

Effectiveness & Achievement

Remote learning – information for families

Summary

- Schools have to provide details about remote learning on their websites and are contacting families regularly with further information
- Remote learning provision will vary between schools depending on their circumstances and, especially, the age of children and young people
- “Live lessons” delivered online may be part of a remote learning package, especially for older secondary pupils, but a variety of formats will be used
- Schools will aim to keep in touch with pupils and parents/carers; partnership between schools and their families is critical for successful learning
- Schools will review and revise remote learning provision in light of experience and it will change over time

Introduction

Schools are currently closed, except to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers until at least half term; the government has announced that a review will take place in w/c 15 February. During this period of partial closure, schools are required to provide remote learning opportunities for all pupils. They have already been doing this for pupils not required to attend school during the summer term 2020 and for those required to self-isolate or who were otherwise unable to attend school during the autumn term 2020. Schools must provide, via their school websites, details of their remote learning offers from 25 January. In practice, they have been contacting parents/carers directly with information since the start of this term.

Remote learning offers will not be the same in every school, just as the curriculum and lessons under normal conditions are not the same. They will vary according to the age of pupils involved, and the amount of support your child will need will also be different according to age and individual needs. It is generally acknowledged that it is most difficult to provide a remote offer for the youngest children without regular support and supervision from an adult in the same room as them. Older pupils in secondary schools are usually much more able to work productively by themselves and also able to use the technology and devices required. Schools also use different systems, or platforms, to support remote learning over the internet.

Finally, it is important to remember that your child’s school’s provision may change over time. Schools are used to providing education on site, with ready access to equipment and facilities and there is a wide range of approaches for which there is strong evidence of effectiveness and success. This is not the case with remote learning under pandemic conditions; schools will be constantly revising and reviewing their provision in light of experience, the work produced by pupils and feedback from them and from parents/carers. Key to successful remote learning is

partnership between schools and their families, supporting each other to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The rest of this document provides information covering the likely features of remote learning for pupils of different ages attending York schools and signposts sources of additional information and support. Remote learning offers, like lessons in schools, will contain a variety of activities, use a range of resources and be delivered in a variety of ways.

Primary remote learning

All primary schools are providing remote learning for children to access at home. Because of the diverse age range of children in primary schools, this will look different depending on the age of your child.

Schools will be using their own choice of platform to communicate with you and your children about the remote learning offer. Common examples being used in the city are Tapestry (especially with the youngest children), Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and Zoom but some schools may be using others.

At primary age, you can expect a focus on the core aspects of children's learning and development. These are reading (including phonics), writing and mathematics and, in the younger years (especially Foundation Stage), Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development. Schools are often providing wider curriculum coverage as well. Tasks will involve non-screen activities including handwritten tasks plus physical activities to support health and well-being.

There is no evidence to suggest that 'live' teaching is better than 'non-live' teaching, but there are several reasons why live teaching can exclude some children and place additional stress and burden on families. There are also some schools where all teachers remain teaching a full timetable in school because of the number of vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers requiring a place. In these circumstances, providing 'live lessons' remotely whilst also teaching a class of children in schools is very challenging.

Whilst some primary schools are providing some live teaching for children they are all prioritising ensuring that children experience the key features of high quality teaching:

- Clear explanations and demonstrations – particularly for new learning
- Structured activities that support children to understand and develop their skills
- Feedback to children about how they are doing and what they need to do next

Often, non-'live' options can help these be delivered more effectively.

Schools are working hard to share learning with families in a timely fashion whilst balancing the need to be responsive to what children have achieved in each lesson. They are taking different approaches to keeping in touch with their pupils in person. For some, this will be via virtual

assemblies, whilst for others it will be personal phone calls. These live interactions are beneficial to maintain relationships and help to strengthen ongoing engagement. Whilst they may not take the form of a live lesson, they are still an important part of children's ongoing development.

Secondary remote learning

There are fewer pupils currently attending secondary than primary schools during lockdown restrictions. This means that secondary schools have a greater proportion of teachers available to directly support remote learning during the school day. IT systems and facilities are generally on a larger scale and pupils are able to access more sophisticated software and video libraries. This means that secondary schools can provide a rich and varied remote learning package which may include a significant amount of 'live' teaching, especially for older pupils studying exam courses.

Common platforms used are Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Pupils are expected to comply with rules around their behaviour when engaging with online or 'live' learning; this is to be expected given widespread concerns on all sides about safe and acceptable use of the internet. Use of online platforms means that schools can take registers for lessons just as if pupils were in school and can also collect completed pieces of work. If your child is not taking part in learning activities or submitting completed tasks their school will contact you.

Secondary schools are making every effort to cover a full range of subjects and your child may follow a timetable which is close to that which they would experience in school. Schools are conscious of the need to support pupils' general health and wellbeing, so remote learning plans will include breaks and tasks which do not require young people to be at a screen all the time.

Arrangements for awarding grades for GCSEs, A-Levels and other exams in the summer of 2021 have not yet been finalised, but it is important for young people in exam year groups to engage with remote learning and complete tasks to the best of their ability. This is because schools will need to have evidence that will support their assessments and feed into the grades awarded.

Frequently asked questions

My child's school's offer is not working for my family. What should I do?

Talk to the school about your circumstances. They may be able to offer some support and advice based on what they know from other parents or be able to make changes to their provision to help you – especially if your challenge is one that many families are facing. Schools continue to want the best for their families but can only do this by parents and school staff working in partnership.

The equipment that we have at home isn't suitable for my child to be accessing their remote learning on. Can I get any help?

There are options available to support families where access to equipment, such as computers or tablets, is the main barrier to accessing learning. Your child's schools will know how to access these options so talk to them about the challenges you are facing.

How can I keep my children online so much when my data allowances are restricted?

As with the access to equipment options, schools are able to take steps on your behalf to help you get more data access. Let them know as soon as you can that this is a problem for you and they will work with you to find a solution.

I don't want to complain but I do have some feedback for the school about their remote learning offer. How can I do this in a constructive way?

Schools are only too happy to receive feedback about their remote learning. As professionals, teachers are used to reflecting on and adapting practice to best meet the needs of their communities. If the school sends out a survey inviting feedback, or is making contact via phone calls, take the opportunity to offer feedback about remote learning. As a relatively new experience for us all, it's helpful for schools to hear about what is working well, as well as things that are proving difficult.

I've heard that there is an expectation that children are given a set number of hours of remote learning a day. Why isn't my child's teacher / school providing that amount of video content each day?

The Government has set out expectations for 'amounts' of remote learning for different ages of children. This is the amount of time that children may spend completing school curriculum based activities, not the amount of teacher led activity that should be happening. When children are in school, effective teachers do not spend all of their time talking to the whole class – children spend lots of time working independently, discussing and thinking. This is no different in remote learning and you should reasonably expect children of all ages to spending time completing some of their work without any adult interaction.

Useful supporting resources for parents

Your child's school will be best placed to signpost you to useful support and resources to assist with remote learning. Using the ones they suggest will mean that your child is most likely to be following the school's curriculum closely and therefore will be well prepared to quickly and easily engage with face to face learning again, when that time comes.

For families that feel additional resources would be helpful, we would suggest:

- Oak National Academy – the government funded online school with access to almost 10,000 lessons and accompanying resources for all school aged children <https://www.thenational.academy/>
- BBC Bitesize – the broadcaster's lessons and supporting resources for children aged 3 – 18 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- BBC networks (TV and Radio) – each day the BBC is broadcasting lessons across their network for early years, primary and secondary aged pupils. Details can be found [here](#)
- City of York Council has compiled a list of additional support for parents and carers with early years aged children (0 – 5) and these can be found [here](#).

Information about remote learning from the Department for Education and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

The Department for Education (DfE) has published lots of information about remote learning for a variety of different audiences. [This blog](#) on 'What should remote education look like?' was published in January 2021 and more detailed information about 'What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges', which includes information about remote learning as well as many other aspects, can be found [here](#).

In January 2021, Ofsted published a [short blog](#) about their view of 'What's working well in remote education'.

This document was produced by City of York Council's Schools' Effectiveness and Achievement team and endorsed by the York Schools and Academies Board on behalf of all state funded schools in York.

January 2021