

REMOTE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Across the UK, there is a clear expectation that schools will provide pupils with immediate access to remote education if they are required to self-isolate or shield, or if public health advice results in a local lockdown. While remote education is regarded as an emergency measure, there is an expectation that pupils should continue to receive a quality education. This raises significant issues for teachers and school leaders, as there is very limited evidence about effective remote education in schools. As a result, teachers and school leaders may need to experiment and use their professional judgement to identify appropriate strategies and approaches to remote education. Where technology is to be used, teachers and pupils will need to have access to that technology, and the knowledge, skills and confidence to make appropriate use of the technology. Different pedagogies may need to be adopted in order to enable pupils of different ages or in different subjects to learn effectively. The use of remote education learning also raises significant concerns for teachers' professional development and workload.

This position statement focuses on 12 issues related to remote education. It outlines evidence about the features of effective practice and provides advice on approaches to remote education that are consistent with NASUWT policy. The position statement also identifies actions that the NASUWT believes governments, administrations and others should take in order to ensure that teachers and school leaders are supported to implement remote education effectively.

Defining remote education and blended learning

Typically, 'remote education' is used to describe pupils being taught remotely in their own homes rather than in a classroom at school. However, it also includes situations where a teacher is working remotely and teaching a class of pupils at school, e.g. the teacher is teaching from home because they are self-isolating or shielding.

Remote education is often used to refer to teaching and learning that takes place online. However, it also covers teaching and learning using hard copy resources such as textbooks and worksheets. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it might also include arrangements where an individual pupil who does not have access to technology at home comes into school to use the school's IT resources to participate in classes.

'Blended learning' refers to learning that involves a combination of face-to-face teaching and remote education which may be delivered online or through hard copy resources.

FACTORS THAT SHOULD GUIDE DECISIONS ABOUT THE USE OF REMOTE EDUCATION

1. Quality teaching and learning

Evidence finds that teacher quality is more important than how remote learning lessons are delivered.¹

Remote learning should incorporate the key elements of effective teaching. Effective teaching includes deep pedagogical content knowledge and quality instruction.² It includes having a strong understanding of the way pupils think about content, scaffolding new content, clear explanations that build on the pupil's prior learning, effective use of feedback, and using assessments to build future learning.

Evidence suggests that it is not important for remote learning to be delivered in real time.³ It can be delivered in another way, e.g. by video which pupils can access at a time that suits them. This might help to address access issues where pupils are sharing a computer or technology with other family members.

¹ EEF April 2020), *Remote Learning: Rapid Evidence Assessment*. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

² Coe, Robert; Aloisi, Cesare; Higgins, Steve; and Elliot Major, Lee (October 2014), *What makes great teaching? Review of the underpinning research*. London: The Sutton Trust.

³ EEF (April 2020). *Ibid*.

There is a need to ensure that the school's approach is consistent with NASUWT advice on arrangements for remote teaching, learning and support. This can be found at: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/arrangements-for-remote-teaching-learning-support.html>.

The NASUWT asks:

Research should be commissioned to examine how remote education is being implemented in schools and settings. This should seek to establish the key elements of effective practice, and the barriers to effective practice, including barriers related to access and to implementation. It should seek to identify examples of effective practices and explain why these are effective. It should examine practices for different ages and phases of education (including primary, secondary, special, and post-16). It should also make recommendations to governments, local authorities, employers and schools about what they should do to support effective practice. Particular attention should be paid to the role of government, national and local infrastructures, and policies and resources needed to implement and sustain effective practice.

2. Connections to the school curriculum

There should be clear links between the content of remote learning activities and the wider school curriculum. Remote learning should be an integral part of the planned school curriculum. This is important if remote education is to build on pupils' prior learning and if teachers are to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding through face-to-face teaching or remote teaching.

It may be difficult to cover some areas of the school curriculum through remote education, for example, practical subjects and pupils' social and emotional development. These areas of learning may need to be prioritised and picked up through face-to-face learning in school. However, schools will need to pay particular attention to how they support the social development and emotional wellbeing of pupils who are self-isolating or shielding.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should review national curricula to ensure that they recognise the centrality of the cognitive, emotional, cultural, creative, ethical and social dimensions of children's learning and the competencies needed to support remote learning (such as working independently). Governments should also ensure that every child has access to a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses these dimensions. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this should include providing guidance on how the various dimensions of the curriculum can be addressed through blended learning, and on how these dimensions should be addressed when pupils are not able to attend school; for example, because they are shielding or because of local lockdowns.

Governments/administrations should monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the school curriculum. Particular attention should be paid to the focus of the curriculum offer and whether the emphasis is on academic catch-up or whether there is a balance between meeting pupils' social and emotional needs and academic study. There will be a need to disaggregate findings to see whether there are differences for pupils from different groups, of different ages, and in different phases of education, and monitoring should seek to identify whether particular subjects or curriculum areas are impacted on.

Governments/administrations will need to ensure that approaches to addressing the disruption to the qualifications system and pupils' work towards these qualifications support high-quality teaching and learning. In particular, arrangements for awarding should support teachers and school leaders in providing broad, balanced, relevant and engaging learning experiences. They will also need to ensure that examinations and arrangements for the awarding of qualifications in 2021 take account of disruption to pupils' learning.

3. Equality, equity and inclusion

Evidence reveals that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than their peers to face barriers to remote learning because they do not have access to technology.⁴ Schools will need to ensure that all pupils have access to technology if they are expected to participate in remote learning online. Schools might consider placing lessons online so that they can be accessed at times that suit the pupil (for example, if the pupil shares technology with other family members) rather than expecting pupils to participate in live lessons.

Schools might adopt approaches to remote learning that do not require technology or internet access (such as workbooks). It will be vital to ensure that the approach to remote learning that is chosen is appropriate and that all learners receive high-quality teaching and learning.

Schools must comply with equalities legislation. It is vital that all pupils can access learning, and schools may need to remove barriers to participation and/or provide additional targeted support to particular pupils or groups of pupils. Schools should undertake equality impact assessments to identify issues and needs and take action to address those issues and needs. Schools should establish whether particular pupils are facing barriers to accessing remote learning and/or need additional or specialist support in order to access that learning.

Schools should undertake equity audits to identify gaps in pupils' learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were less engaged in remote learning during the lockdown.⁵ Evidence also indicates that there were particular challenges engaging and supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).⁶ Schools should consider what additional and/or targeted support is needed to enable those pupils to catch up.

Pupils should not be prevented from accessing remote learning because of the way in which it is delivered. For instance, steps may need to be taken to ensure that pupils with hearing impairments can access the learning; it may be appropriate to use subtitles and/or ensure that the pupil can see the teacher's face when they are speaking.

Various reports stress the importance of focusing on pupils' social and emotional wellbeing as part of the wider reopening of schools.⁷ Schools need to ensure that they are aware of pupils' social and emotional needs and that all pupils can access support.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should provide advice to schools on conducting equity audits and equality impact assessments in light of COVID-19. This advice should address equality and equity issues that relate to remote education.

Governments/administrations should provide additional resources to schools, including employing additional specialist teachers and support staff, to enable schools to provide targeted support to pupils to reduce gaps in learning and address wider disadvantages.

Governments/administrations should also ensure that there are links to wider systems of support for vulnerable pupils and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In England, activities to support implementation of the Mental Health Green Paper should be stepped up so that, for example, Mental Health Support Teams are operating in all areas.

Governments/administrations should commission research into the potential benefits of, as well as the limitations of, remote education in supporting learners who have special and additional support needs and disabilities. This should include an examination of whether remote education might be used to support some of these learners in the longer term, and the contexts where this might be appropriate. It should also seek to clarify the elements of face-to-face education that cannot be replicated through remote education.

4. Access to and use of technology

Many studies find that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to access computers and the technology needed to participate in remote learning.⁸ There is a need to ensure that all pupils have access to

⁴ EEF (April 2020), *ibid*.

⁵ Lucas, M., Nelson, J., and Sims, D. (June 2020), *Schools' Responses to Covid-19: Pupil Engagement in Remote Learning*. Slough: NFER.

⁶ Lucas, M., Nelson, J., and Sims, D. (June 2020), *ibid*.

⁷ For example, Education International (June 2020), *Education and Covid-19; Virtual International Summit on the Teaching Profession*.

⁸ EEF (April 2020), *ibid*.

the technology they need to participate in remote learning. Steps may also need to be taken to ensure that pupils can access learning flexibly. For example, enabling lessons to be accessed at a time that suits the pupil may address barriers arising from equipment needing to be shared with siblings or other family members.

Schools will need to consider whether there are other barriers that may prevent pupils from participating effectively in remote learning, e.g. having a quiet space at home to undertake study.

Schools may need to consider whether remote learning might best be delivered by means other than technology and/or internet access.

Schools need to ensure that teachers and support staff who participate in remote learning have access to the technology. If teachers are working from home to support remote learning, it will be particularly important to ensure that they are provided with the necessary equipment in their home.

Schools should ensure that guidance and support is in place so that teachers and pupils use the technology safely and effectively. Teachers and school leaders should refer to the NASUWT's guidance on arrangements for remote teaching, learning and support (available at: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/arrangements-for-remote-teaching-learning-support.html>).

Schools should monitor and evaluate the impact of blended and remote education on groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, pupils who share a protected characteristic under equalities legislation, and pupils who have SEND. It will be important to use the findings of monitoring and evaluations to identify and remove barriers to participation and to ensure equality of outcomes. This might include providing targeted support to particular groups of pupils, making changes to how provision is organised, and identifying and sharing evidence about how technology supports particular pupils or groups of pupils.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations must ensure that every child has access to the technology needed to engage in remote education. There is also a need to ensure that every household has fast internet access. Governments should consider inviting technology companies and suppliers to work with them and invest in children's learning at home and at school.

5. Peer-to-peer pupil interaction and collaboration

Evidence indicates that remote learning that provides opportunities for pupils to interact with each other can help to motivate pupils and improve their learning outcomes.⁹ Teachers should consider using strategies that will encourage and support pupils to collaborate.

It will be important to monitor whether pupils are collaborating and whether they are doing so appropriately and effectively. Some pupils have reported that their peers may be reluctant to collaborate and support each other if they are, for example, competing for grades. Teachers will also need to monitor peer-to-peer interactions to ensure that pupils are not being bullied or harassed.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should collect and disseminate evidence about peer-to-peer pupil collaboration as part of remote learning. This should include establishing what works and the contexts for effective practice. It should also include identifying potential barriers to collaboration and the steps that can be taken to mitigate risks.

6. Supporting pupils to work independently

Studies highlight the need for schools to ensure that pupils are supported to work independently.¹⁰ Self-motivation is identified as an important factor in enabling pupils to work independently.¹¹ One study makes a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and suggests that extrinsic motivation can be increased by making a task compulsory, or making it contribute to a final grade. Evidence suggests

⁹ EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹⁰ EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹¹ Bowyer, Jessica; and Chambers, Lucy. (2017), 'Evaluating blended learning: Bringing the elements together', in *Research Matters: A Cambridge Assessment publication*. Issue 23, Spring 2017. Accessed 9 June 2020. Available from <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/375446-evaluating-blended-learning-bringing-the-elements-together.pdf>.

that it is important to adopt strategies and approaches to learning that encourage pupils to become independent.¹² For instance, pupils might be encouraged to reflect on their work. Evidence points to the benefits of learning that focuses on metacognition and self-regulation. Studies also indicate that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from explicit support to help them to work independently, such as providing checklists and daily plans.¹³

Schools may need to identify ways to support particular groups of pupils to work independently. For instance, some pupils with SEND may need additional specialist support to enable them to work independently.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should commission research into remote learning that examines pupil characteristics with a view to establishing whether remote learning is appropriate for pupils of different ages and abilities, the competencies that pupils of different ages and abilities need to engage effectively in remote learning, and the strategies that can be used to help pupils develop those competencies, particularly ones that support independent learning. Governments/administrations should publish practical guidance for teachers and schools about how to develop independent learning competencies.

7. Adapting remote learning to suit the task and the context

There is some evidence which indicates that different approaches to remote learning suit particular tasks and contexts.¹⁴ This shows that different approaches have different strengths and weaknesses. It shows that games for learning may have a high impact on vocabulary learning in foreign languages, and that technology to support retrieval practice and self-quizzing can help pupils to retain key ideas and knowledge. However, this is not a replacement for other forms of assessment.¹⁵

There is limited evidence about the use and impact of technology in different subjects and for different age groups, particularly school-age pupils. Therefore, teachers and school leaders may need to experiment and use their professional judgement to determine the strategies and approaches to remote learning that are likely to be most effective. It will be important to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of approaches and to share knowledge and practices across the school and beyond.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should collect evidence about the use of different approaches to remote education with a view to establishing the contexts in which particular approaches might be effective. Governments/administrations should support teachers and school leaders by disseminating evidence about the approaches that seem to be suited to different groups of pupils (including different age groups) and subjects. Governments/administrations should support teachers and school leaders to share experiences and practices about effective approaches to remote and blended learning by supporting and resourcing local and national networks of practice.

8. Workload and wellbeing

Remote education must be implemented in ways that are manageable and sustainable. Remote teaching has the potential to increase teachers' workload significantly; for example, if teachers are expected to plan, prepare and teach lessons face to face, as well as plan, prepare and teach remotely. Evidence indicates that schools may need more staff in order to manage face-to-face and remote education effectively.¹⁶

Schools should undertake a workload impact assessment of proposals and take action to address potential workload burdens. This should include action to address sources of workload that predate the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. those related to marking, planning and assessment), as well as those arising from the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹² EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹³ EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹⁴ EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹⁵ EEF (April 2020), *ibid.*

¹⁶ Sharp, C., Sims, D., and Rutt, S. (June 2020), *Schools' responses to Covid-19: Returning pupils to school*. Slough: NFER.

Schools should engage the NASUWT and workforce unions in planning how education is provided remotely.

It may be appropriate to use teachers who are working from home to teach remote lessons. If teachers working from home are used in this way, the school will need to ensure that they take account of the time that will be needed for the teacher to collaborate with teachers providing face-to-face teaching to pupils.

Remote education is uncharted territory for many teachers and there is limited evidence about effective remote education practice in schools. This has implications for the time that teachers will need to plan and prepare online lessons and resources. Schools should ensure that teachers have sufficient time to plan and prepare online lessons.

Evidence highlights the importance of ensuring that teachers are trained and supported to provide remote education, including online lessons. Again, schools will need to ensure that teachers have appropriate time to undertake training and professional development.

Schools should consider recruiting additional teachers to provide a bigger capacity to support remote education.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should provide additional funding to enable schools to employ additional staff to support pupils following the COVID-19 pandemic. This should allow schools to employ additional teachers and support staff to support remote education and to provide targeted teaching and support to disadvantaged pupils, and to close gaps in learning outcomes.

9. Leadership and management of remote education

Feedback suggests that some schools did not co-ordinate remote education during the COVID-19 lockdown and that this caused confusion, as teachers were using different platforms for remote learning. Also, the lack of a co-ordinated approach placed competing and unrealistic demands on pupils and teachers.

It is vital that schools' approaches to blended and remote education are led and managed so that practice is consistent. Remote learning should cohere with the broader school curriculum; teachers' training and development needs should be identified and met; effective pedagogies, strategies and practices should be identified and shared across the school; and issues relating to workload and resourcing should be identified and addressed.

School leaders should work with middle leaders, the NASUWT and other workforce unions to map out expectations for remote education that are realistic and appropriate.

Leaders will need to ensure that remote education practice complies with health, safety and safeguarding requirements (see the NASUWT's advice: 'Arrangements for remote teaching, learning and support': www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/arrangements-for-remote-teaching-learning-support.html as well as broader advice on the health and safety of teachers: www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety.html) and to wider school policies such as those relating to pupil behaviour (see the NASUWT's advice available at: www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/in-the-classroom/behaviour-management.html).

Leaders who coordinate and manage remote education will need to ensure that they keep up to date with the latest evidence about effective practice, as this is an area where evidence is emerging.

Leaders will need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of remote education. This should include evaluating its impact and effectiveness for different groups and ages of pupils. Particular attention should be paid to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND. It should also include monitoring teachers' workload and development needs.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should provide guidance to schools on leadership of remote education and the relationship between the remote education curriculum and the wider school curriculum.

10. Continuing professional development (CPD), training and support

Evidence reveals that in many countries teachers have limited familiarity with integrating technology into instructional practice. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says that this highlights the need for teachers to receive training in remote education, and the need to create opportunities for teachers to share knowledge, including new knowledge, as remote and blended learning practices are developed.¹⁷ Other studies stress that the success of blended learning programmes depends on comprehensive teacher training for all teachers involved in using it, and ongoing evaluation of the approach.¹⁸ They also find that few teachers have received sufficient technological support or professional development.¹⁹

Schools should ensure that all teachers receive training and professional development on the use of remote teaching and learning. This should include training on how to use the technology, how the technology can support teaching and learning, and the pedagogical approaches that support the use of that technology and the learning context. Schools should also ensure that teachers are able to access ongoing professional learning, including opportunities to share experiences and practices with other teachers within and beyond the school.

Schools should note that evidence finds that the features of effective professional development include ensuring that CPD:

- is carefully designed to focus on pupil outcomes;
- is prolonged rather than a short course;
- is relevant to teachers' day-to-day experiences and aspirations for pupils;
- is underpinned by subject knowledge, subject-specific pedagogy, clarity around learner progression, and content and activity that helps teachers to understand how pupils learn; and
- includes explicit consideration of how the CPD translates into practice, with teachers having opportunities to experiment in order to implement what they have learned.²⁰

Evidence also finds that managing and organising CPD effectively includes establishing priorities, resolving competing demands, sourcing appropriate expertise and ensuring appropriate opportunities are in place.²¹

Schools should ensure that CPD to support remote education reflects the features of effective practice described above.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments and administrations should invest in a national programme of CPD to develop teachers' and school leaders' knowledge, skills and understanding of remote teaching and learning and the features of effective practice. Training/CPD should be free and steps should be taken to ensure that all teachers and leaders are able to access the training/CPD within the working day.

Governments/administrations should monitor teachers' training and professional learning needs in respect of remote education. They should fund additional training where issues and needs are identified, and ensure that teachers are supported to engage in professional learning.

Governments/administrations should ensure that remote teaching and learning are addressed in initial teacher education and induction programmes for new teachers.

11. Collaboration and sharing practice

Evidence indicates that most teachers have little or no experience of remote education. Studies highlight the importance of enabling teachers to collaborate, and of providing opportunities for teachers to share practice.²² Studies also highlight the importance of collaborative practice in supporting innovative learning environments.²³

¹⁷ Reimers, Fernando, and Schleicher, Andreas (June 2020), *Schooling disrupted: schooling rethought: How the Covid-19 pandemic is changing education*. Paris: OECD.

¹⁸ Bowyer, Jessica; and Chambers, Lucy. (2017) 'Evaluating blended learning: Bringing the elements together', in *Research Matters: A Cambridge Assessment publication*. Issue 23, Spring 2017.

¹⁹ Education International (June 2020), *Education and Covid-19: Virtual International Summit on the Teaching Profession*.

²⁰ Teacher Development Trust (2015), *Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from international review into effective professional development*.

²¹ Teacher Development Trust (2015), *ibid*.

²² Reimers, Fernando, and Schleicher, Andreas (June 2020), *Schooling disrupted: schooling rethought: How the Covid-19 pandemic is changing education*. Paris: OECD

²³ OECD (2017), *The OECD Handbook for Innovative Learning Environments*, Paris: OECD.

Schools should ensure that teachers are given the time to collaborate and share ideas, experiences and practices with other teachers in the school. Schools should also work with other schools and networks to enable teachers and school leaders to collaborate and share experiences about effective practice.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should fund the development and operation of local and national networks to support teachers to collaborate and share practice and experiences about remote and blended learning.

12. Workforce engagement in discussions and decisions about remote education

Schools should consult the NASUWT about remote and blended learning and ensure that remote and blended learning policies are approved by the Union.

The NASUWT can help the school to identify barriers to remote teaching and learning. It can also help the school to establish how remote education might be implemented effectively, including ensuring that policies and practices are consistent with NASUWT advice. The NASUWT may also be able to help the school to identify and disseminate effective remote education practice.

The NASUWT asks:

Governments/administrations should commit to social partnership and ensure that the NASUWT and workforce unions are fully engaged in planning and decision-making about COVID-19 and remote education.

Governments/administrations should issue guidance to schools, local authorities and employers, making it clear that they should engage with the NASUWT and workforce unions in planning and decision-making. Proposals should be agreed with the NASUWT and other workforce unions before they are implemented.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following evidence and resources may be useful to teachers and school leaders. While online learning resources are organised under country headings to indicate the primary target audience, teachers and leaders may find resources from other UK administrations helpful.

UK-wide/international

BBC Bitesize: Online lessons covering nursery/reception through to age 16 in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>.

Education Endowment Foundation: Evidence about effective approaches to remote learning: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-supporting-students-to-learn-remotely/>.

European Commission, School Education Gateway: European Commission (June 2020): 'Blended learning in school education: guidelines for the start of the academic year 2020/21'. Provides guidance for policy makers, school leaders and teachers on blended learning: <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/publications/blended-learning-guidelines.htm>.

England

Oak Academy: Online lessons covering reception through to Year 10 (KS3) and specialist education in England: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

Department for Education (DfE) list of online learning resources for English, maths, science, PE, wellbeing and SEND: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>.

Scotland

Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub: Advice and support for teachers and leaders on online learning, including guidance on teaching online and access to curriculum resources that link to Curriculum for Excellence. These cover both curriculum subjects and broad themes (e.g. creativity): <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/supporting-online-learning-links-for-practitioners/>.

Wales

Welsh Government distance learning support for teachers and senior leaders, including guidance on approaches to distance learning and curriculum resources from the foundation phase through to post-16: <https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning>.