Deploying Distance Learning

Engaging and enhancing lessons during lockdown and beyond

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Simon is Head of ICT at Ashton on Mersey School, where he leads and delivers the Computer Science and ICT curriculum for KS3 - 5, he's also a Google Certified Educator, Raspberry Pi Educator, CAS Master Teacher and an SLE. He believes the best way to educate pupils, and build resilience, is through real world experiences. He uses technology to motivate and engage pupils in both the classroom and at home.

Ashton on Mersey is a large mixed comprehensive school, situated in the metropolitan borough of Trafford. The school is a National Teaching School supporting schools and staff development across both The Dean Trust and the North West. All teaching and support staff are committed to maintaining high expectations, standards and professional development so that each pupil can make excellent progress in their academic and social development.

What has been your school's approach to distance learning?

- **Daily lesson activities:** Tasks are issued by subject teachers via Satchel One's home-learning app, Show My Homework (SMHW). Lessons are daily, within context of learning sequences and schemes of work, with detailed instruction and accompanying resources. An average of 1200+ individual lesson activities have been sent out each week since 20th March.

- **Assessment & feedback:** We use the messenger functions on SMHW, as well as feedback functions on Google Classroom, to communicate with pupils about their schoolwork and the progress they are making. Pupils are also set low stakes quizzes via SMHW to assess pupils.

- **Podcasts:** Teachers pre-record short lesson podcasts through Screencastify to give extra instruction and context to tasks set on SMHW. The pre-recorded lesson is posted with resources on SMHW and Google Classroom.

- **Online video conference lessons:** The school offers online video conference lessons on a weekly schedule. The school uses Google Meet to deliver these sessions.

How has Satchel One supported you and your school's approach to distance learning?

Satchel One has been the bridge between pupils, staff and parents, and used in conjunction with Google Apps for education and other online learning platforms, such as Seneca learning, has supported this period of distance learning:
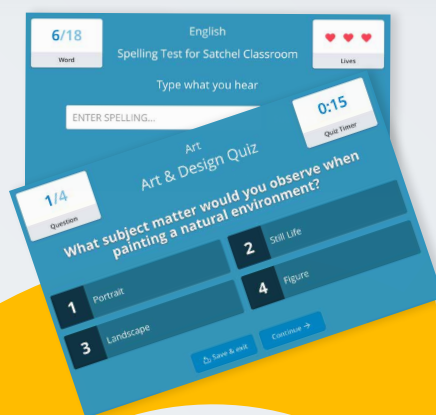
• Satchel One has allowed staff to set clear tasks for pupils, with resources, so they can learn effectively from home.

• The Notice Board has enabled staff to send out whole school, year group, form and department messages.

• The Messaging function is used frequently between students and teachers to support any issues with tasks set, password changes or suggest additional resources.

• Form tutors and HOYs use the platform to send weekly messages to support students pastorally.

• Reports have allowed us to monitor student engagement - **on average 91.9% pupils access the app on a daily basis.**

How do you use Quizzes on Satchel One?

We use Quizzes to assess pupils after a block of theory to ensure they have understood the topic area. The results give the teacher a snapshot of pupils' understanding and highlight areas that may need to be revisited.

Pupils enjoy completing the quizzes online as they get instant feedback on what they have done. Sometimes, the pupils who do not fully engage with the home learning lessons will complete the quizzes as they're more appealing.

They've really helped to add some variety to our distance learning model.

How have you used Satchel One and Google Classroom alongside one another?

All work is set on Satchel One which then links off to Google Classroom which students can access on their devices. We've also been using Google Meet to stream live lessons during lockdown. All links to live lessons are again, posted on Satchel One in line with a weekly timetable for each year group.

Your school has successfully blended multiple tools. What advice would you give to other schools looking to do the same?

The best advice is to start small and build upon your provision, do not integrate all ideas at one time. Try to let staff use one, get comfortable, then introduce another tool that enhances it.

For example, at the start of distance learning staff only used Satchel One to set home learning tasks, then Google classroom, then Screencastify, and finally live lessons.

Additionally, it's important not to rush into integrating new tech, try to see what is best for your pupils and staff before investing time and money. And when you do, have a point of contact within your staff who the school can go to for support.

In what way, if any, do you think your distance learning experience will change the way you teach in the future?

School closures have meant that staff were forced into upskilling their IT knowledge, so now, their literacy in edtech tools is much greater, meaning they will be able to transfer these skills into the classroom, and beyond, to support students. Not only this, but the content that's been created to support distance learning will be able to support students' learning in years to come.