mind that in addition to the issues related to digital inequity, many children may struggle simply to have a quiet space to study / work.
53. Learning activities should suit the age range and capabilities of the children and expected outcomes should be flexible. A good strategy is to set learning activities 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 possible activities that cover different areas of the curriculum/course and which allow learners to choose the activities that particularly interest them and with which their parents might be better placed 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 a 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 make 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, local authorities and schools should be live to this and continue to take account of and address socio-economic disadvantage and digital inequality in terms of the remote learning that they offer.
60. Provision of feedback on pupils' learning at home 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 provided is meaningful for young people. With this in mind, teachers should also be free to use their professional judgement in determining the amount, nature and frequency of feedback that they give their pupils. It should also be borne in mind that good formative assessment practice involves a balance of teacher, self and peer assessment.

Further Advice and Resources

61. 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.
62. The EIS has developed an online Working at Home resource (embed link - [Working at Home \(eis.org.uk\)](https://eis.org.uk/working-at-home)) which will provide further ideas and guidance on working for an extended period at home. In addition, we have compiled some learning and teaching resources which might be helpful when delivering learning and teaching remotely (embed link - [Teaching Resources \(eis.org.uk\)](https://eis.org.uk/teaching-resources))