

Distance Learning Strategy Toolkit

Helping you to prepare and tackle
distance learning workload



About this toolkit

It's a legal duty for schools to be able to facilitate distance learning when school time is disrupted. Whilst this is good for our students, schools are concerned about the increased workload this will have for teachers and SLT members.

One of our goals as an organisation has always been to reduce the stress and strain of the modern teacher's life and help them to reconnect with the reason they started teaching. So we've drawn on the wealth of education experience at our disposal to create this guide that will help you prepare for distance learning whilst ensuring it has a minimal impact on workload.

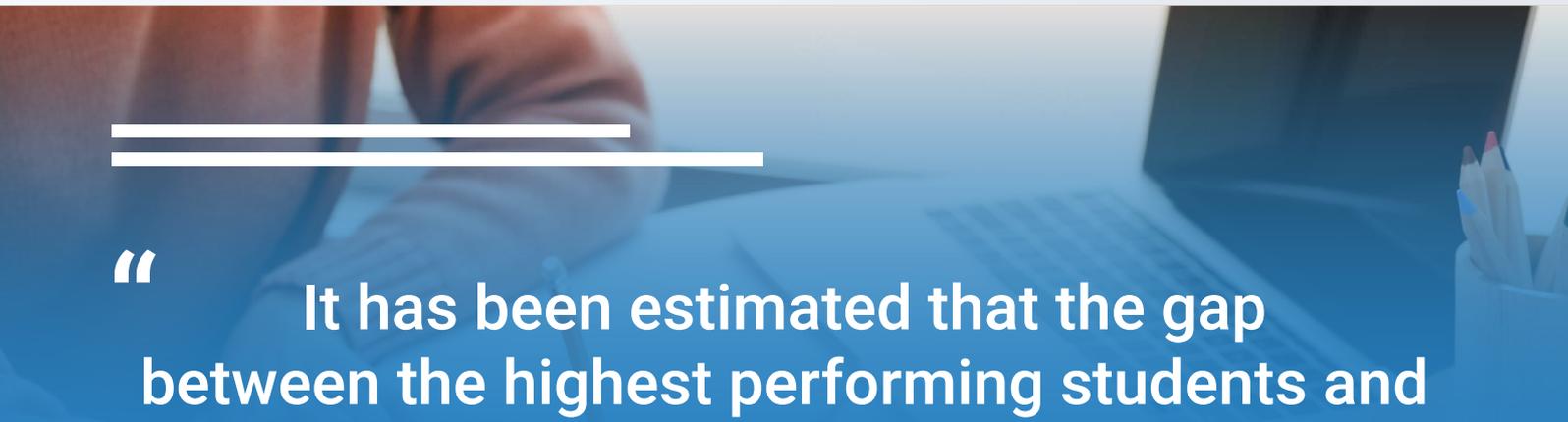
Why we need distance learning

Distance learning is the only way students can continue learning if they are unable to attend school, and at present, this could happen for a number of reasons such as full closures, partial closures or self-isolation. By having tools in place that facilitate remote learning schools can minimise the disruption to learning caused by closures or being unable to attend school.

Students lost out on a lot of learning in the spring/summer school closures. This has widely affected their attainment, but it's been particularly damaging for disadvantaged pupils. In fact, it has been estimated that the gap between the highest performing students and the lowest has grown by around 36%. (EEF)

We've already seen a huge influx of funding and airtime dedicated to 'catch-up learning'. If students miss more lesson time this year, they might not catch back up in time for exams or their progression into the next year. Distance learning is the only way we can keep our pupils on track if schools experience further closures.

Having these tools in place isn't just a short term solution. Before the pandemic, school closures due to extreme weather, sickness outbreaks and building issues were already reducing learning. Having the ability to switch to distance learning whenever needed is only going to benefit schools in the future as students may have to take prolonged periods out of school.



“ It has been estimated that the gap between the highest performing students and the lowest has grown by around 36% ”

Education Endowment Foundation

Making sure your school is ready for distance learning

Now that schools have a legal duty, you should make certain your school has all the correct preparations in place for distance learning. This isn't just about having a video call host and an email address - students need safe access to reputable education material and live teaching to help those that need a little extra support.

In this guide we will explore time saving distance learning tools, how to streamline communication and keep your students and teachers happy through these difficult times.

We have also included additional resources relating to distance learning that will help save you time when it comes to preparing for any further closures.



Distance Learning Policy Checklist

School Contingency Plan Help Sheet

Online Safety Policy Checklist



Finding Reliable Sources Poster



6 Principles for Remote Safeguarding Poster

Time saving distance learning tools

Quizzes and micro lessons

If students are learning remotely, it can be hard to get them to engage with lesson content. Through the use of interactive learning tasks you can keep learning fun for students and save yourself time:



Quizlet

Give students mini lessons on personalised topics, providing instant feedback. Use modules created by other teachers to save valuable time.

As one of our partners, you can share Quizlet lessons to your class straight from Satchel One.



gcsepod
education on demand

Providing free revision webinars and resources that cover study tips, subject material and wellbeing, GCSEPod is a hub of time-saving resources. Find engaging micro lessons or delve into 'Pods' for full video lesson modules on 28 GCSE subjects. GCSEPod also integrates with Satchel One.



satchel:
one

With Satchel One you can create multiple-choice Quizzes for your students to complete at home.

All Quizzes are auto-graded, saving you time, and instantly show you how well students are performing and if any gaps in knowledge have occurred. You can also re-use your own or colleagues' Quizzes to save you even more time.

“

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

”

Ashton on Mersey School

Pre recorded & live video lessons

Students benefit from face to face learning and just because you're not in the same classroom doesn't mean you can't still teach them face to face! Thanks to video streaming platforms you can continue to teach your students even from home. Choose to either pre-record a lesson for students or provide them with a link for a video stream and deliver the material in real time.

There is an abundance of tools that can make this process quick and easy:



Zoom

You can sign up for a free zoom account and make video calls with your entire class, the ability to share your screen allows you to provide students with visual cues and you can record sessions to reuse in the future.



Screencastify

If you want to record a separate screen recording, use Screencastify, a free online screen recorder that's super easy to use and that you can add to Chrome.



Clipchamp

If you're choosing to record your lessons to reuse you might want to use Clipchamp to edit your videos to make them shorter or cut out any pauses. The software is simple to wrap your head around, making it easy to use for even the firmest technophobes!



Timetables

Whichever platform you choose to stream your lesson on, it's important that all your class have access to the link so they can join in with online learning. With Timetables, you can attach links to specific lessons - this means that when a student comes to view their timetables, they know exactly which link to use for each lesson!



Satchel One works with Microsoft Teams for live video, but you can pre-record and attach video files to Show My Homework tasks too.

Embrace ready-made online resources

When distance learning is in place, you obviously can't hand out any resources or go through anything in person. Online resources and textbooks can be a real time saver when it comes to assigning students work. When using online resources it's important that they are of high quality and in line with your school's curriculum. We listed some sources from which you can access high-quality resources:



Content

Content exclusively provides Satchel One users access to Collins' online textbooks for core subjects. Having access to this online content library means that teachers can attach curriculum-matched learning tasks and questions to students' work.



BBC Teach

The BBC's teaching section has tonnes of resources to make teaching easier, whether distance learning or in the classroom. It has everything from live lessons to class worksheets and with new content added each term, you'll never run out of things to do.



Community Resources

With Community Resources, Satchel One teachers are free to browse hundreds of tasks created by fellow educators and assign them to their own class. This helps to save teachers a huge amount of time when it comes to creating content and, because the tasks are created by teachers, schools can rest-assured they'll be of a high-quality.



P.E with Joe

It's unlikely that you haven't heard of P.E with Joe after it's shining success during lockdown. But if you still aren't on board, it's time to add some physical activity to your timetable and get your students moving to stimulate better brainpower and improve their wellbeing!



Store lessons online

With a learning platform like Satchel One, all lesson and homework content that teachers create is stored online. This means that when it comes to reteaching the same subject matter, the content is readily available to you. With Satchel One, you and your colleagues can reuse existing tasks, this not only saves teachers a huge amount of time, it helps with the sharing of best practice.

Streamlining home school communication

One of the biggest timesinks for teachers is their email inbox. Replying to parents and other members of staff can take a large chunk out of teachers' days. Whilst some conversations with parents are completely necessary, phone calls and emails about homework or classwork aren't a good use of anyone's time.

Ensure that your school is communicating work clearly to students and parents. Making tasks available to parents, as well as students, not only empowers parents to take an active role in their child's work, it reduces their need for additional assistance. Make sure tasks have clear, complete instructions included.

This is something that we wanted to address in Show My Homework. When you set a task in the app, it will notify parents and provide any details you've shared with your students. There's also the function that allows parents to view messages between their child and the teacher. This makes life easier for both parents and teachers - creating more transparency and reducing workload.



Keep wellbeing afloat

Almost 4000 teachers per year went on long term stress related illness before the pandemic. The increase that school closures and COVID-19 has had is unknown, but it has likely risen far above pre-pandemic levels.

Making sure that your teachers are coping with their workload is crucial. Schools should look to foster an open and transparent culture where teachers feel able to speak out about stress and workload.

In order to create this transparent culture however, you'll need a way of understanding how teachers are feeling and how the school can help. This can be done through meetings, although meetings take time to set up and attend.

Another way to do it is via anonymous surveys. This allows teachers to fully speak their mind without the worry of being treated differently or unfairly for their views. Surveys are generally completed in a couple of minutes, meaning less workload drain too.

This also makes them perfect for identifying students' wellbeing concerns. Closures and COVID-19 will have taken their toll on many students' mental health this year, so making sure that you're ready to support them is crucial to keeping the school safe. Students are more likely to be open about their feelings via anonymous surveys.

Our distance learning apps

A well integrated platform that everyone knows how to use will save your school a significant amount of time, stress and resources. During the spring school closures of 2020, we worked hard alongside our schools to bring them apps that worked just as well for remote learning as they had done in the classroom.

750k tasks were set on **Show My Homework** during the first week of remote learning alone, as over a million students took to the platform to begin learning from home. But it's not just Show My Homework that kept teachers on course:



Show My Homework

With Show My Homework schools have immediate access to remote learning - teachers can assign remote learners with Classwork or set them a self-marking Quiz to check for any gaps in learning. If students don't understand the task they've been issued, they can message their teacher to ask for support. Parents also get notified of any work that is set, empowering them to take a more active role in their child's education.



Attendance

With an easy to use punctuality and attendance tracking dashboard, teachers are able to see who is logged in and joining video lessons on time, with an overview of the entire class or year.



Behaviour

Teachers can award behaviour points to students who are making the effort and track who is performing well during distance learning..



Timetables

With such a big change, and no physical classrooms, it was harder for everyone to remember their schedules. Thankfully our Timetables app kept everybody on time and in the right Zoom call!



Content

When teachers needed high quality resources, they had instant access to 100s of high quality, curriculum-matched pieces of content from Collins.



Welfare Notes

One of Satchel One's Premium features, Welfare Notes makes it easier to share sensitive information about students privately to other relevant members of staff.



School Branding

This premium feature allows your school to set a custom theme on Satchel One. Having the school colours and crest on your learning platform exudes a more established look and feel. It also helps parents and students to know they're in the right place and strengthens the sense of school community during distance learning!

Next steps

- Things are still uncertain for schools. Stay up to date with all the school closure news on the government school closure page.
- Ensure that you have an up to date school contingency plan in case of any further changes to government advice.
- Be sure that your remote learning platform is up to scratch and ready to deal with another lockdown, should it happen.
- If you don't yet have a remote learning platform, take a look at Satchel One and book a demo for your very own guided tour.



Have a look at our free resources



Distance Learning Policy Checklist

In the DfE's guidance for full school reopenings they state that schools should be able to provide students with immediate access to distance learning should they need it. As such, it's important that schools implement a distance learning policy so all teachers, students and parents are aware of what to expect should remote learning occur.

This checklist outlines some of the key considerations schools should take into account when creating their distance learning policy.

Purpose

Outline the purpose of this policy and your reasons for creating / updating:

- To ensure students' safety whilst studying remotely
- Make certain that the content assigned to students whilst working remotely is of a high quality and engaging
- Let students know what to expect should they have to engage in distance learning

When will distance learning take place?

Outline the circumstances under which distance learning might take place. Generally, distance learning will need to be implemented in the event of school closures, but given current circumstances schools may want to explicitly reference times where remote learning may need to take place in relation to COVID-19, for example:

- In the event the school is in an area where a local lockdown is enforced
- If the pupil has tested positive for coronavirus
- If the student is having to self-isolate due to having come into contact with someone who has the virus, if they're awaiting results, a member of their household is having to self-isolate or if they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus

Delivery of distance learning

In this section outline the tools you will be using to deliver distance learning, this will most likely be a learning platform you use throughout the school year (as suggested by the DfE to avoid confusion). You can also list any additional content providers you would be using to facilitate distance learning eg. BBC Bitesize

Content delivery

Outline the logistics of how students will receive classwork online and how work will be quality-assured, consider:

- How will learners at home receive the same curriculum content as their peers in class? Will all work, in lessons and at home, be issued online so students have access to the same content all year round?
- How will schools quality assure the work students are completing at home?
- How frequently will students have to submit work and how will it be marked?
- For students who have to learn from home, will they be provided with necessary resources? Eg. textbooks, exercise books
- How will students access online learning, will the school provide them with laptops should they need them? And will learning be available offline if students don't have internet connection at home?
- How will students communicate with their teachers if they are learning from home and need additional support? Does your learning platform facilitate communication between students and teachers?
- Will high-quality lesson content be made available via video?
- What tools will teachers use to gauge students' understanding whilst they're working from home? (Consider online quizzing software.)

Distance learning expectations

Outline the basic expectations you have around how students should conduct themselves whilst distance learning, this could include:

- Students should notify the teacher of when they're online in the morning to replicate morning registration
- Only communicate with the teacher online through the schools designated learning platform/messenger service
- Outline the hours at which students and teachers will be able to contact one another eg. between 8:30am and 3:30pm
- Use appropriate language at all times
- Remain polite whilst communicating online as would be expected in school
- Include reference to safeguarding in this section and link off to your school's online safety policy

Points of contact

- Include who is responsible for creating and updating the policy as well as the date it was last updated
- List important points of contacts eg: Safeguarding Lead, IT Lead, the personal responsible for your school's learning platform

School Contingency Plan Help Sheet

With students back in school, the DfE has set out its requirements for keeping schools safe. This includes requiring schools to form a contingency plan for re-closures. Due to increased risk in some areas and local lockdowns additional school closures could be on the cards.

A contingency plan should detail any measures that would be taken to continue learning remotely and minimise the disruption to study and, should closures strike around exams, what the school's examination process could be.

Use this help sheet to ensure that your school's contingency plan includes any eventualities that could arise from the re-closing of schools or from a local outbreak of COVID-19

In the event of a confirmed case ●

If a case is confirmed then the school must take action immediately. First, contact the local health protection team (the health protection team may also contact the school if they have information regarding infection of students or staff).

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment and make sure that anyone who is infected is self-isolating at home. Anyone who was in 'close contact' with the infected person will also be asked to self isolate for 14 days.

Close contact could mean face to face contact within 1 metre of the infected person, travelling in a small car with the infected person or being within 1-2 metres for more than 15 minutes.

Changes to school day

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at your school, certain changes will be made in line with Public Health England's systems of control. This should reduce the risk of further outbreak. Apart from the removal of those infected and the people they've been in close contact with, there won't be too much change to the school day.

Make sure your school has an area to isolate infected students as they wait to be picked up.

Ensure that students who are sent home have access to remote learning resources so they won't be left behind and ensure that their desk and locker areas are deep cleaned with anti-bacterial cleaning products.

Changes to examinations

There is already talk of changes to exams for the 2021 season because of the reduced 2019-20 academic year. If students are self isolating they will obviously be unable to attend exams - this may lead to them being given exams at home, in a neutral isolated building or online.

In the event of a recognised outbreak ● ●

If more than two confirmed cases are reported in 14 days, this is officially considered an 'outbreak'. In this case the health protection team may request that a large number of students self-isolate. This could mean the whole year group or even the whole school.

Changes to school day

If an outbreak occurs, certain changes will be made in line with Public Health England's systems of control. This will help to bring the outbreak under control before it spreads or becomes a larger regional issue.

The local health protection team will be in touch with further actions to take to ensure the safety of your school and may ask to conduct mass testing via a mobile testing unit.

Ensure that your school has software that can facilitate remote learning in this instance. Students can't afford any more disruption to their learning and it will make returning to school harder if their routine dissipates now.

Try to create online lessons to keep the class on track. Even if lessons have to be adapted, try to maintain a good routine for students during an extremely disruptive time.

Changes to examinations

It's unclear, thus far, what would happen if an outbreak occurred during exam season. However schools should be prepared for any eventuality, and with talk of the government proposing an online examination system, don't rule out online exams for the whole school!

In the event of local school closures or national lockdown ● ● ●

Obviously this is a worst case scenario, but it pays to be ready. It would also be unwise to write off the possibility of another lockdown or local school closures.

In the event of a school closure, the government would announce the details publicly and the school will be given a short time to prepare for closure. If this happens, it's crucial that students can continue to learn at home. Make sure that home learning is something that teachers and SLT members are willing to make a significant shift towards should the time come.

Online Safety Policy Checklist

The use of the internet within the classroom, or to complete homework, is second nature to most schools. The internet hosts a wide-range of valuable content that can enhance the learning experience and help to shape student work. The internet enables schools to provide a more connected learning experience, however, it is not without its risks and as such, each school should have an online safety policy that ensures the appropriate use of the internet for all stakeholders.

Use this checklist when creating or assessing your current online safety policy to ensure it up to date and includes all necessary information:

Purpose

Outline the purpose of this document. Consider including:

- What your school considers to be appropriate use of the internet.
- An overview of how students will be using the internet in relation to schoolwork, as well as the involvement teachers will have with the internet and how this impacts parents.
- What are the necessary steps you will take to ensure staff and student safety online?

Roles and responsibilities

- Outline who will be responsible for monitoring the upkeep of this policy and ensuring all stakeholders are adhering to it.
- In most instances the Headteacher and Governors will be responsible for the review and upkeep of the policy, however, you may also have a designated Online Safety Coordinator, Safeguarding Officer or Network Manager who will support them. List those people here and their contact details if deemed necessary.

Why is internet use important?

Outline why your school champions the use of internet for schoolwork and homework and the benefits it can offer students, such as:

- Reflective of the modern day we live in
- Opens students up to different cultures and ideas
- Abundance of resources available for learning
- Students should be digitally literate in order to secure a job in digital Britain
- Allows schools to teach students about safer internet use

Training

Outline the type of training staff and students will receive on online safety, consider:

- How frequently training is given?
- Are all staff trained to the same standard?
- What does the training cover?
- How will online safety be covered in lessons/the curriculum?
- Are there any events staff/students will attend on online safety?
- Does the school have any scheduled guest speakers arranged who will provide training/advice on online safety?

Teaching and learning

Outline how the teaching of online safety integrates with your curriculum, what areas will be covered and why it's important that students are well versed in these areas, taking into account:

- Digital Britain
- Digital literacy
- Cyberbullying
- Digital footprints
- Coding

Internet security

Include details of internet security taking into consideration:

- Your school's firewall
- Blocking inappropriate content
- Age restricted content
- Password protected devices
- Anti-virus software
- On-site IT Team
- If your school has a single sign-on
- Does your school allow students to use personal devices in school?
- Are staff able to take school devices home?

Published content on the school website

- Provide details of the school's website and social media accounts.
- Outline the purpose of these sites.
- Will the website and social media sites include children's work and/or images if so:
 - What steps are being taken to protect their identity?
 - Will personal details be included in images?
 - Do parents/students have to give permission before the school posts images/work online?
 - Will parents and students sign a consent form?
 - Do they have the ability to withdraw consent at any time?

Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying should be covered in your school's anti-bullying policy but it's also important to mention it in your online safety policy.
- Reference your anti-bullying policy so stakeholders can read further information on your school's stance on bullying.
- Provide a brief definition of cyberbullying and examples of associated behaviour - consider all stakeholders and eventualities during this statement. Remember, students, parents and teachers can all be victims or perpetrators of online bullying.
- Provide information on what students should do if they are being bullied, know someone is being bullied or have been involved in cyberbullying of any kind.
- Provide details of the key people who students, parents or teachers can speak to if they have any concerns.
- Include what will happen if students use school property or carry out cyberbullying during school hours as well as what will happen if you find students are taking part in cyberbullying outside of school hours.

A list of approved sites used by the school

Include a list of approved sites and apps that you will direct students to for learning:

- Outline the process the school goes through to ensure the safety of these sites.
- Ask teachers to share any new sites or apps with the Headteacher or key members of staff who are responsible for online safety so they can be approved and added to this list.

How the school uses the internet

- Include how the school would rely on the internet and the school's devices to carry out distance learning if, for whatever reason, the school has to close for an extended period of time. You can also reference your school closure policy for additional information on the reasons around school closures
- Reference how email is used at your school and what you deem appropriate email protocol including what students should do if their passwords need resetting, if teachers and students are able to email one another directly and for what purposes should the school email address be used?
- Outline how the internet should be used in school. For example, the use of the internet in school should be used for educational purposes and not for socialising.
- When teachers assign homework to students that requires internet access what guidelines should they follow around the type of sites they direct students to? Take into consideration sites that are deemed appropriate for homework but may be deemed inappropriate during school hours. For example, teachers may want students to watch an educational YouTube video as part of research but the school may block YouTube at school as it can be a distraction.
- If your school uses an online learning platform or similar software, outline how stakeholders are expected to use this software safely. Include how login information will be distributed, what constitutes a secure password and include a link to the software providers acceptable use policy.
- Does the school have social media accounts? If so, what are these, what information is being shared on these and what is appropriate use of these sites from within the school?

6 Principles for Remote Safeguarding

By applying the principles of safeguarding, recognised by the Ann Craft Trust and NSPCC, to distance learning we can better protect children during school closures.

Prevention

Ensure you're taking security measures seriously on video calls and when streaming lessons. Is the call secure? Do you have parental consent for video calls?

Tip
 Set up a secure video call that requires a student password to join



Accountability

Everyone is accountable for their actions. Taking responsibility makes it easier to build trust with both students and parents and create a safer learning environment.



Tip
 Check in with students at least once per week to ensure they're happy and safe

Empowerment

If vulnerable students don't wish to appear on camera or they feel unsafe, allow them to take control of the situation so they can leave the video and join back in if they want to.

Tip
 Give the option of joining video lessons without video or receiving pre recorded lessons



Partnership

Make sure that students know who to contact at the school, or externally (NSPCC), if they think they're experiencing inappropriate behaviour.



Tip
 Email key contact details to students or make them available via an online noticeboard

Proportionality

Staff should only involve themselves in cases where necessary. Always take the least intrusive course of action possible.

Tip
 If you're unsure about intervention, ask the welfare officer or member of SLT for advice



Protection

Children who are part of the safeguarding process should be kept safe from known threats during video calls, home learning and day to day life.

Tip
 Create a separate protocol for protected children to ensure their safety online



Becoming an Online Detective

Finding Reliable Sources



When you're doing research for schoolwork, how do you know if the website you're using is real or fake? Follow these simple steps to make sure you're only ever using a reliable source:

Make sure it's credible

Search the website and author to make sure both are real and reputable. Have they written about this kind of thing before? Are they an expert? Do they have relevant qualifications? Is what this person's saying backed up by facts? What other topics do they write about?

Check the publish date

Is it still relevant? If it was published some years ago then times may have changed and certain parts of the article may no longer be true.

See if the story fits

Do some further research - does the article you've read align with what others are saying? If it's reporting a different side to the story, make sure all claims are backed up with facts.

Watch out for bias

Are you getting the full story? Is there anything that openly shows support for a political party? Coverage is only balanced if it doesn't show support or political allegiance.

Look out for the lock

Make sure the site you're on is secure by looking for the little padlock in the URL bar or checking to see if it has 'https' before the URL.

Think critically

If you think something sounds untrue, investigate! You'll either find out something amazing or unearth a lie. So start snooping.