

# Tower Hamlets NEU Branch

## Briefing for NEU Reps

### Coronavirus update: approaches to “blended learning”

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This advice supports professional discussions and negotiations in school about developing a blended learning offer for students in your school or college.

This offer will need to be developed closely with staff and shaped by what is realistic and manageable given the context of your setting. Teacher workload and wellbeing is also an important aspect as teachers continue to perform over and above expectation during these exceptional times.

#### **Government expectations**

The Government has issued a Temporary Continuity Direction, which means schools have a duty to provide education to children at home, as they do when children are in the classroom. This will come into force on 22 October. The expectations for remote learning are the same as they were when they were set out in June.

#### **The NEU says**

The Government must provide sufficient funding directly to schools and colleges for training and resources for staff to be able to fulfil this requirement. Teaching remotely is not the job teachers trained for or are used to: Training in this new approach is needed alongside training on new technologies.

Time should also be scheduled for year groups or subject departments to collaborate and work out how best to make use of them.

There are many ways to provide learning for pupils who are at home, whether for individuals or whole classes. Many factors, including the age and stage of pupils, the subject and topics being taught, and the readiness of pupils and staff for using various technologies, will need to be considered before the best approach to remote learning is decided upon. It will not be the same for every child in every school for every subject. Only school leaders, in collaboration with the teachers who know their pupils best, can make these decisions.

#### **Pupils and Learning: considerations for leaders**

In making their remote learning plans, leaders should consider the following:

- Where possible, distance learning should follow the curriculum being taught in school. Leaders should think about the different levels of provision needed for different groups of pupils under different circumstances.
- Pupils learning from home, no matter via which method, will have very different experience of education compared with being at school or college. Leaders and teachers should consider how to vary the activities and contact to maximise engagement and access to learning.
- Leaders should make arrangements to ensure pupils who are at home a lot of the time have regular contact with teachers.
- Leaders should recognise that the assessment of learning gaps and pupils' readiness to learn from home will be different for individual students. Such assessment will be time-intensive and add to teacher workload. Any additional workload must be compensated for by reductions elsewhere.
- Many learners with SEND are finding the transitions in and out of school very challenging and extra communication with parents may be needed. Leaders should recognise that SENCOs will need additional release time and resources to provide the necessary support for pupils with SEND and pupils with emotional or social NEU's Coronavirus pages have lots more information about teaching and learning, and also pupil mental health and well-being. <https://neu.org.uk/coronavirus>

#### **School staff and reps should expect leaders to:**

- Agree policies and practices relevant to each scenario. This might include a clear idea of how many lessons, subjects or tasks should be made available each day; how frequently feedback should be given on pupil work; and what the balance should be between teacher input (including presentations, explanations), other resources (including film, textbook, external resources) and pupil tasks. Leaders should share these expectations with parents and pupils as appropriate.
- Have clear policies and practices with regard to the safeguarding aspects of any remote teaching needed.

- Ensure that they have a list of pupils who will struggle to access technology, Wi-Fi, or quiet space for learning, and develop contingency plans to support those pupils where possible.
- Recognise that some pupils need to share laptops/computers at home (because of siblings or parents also working at home). Many have to undertake their lessons as and when they can during the day, not at the specific lesson time.
- Support them to provide the best learning opportunities possible for children and young people, whilst being protected from the physical and mental health impact of over-work.
- Nominate remote learning leaders, who support and promote good practice for remote learning provision, and review whole-school or college practices.
- Consider how they best make use of staff who are working from home, for example assigning some remote teaching, developing or recording presentations etc, where appropriate to the teacher's subject and/or phase teaching experience.

### **Pre-recorded lessons**

Pre-recorded segments are suitable for saving and might be useful for going over key concepts [\[AB1\]](#). This is very different to the recording of live lessons, which are live interactions. They can be accessed more flexibly, at times convenient to pupils, and paused and re-watched.

Leaders should:

- Provide space in school or college as a suitable setting for recording materials for lessons

Where possible, any pre-recording should be done in the workplace. If done at home, it should be in a very neutral environment: no bedrooms, no distractions, personal or family pictures in background, anything that could be a distraction from the lesson focus.

Teachers should:

- Think about the pace of your introductions and explanations, and of the lesson as a whole: give students enough thinking time and encourage them to pause the recording a number of times to think about something or do a particular task. (A videoed lesson relies on pupils being very proactive and, works best for revisiting things previously taught in the classroom.)
- Explicitly link the recorded lesson to the term's work, what has come before and after it, e.g. when we are back in school we'll be moving onto X topic, so we will need to know this...

Consider alternatives to video presentations if they feel anxious about this – for example through voice over presentations

### **Live streamed lessons from the classroom**

Live streamed lessons are increasingly being used by teachers when pupils are isolating and where schools and colleges are operating on a rota basis.

- Live streamed lessons can be a useful tool to ensure the equity of education of all pupils, and to mitigate against increased teacher workload. However, it is important to recognise that the experience of the lesson in the classroom compared to at home is very different. Classroom lessons work by the nature of their live interaction that is extremely difficult to replicate through live streaming, especially in large classes. [The NSPCC has good information and training resources.](#)

Schools and colleges should have clear safeguarding policies and practices in place:

- Clear procedures for staff to follow where a child protection issue arises during a live stream (e.g. the staff member witnesses behaviour which suggests a child may be at risk of harm).
- The camera should be trained on the teacher and the board, with the teacher's consent, or just on the board/screen with teacher's voice. Pupils should not be visible on screen at any time.
- At home, pupils' cameras should be visible to teacher but not one another.
- Pupils' microphones should not be audible to one another unless the teacher makes it so, for questions, e.g. for Q&A session.

### **Informed consent**

We stress the importance of informed consent and the need for schools to engage in consultation with parents,

students, and school/college staff before introducing potentially intrusive measures of this kind. The school/college community should be informed of the following in advance:

- Whether lessons will be recorded, and for what purpose.
- If so, where the recordings will be held and for how long.
- Who will have access to the recordings.
- How the safety and security of live-streaming will be ensured.
- Whether, in relation to staff, live streams will be monitored for performance management and disciplinary purposes. The NEU states that they should not be used for performance management purposes under any circumstances.
- Pupils and parents should sign an agreement not to record or share any element of live lessons; schools may warn the school community of the consequences of engaging in such behaviour.

## Workload

In order to meet these expectations, teachers will need a significant amount of time to plan content that can be used in classrooms and remotely and to find or record explanations of new concepts. While some of this time can be found by reprioritising and repurposing activities, this is unlikely to provide enough time to plan a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school, ideally including daily contact with teachers.

Individual teachers cannot be expected to do two jobs (teach in class and remotely) and find time to plan for both. Leaders and teachers will need to work together to agree what is reasonable and manageable, in order to maintain pupil learning as well as possible during this period.

The workload issues arise more strongly when teachers are expected to teach all their lessons in the class and provide additionally for those individual pupils who are at home.

- Schools and colleges should monitor staff wellbeing and morale regularly and have policies in place to improve the wellbeing of all staff, as well as not having policies that are to the detriment of staff wellbeing.
- Teachers should not be expected to record lessons or segments of lessons on top of a full day's teaching. Leaders should think about ways of minimising the workload. This could be by taking away other aspects of work, such as meetings. Alternatively, teachers could be encouraged to upload presentations they give to the class alongside tasks that they have given to the class. If this means that face-to-face lessons need to be replanned, then teachers will need to be given time to do this.
- Schools or colleges should agree the priorities for planning: will you plan first for particular year groups or subjects? Where possible, staff should share the work with colleagues in the year group or department. Staff might also be able to share with colleagues in different schools in the local area or MAT.
- Schools and colleges should have a plan for how to use external resources – blended learning does not have to mean the class teacher presenting and developing original materials. Schools have used materials from the BBC and [Clickview](#) for example. Subject associations and societies will also have resources available.
- It might be helpful to start by using external resources, and gradually plan content and teaching that better suits the school circumstances as time allows.
- Leaders should consider whether teachers who are working from home for health reasons, might be able to deliver remote learning for pupils who are at home. This would depend on their subject and/or age range experience.
- We have [FAQs on Workload during Coronavirus](#).

For teachers, when talking about the digital divide with pupils, parents and carers:

Not all families have internet access or access to sufficient devices. Your school/college will already have established over the summer term which families have barriers at home, either because of income levels, language barriers or other factors. But extra families may also face pressures in the coming months and so parents and carers need to be asked each half term about what support they need to support remote learning.

- If talking about internet access or remote learning in the classroom, be mindful of not exposing pupils who will not want to be identified as living in poverty

- Address pupils' feelings and anxieties. Talking about difficulties in accessing learning can make young people sad, anxious and/or emotional. Let students know it's natural to feel this way. Try to end on a positive note (“we're finding ways to help”)
- Remodel any negative language that students may use about those without internet access/certain devices by rephrasing what they say
- Wherever possible, communicate with parents through a mix of methods (letters, emails, texts, in person...)
- Even when you are not explicitly talking about poverty, it's important to make sure you don't use language that stigmatises children living in poverty, or which excludes them
- Describing initiatives like sharing schemes as 'green' or 'community focused' can help increase uptake or avoid stigmatising families (instead of focusing on financial aspect)
- Talking directly about financial difficulties can sometimes worry parents and carers. Try using collective words like 'us' (e.g. “we want our families to get the support they're entitled to”)
- Families appreciate that schools are willing to talk about family finances. Asking families what help they need around online learning and your blended learning arrangements is often the best way to make sure your school is providing the right support.

### **Adaptive technology:**

- Many pupils with SEND will use adaptive technology in school and will need access to the same equipment at home in order to effectively access online learning if that is what their peers are doing.
- Schools should ensure that where videos are included in online work and pupils may have a hearing impairment then captions should be available. Likewise, for pupils with a visual impairment descriptive technologies will be required at home as well as at school.
- Families of pupils using adaptive technology at home may also need access to a technician linked to the school to assist with any issues.