Education Scotland
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Remote learning
Advice & Guidance

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For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

Contents

Remote learning

Initial advice on remote learning was produced in January 2021 by Education Scotland in partnership with the Education Recovery Group. This advice has now been updated (December 2021) to take account of the current arrangements to support practitioners in leading remote learning when and if needed in the coming weeks. The advice sets out shared understanding and expectations of what remote learning means for schools and settings across Scotland. Practitioners will be able to apply this understanding to their own specific context and use it as a basis for professional engagement and development.

Principles of Curriculum for Excellence

While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things, our curriculum framework continues to apply. The core principles of Scotland's curriculum and the four fundamental capacities at its centre remain critical in putting learners at the heart of education.

From the outset of the pandemic, schools and settings adapted their learning and teaching to ensure a strong focus on children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing, and engagement. This continues to apply.

Individual settings and practitioners should seek to provide a curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the full range of learners' needs, reflecting each learning community's specific context.

A focus on promoting and developing children's and young people's skills in independent learning is a useful part of the remote learning approach.

What is remote learning?

Remote learning is learning that is directed by practitioners and undertaken by children and young people who are not physically present with the practitioner while the learning is taking place. In the current context, digital and online approaches will be commonly used as part of the overall mix for remote learning.

Remote learning typically allows for a combination of 'live' interactions between learners and teacher/practitioner and tasks which are undertaken independently. It will take account of the need to make sure that learners are not, for example, engaging in online learning for the entirety of the school day. It may involve, for example, a range of learning experiences which take place in a variety of learning spaces, including outdoor and physical learning. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating. The involvement of partners, such as community and third sector organisations to support remote provision has the potential to provide rich and varied learning experiences. Some of the best learning examples will not require technology at all.

It is expected that learning will include provision of opportunities and experiences to consolidate, extend and enhance knowledge and skills to take account of and meet the needs of learners and their families. This may be accommodated by providing access to pre-recorded lessons, presentations, lesson notes, diagrams or links to useful websites. Helpful advice for planning online aspects of learning can be found in Education Scotland's Delivering Learning and Teaching Online resource.

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 and can offer learners:

- significant autonomy over their learning
- a degree of flexibility for learners in where and when they learn
- potential for high quality consolidation of learning
- opportunities to develop and improve their skills in working independently

- increased opportunities for personalisation in learning
- opportunities for improved engagement
- enhanced parental engagement in their child's learning away from school.

Key principles for remote learning include:
- remote learning will not replicate face to face in school teaching – in style, approach or hours of delivery
- teachers and practitioners retain responsibility for planning and organising children's and young people's learning, with learning supported by parents and carers
- opportunities for learners to progress and extend their learning
- approaches to assessment of learning and providing feedback that support and capture children's and young people's achievements in school and at home
- provision of learning activities to ensure engagement for all, considering the age and stage of development of learners, and introducing increasing opportunities for independent study as appropriate
- provision of learning activities for learners who require additional support for learning and any learners who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged
- a shared understanding between home and school of the remote learning approach and the respective roles and responsibilities of all involved
- continued endeavours to tackle digital exclusion, including the provision of devices and connectivity solutions to support learning
- partnership working with community providers and third sector organisations to support provision.

In line with these key principles, children and young people are entitled to:
- learning opportunities which reflect the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, allowing learners to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes in a variety of relevant contexts and across curriculum areas
- access to appropriate physical resources where needed – this might include learning materials, textbooks and / or digital devices
- on-line resources that will be consistently used across learning to aid interaction, assessment and feedback
- regular high quality interactive learning and teaching using technology or other remote methods
- a balance of live learning and independent activity
- access to key learning which is available for learners to revisit as often as necessary
- ongoing dialogue, reflection and feedback with practitioners in relation to their own learning
- daily registration/check in for every learner, recognising that the format for this may vary depending on the age and stage of learners
- regular opportunities for engagement with other pupils to support learning, as well as informal engagement
- due regard for their wellbeing and safeguarding.

Examples which illustrate how different schools implemented the entitlements for remote learning can be viewed here: Remote learning: what's-working-well

Support for remote learning

National e-Learning Offer | Education Scotland

The National e-Learning Offer continues to support learning and teaching in session 2021/22. Its combination of live sessions via e-Sgoil, recorded lessons on West OS and further supported resources can be used when physically present in schools and settings and for any periods of remote learning or self-isolation.

The Resources to Support the Refreshed Narrative for Curriculum for Excellence is a practical tool that will support school and settings when planning for a remote learning approach with the four capacities remaining at the heart of learning.

Scotland Learns

The Scotland Learns publications provide a range of ideas and suggestions of activities to help parents, carers and practitioners support learning at home.

COVID-19 Education Recovery

The COVID-19 Education Recovery page provides a single point of access to guidance and support for COVID-19 recovery. It includes key advice from the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG), and from sources approved by CERG.

Strengthening Support for school staff

The Scottish Government has announced a package of continued support to be offered to the education workforce to help manage additional pressures as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes supporting the wellbeing of school staff via coaching and mentoring and enhanced support for recently qualified teachers.

Professional Learning

The Education Scotland Events page provides access to programmes of learning and a wide variety of online events covering a wide range of topics including Curriculum Support, DYW, Inclusion and data analysis. Practitioners can directly access professional learning support around digital learning and teaching via Education Scotland Digilearn.scot.

Glow

Glow is Scotland's nationally available digital platform. It provides free access for all learners and teachers to online tools such as Microsoft Office 365, Google G-Suite for Education and WordPress Blogs. Find out more on Glow Connect.

Digilearn.scot

Digilearn.scot provides a range of strategies, tools and guidance to support learning and teaching remotely. Including links to a range of subject Wakelets which provide a collection of curated resources from a variety of sources for individual subject and curriculum areas to support digital remote learning.

SQA

SQA has a resource hub for the delivery of National Qualifications in 2021-2022 where teachers can get access to the latest information and resources to support the delivery of qualifications this year.

GTCS

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) has created and curated a variety of resources and advice to support practitioner health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis. The GTCS has also published has published Engaging online: A guide for teachers which has been endorsed by the Teacher Professional Associations.

You can view examples which illustrate how different schools implemented the entitlements for remote learning here: Remote learning: what's-working-well

Organising Learning

A good starting point when planning for remote learning is to consider how you might organise learning in a typical learning situation i.e. under 'normal' circumstances. Where, for example, the practitioner is not working directly with a group of learners, what sort of activities would be planned for them and how would these be organised?

More specifically:

- Which elements of learning should be delivered via 'live learning'? Why?
- Which aspects of learning would be best suited to take place independently, rather than online? Why?
- What resources are available locally and nationally to support remote learning?
- Are there activities and learning that can be done prior to face-to-face sessions to help learners become familiar with the topic or concepts, using a flipped classroom approach?
- Are there activities and learning that can take place after the face-to-face sessions to deepen understanding, reinforce and consolidate learning?
- How can we ensure learners, parents/carers and other professionals know what is expected in learning beyond the school?
- What resources can be provided that will help learners to revisit, apply and deepen their learning?
- Can carefully planned inter-disciplinary learning challenges engage learners and enrich learning experiences?

When considering the questions above it will be important to ensure activities are appropriate to the age and stage of learners. Realising the Ambition encourages practitioners to consider learning spaces, interactions and experiences. The same considerations can be helpful when planning learning for older learners.

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.

It is important that, given the limited time with learners, a didactic teaching model does not become the norm. Practitioners should have access to professional learning opportunities which support them to understand and provide remote learning methodologies to ensure they are well equipped to support children's and young people's learning and achievements.

The move to remote learning may have a detrimental impact on progress in learning for some learners. Attention will need to be given to those learners who face disadvantage. Schools will need to carefully consider any steps which they can take to mitigate barriers to learning and engagement.

Parents and carers and remote learning

Parents and carers want the very best for their children. It is important to stress that, in a period of remote learning, parents and carers are not expected to be teachers and we understand that many will be juggling work and childcare. It is crucial that parents and carers are as certain as they can be about what remote learning is, what it means for their children and how they can continue to contribute positively and effectively to their children's learning. Good communication between home and school is essential. Parents and carers should receive information from the local authority and school regarding the plans they are putting in place, including access to online learning so they and their children know what to expect.

Conclusion

What constituted high quality learning, teaching and assessment prior to the pandemic and what constitutes high quality learning, teaching and assessment now has not changed. The professionalism of our workforce remains. We all remain committed to children's rights and positive relationships. We want our learners to be eager participants in their learning. Learning should be motivating, meaningful and enjoyable. It should also be well matched to children's and young people's needs and interests. It still remains important that learners understand the purpose of their learning and that assessment remains integral to learning and teaching.

What has changed is the way in which we are seeking to attain high quality experiences for our learners. It is vital that we continue to adjust and tailor our approaches to help ensure the very best for all of our learners.

It is important that we continue to build on the strong culture of collaboration that exists across Scotland, strengthening this to ensure there are opportunities for schools, local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national bodies to work together to support remote learning.