



ST MARY'S CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

REMOTE LEARNING POLICY

November 2020

Rationale

In the event of a school closure, the school is committed to providing continuity of education to its pupils and will do so through a process of remote (online) learning.

Extensive remote learning would apply particularly in a situation in which the school is closed for an extended period of time, but a high proportion of pupils and teachers are healthy, and able to work as normal from home. This policy does not normally apply in the event of short-term school closures (e.g. as a result of inclement weather) or a short-term pupil absence.

Remote learning may also be appropriate in situations when pupils, in agreement with the school, have a period of absence but are able to work at home, at least to some extent. This may apply in cases such as exclusion from school, or longer term illness, assuming pupils are able to complete school work at home. Another relevant instance would be if, following contact with a positive case of COVID-19, pupils are self-isolating at home but are not suffering with relevant symptoms.

There is no obligation for the school to provide continuity of education to pupils who absent themselves from school, with or without parental permission, in contravention to school or government guidance. This may apply, for example, if parents choose to take pupils on holiday during term time. Similarly, this would apply if parents made the decision, without prior agreement with the school, to absent their sons from school ‘as a precaution’, against official guidance, in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19.

This policy will remain under review and may be revised as necessary in light of further experience of remote learning and the circumstances around its necessity. For example, the extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning, owing to widespread illness, for example.

Remote learning for individual pupils

Assuming an absence has been agreed with the school, and the pupil in question is healthy enough to work from home, the school will provide work for pupils who are unable to attend in person. If this occurs for an individual pupil, the collation of work and communication with the parent will be coordinated by the pupil’s Year Head and form teacher.

The pupil’s subject teachers will make work available to the pupil. If there are any issues with the compilation of work, form teachers should liaise with the relevant Year Head or Head of Department (particularly if a subject teacher is unavailable).

Though every case will have its own specifics, a rough guideline for the frequency of communication between school and pupil would be once per week. Work will only be provided to pupils in this way if there is an agreed absence lasting more than three working days.

Remote learning for multiple pupils

The most likely event that will lead to remote learning for multiple pupils is when some pupils are instructed to self-isolate at home for a set time period due to contact with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in the school environment.

Should this situation arise, one of two approaches to remote learning will be adopted.

If part but not all of a class is required to self-isolate, the school will utilise the approach detailed in the section ‘Remote learning for individual pupils’ above. Work will be provided for pupils by their subject teachers, with contact from each teacher at least once per week. Google Classroom and other online platforms discussed later in this policy will be used to support this contact.

If an entire class is required to self-isolate, the approach will be similar to that outlined below in 'Remote learning in the event of extended school closure'. The subject teacher will make more frequent contact with pupils through Google Classroom and other online platforms, usually during the normal timetabled slot for that particular class.

The numbers of pupils impacted by the requirement to self-isolate will be closely monitored as the situation with COVID-19 develops.

Remote learning in the event of extended school closure

In the event of an extended school closure, the school will provide continuity of education in the following ways:

- a) Through teachers delivering lesson content online, with the ability of pupils to ask questions online (primarily through Google Classroom).
- b) The setting of work that pupils complete, with written responses (if relevant) submitted electronically.
- c) Feedback on specific pieces of work that are submitted to teachers electronically.

The school recognises that many families may not have home printers and will therefore not require the printing of material.

The school will primarily use Google Classroom to ensure continuity of education. It is accessed via the relevant app on the 'My-School' homepage or the 'waffle' (9 dots) on any Google search page. A small number of teachers may also use Microsoft Teams/OneDrive, which are accessed via the relevant app or desktop application, or via the following URL: <https://teams.microsoft.com> or www.onedrive.com. In some cases teachers will provide communicate by school email. Where Google Classroom is not being used, the teacher involved will ensure that all pupils in relevant classes are informed of the platform to be used and are aware of how to access their work.

All pupils received instruction in how to access and use Google Classroom during their inductions in August 2020, and parents were provided with instruction booklets. All teaching staff have undergone extensive training in Google Classroom and the effective use of online platforms to support remote learning. This in-house training and support continues on an ongoing basis.

Access to these platforms is gained via a pupil's normal 'My-School' login. If pupils have difficulty with logging in, they should contact the school at info@stmarys.belfast.ni.sch.uk.

The extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning. For shorter closures, for example, teachers may set work on Google Classroom for submission in person once the school has reopened. For longer closures, teachers would make more use of electronic assessment and, in some cases, live sessions (see specific guidance below).

Teachers may be contacted by pupils and parents via official school channels (using their C2k email account). Communication should not be made through personal accounts (for teachers or pupils) or other websites.

The school reserves the right to vary the range of methods used to provide remote learning tasks, feedback and interaction, based on the particular circumstances of any closure and based on our experience.

The setting of tasks using Google Classroom

Subject areas will provide work broadly in line with pupils' timetables, primarily using Google Classroom. Tasks will be set in accordance with existing Schemes of Work, and tasks will be designed to allow pupils to progress through Schemes of Work at the same pace as if they were in school, where possible. Naturally, remote learning will require pupils and teachers to take a different approach to working through content, but tasks will aim to ensure the pace of content coverage is as close as possible to in-school teaching, and ensure pupils do not fall behind. The nature of tasks set should allow pupils to learn independently, without the specific support of an adult at home.

In most cases teachers will set tasks through the tasks function on Google Classroom and it is the responsibility of pupils to ensure they know how to use this functionality effectively (instructions are made available separately).

Communication

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, teachers will be expected to be contactable remotely by colleagues, pupils and parents. All communication should take place during usual office hours, with no expectation for teaching staff to read or respond to emails after 3.15pm, although responses should be made to electronic messages within one working day in normal practice. For those who are on part-time contracts, communication is expected only on the days on which they would usually work.

Live sessions - Using Google Meet and Microsoft Teams

Although not required to do so, some teachers may arrange to deliver content in a 'live' manner (either by text or audio and/or visual means).

Google Meet and Microsoft Teams are platforms that allow for resources to be shared, teachers to provide exposition, and pupils to ask questions in 'real-time'. Pupils will be provided with details of sessions, and will be expected to participate in them if they are asked and able to.

Live sessions can be particularly helpful as they can facilitate contemporaneous communication, with pupils able to respond to teachers' questions (and ask them) via the conversation functionality.

Assessment

Teachers will endeavour to provide regular feedback to pupils on pieces of work that they are required to submit. Under normal circumstances, not all pieces of work are formally assessed by teachers and this would continue to be the case should the school employ remote learning.

Assessed work will in most cases be set using the tasks function in Google Classroom, regardless of how pupils' work is eventually submitted, with clear due dates given to pupils for completion, thereby helping pupils to organise their time. The tasks function also allows pupils to submit work to the teacher before a task is signed off.

Given the nature of the tasks, the type of feedback teachers can provide may not have the same format as marking an exercise book.

Teachers may use various methods to provide feedback, such as:

- Providing whole class feedback rather than feedback on individual pieces of work
- Using the "Comments" function on online documents on Google or Microsoft
- Sending a direct email to pupils with specific feedback/targets
- Feedback via another website/piece of software (e.g. MyMaths)
- Recording oral feedback and sharing an audio file with the pupil

Support for pupils with SEN, EAL and other specific learning needs

Should parents of pupils with SEN, EAL or other specific learning needs require advice or support during a period of remote learning, they should contact the SENCO, Mrs Amanda Barr.

Teachers will ensure that work is differentiated as required for all learners when setting online tasks.

Pastoral care during a school closure

In event of a school closure, the primary responsibility for the pastoral care of a pupil rests with their parents/guardians. However, form teachers (under the guidance of the Year Heads) will check in regularly with the pupils in their form classes to monitor both academic progress and their general wellbeing. Form teachers will pass on feedback to Year Heads, particularly if there are concerns or a lack of communication.

Safeguarding during a school closure

In the event of a school closure, pupils, parents and teachers are reminded that the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy still applies to all interactions between pupils and teachers. In that policy, there are behaviours and reporting obligations to which teachers must adhere, whether they are at home, in the community or at school.

Any questions or concerns about safeguarding should continue to be raised to the Designated Safeguarding Teacher, Mrs Fiona Crookes (fcrookes766@c2kni.net), or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Teacher, Mrs Amanda Barr (abarr524@c2kni.net).