# The Educational Institute of Scotland

# Advice on Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic

## (January 2021)

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### Introduction

1.1 The EIS is clear that learning and teaching occur most effectively when teachers and pupils work together face to face in classrooms. This is acknowledged in Education Scotland's recently published advice on remote learning which states that 'remote learning will not replicate face to face in school teaching – in style, approach or hours of delivery'. Teachers may wish to provide access to online learning as an addition to classroom-based learning and teaching but only in exceptional circumstances should online modes of learning be considered as a substitute for face to face learning and teaching.

1.2 The Education Scotland advice is clear and the EIS agrees that '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' in a variety of ways.

1.3 This guidance has been developed to reflect the current context of teaching and learning in our schools and the fact that in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are having to adapt to a variety of circumstances and use a range of approaches to deliver teaching and learning. **The advice contained in this document is for the limited and sole purpose of responding to the challenges of teaching and learning in the COVID-context and should be applied in these exceptional circumstances only.**

1.4 The advice set out in this paper is consistent with the principles established in the Salaries Committee's paper on E-learning Initiatives, which flowed from the following resolution approved by the 2016 Annual General Meeting:

*'This AGM instructs Council to investigate and report on the workload and contractual implications for teachers and lecturers of e-learning initiatives.'*

1.5 In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to the delivery of teaching and learning may have to be made for a variety of reasons:

(i) pupils may be self-isolating or shielding

(ii) teachers may be self-isolating and able to work from home

(iii) teachers who are shielding or with particular vulnerabilities may be working from home

(iv) schools may require to move to a blended or remote learning model.

1.6 To accommodate these circumstances, schools may wish to consider the delivery of online lessons, either pre-recorded or on a 'live' basis. This guidance is designed to assist Local Associations in negotiations about such provision at a local level, reflecting the contractual position as well as the health and wellbeing needs of teachers and pupils, at this challenging time.

1.7 It is recognised that pupils may also be absent from school for non-COVID-related reasons. In these circumstances, existing Local Authority policies, procedures and guidance to manage such absences and to support attendance would normally apply. The arrangements and protocols referred to in this document would **not** normally pertain to these situations, unless arrangements and protocols have already been agreed and online teaching is being provided to another pupil in the same class who is self-isolating or shielding.

**Guiding Principles**

*Agreement at LNCT*

2.0 All arrangements and protocols for the delivery of online teaching in the circumstances outlined in Paragraph 1.4 above should be agreed at LNCT.

2.1 SNCT and LNCT conditions of service must be observed in all cases and any involvement in online teaching must be capable of being delivered in the 35-hour working week and within the Working Time Agreement of the host school of the teacher who is involved in delivering online teaching.

2.2 Extant individual statements of particulars and locally agreed job descriptions and remits should not be varied.

2.3 There is no explicit statement in teachers' contracts in relation to delivering online lessons and unlike the UK Government, the Scottish Government has not used its legal powers to instruct remote or online teaching. The EIS believes that teacher staffing of online teaching, whether delivered by teachers working from school or at home, should be voluntary.

2.4 The delivery of online teaching to individual pupils or to timetabled classes **is class contact time and class size maxima as set out in the SNCT Handbook must be honoured in all cases**.

2.5 The supervision of classes engaging in remote learning from within physical classrooms can only be undertaken by GTCS registered teachers. **It is not acceptable for support staff or other colleagues who do not hold GTCS registration as teachers to supervise classes of students who are being taught remotely.**

*Pupils self-isolating or shielding – access to remote teaching*

3.0 Where a pupil is self-isolating and remote access to teaching is being considered, distinct arrangements and protocols should be agreed for this provision, reflecting the needs of the individual pupil in line with GIRFEC principles.

3.1 Whilst it is recognised that screen-based online learning may form part of the provision of teaching and learning for pupils who are self-isolating or shielding, it should **not** be the only pedagogical approach adopted. Consideration should also be given to a range of active and independent learning approaches, including research tasks, project work, and opportunities to participate in practical activities which can be carried out away from a digital device. This view is shared by Education Scotland and forms part of their recently published advice on remote learning referred to above.

3.2 The EIS is clear that where teachers are providing online teaching in these circumstances, arrangements should be made to backfill that part of the post which is required for the delivery of online learning.

3.3 Class teachers who are fully class-contact committed should **not** be teaching in class for the duration of their class contact commitment *and* delivering **live-stream** or **recorded** lessons to pupils elsewhere.

3.4 Live streaming and recording of in-class lessons is not an acceptable practice, either pedagogically or in terms of conditions of service. A limited exception to this relates to the use of limited live streaming of student teacher "expositions" which are governed by specific parameters and protocols, and are primarily focussed on supporting the student teacher.

3.5 Consideration should be given to the allocation of additional teachers for the delivery of online teaching or where appropriate and agreed locally, to the use of the E-Sgoil National Study Support Offer.

3.6 It is recognised that if new members of staff are being recruited, then a Local Authority may have a requirement to appoint on the basis that part, or all, of the role will be to deliver online teaching during these exceptional times. LNCTs will have to agree the specific job description and remit for the duration of the pandemic with a view to the remit defaulting to face to face classroom teaching when normal education service delivery is resumed. The creation of any COVID-specific remits related to online learning should adhere as a minimum to the conditions and protocols related to Esgoil delivery, for example in relation to class size maxima.


*Teachers working at home and delivering remote teaching*

4.0 It is recognised that some teachers may be working from home, as a result of:

   (i)     a requirement to self-isolate; or

   (ii)    shielding or particular vulnerabilities; or

   (iii)   a move to blended or remote learning in their host school.

4.1 In these circumstances and subject to agreement at LNCT as outlined in the provisions above, the teachers involved may be asked to deliver online lessons, either pre-recorded or on a live basis.

4.2 Whilst teachers' contracts make no explicit statement in relation to delivering online lessons, the EIS has argued for the right of teachers who are shielding or who have particular vulnerabilities to work remotely. The delivery of online teaching is part of the range of mitigations which can be adopted in these circumstances.

4.3 LNCT agreements should ensure that all relevant circumstances are considered when determining if the delivery of online teaching is necessary and possible.

4.4 A truly collegiate approach should be adopted, and agreements reached which are reflective of the individual circumstances of the teacher involved.

4.5 LNCT agreements should make provision for the potential of the different home and personal circumstances of teachers working at home, some of which might render the delivery of live or pre-recorded lessons from home a significant challenge.

4.6 It should also be recognised that there will be variable circumstances across and within schools in terms of the need for teachers working from home to be involved in remote teaching. Teacher professional judgement will also play a part in determining whether or not it features within particular learning contexts. For example, where a post has been back-filled or absence covered to ensure that in-class lessons are being delivered by another teacher, there may be no need for a self-isolating or clinically vulnerable teacher who is working from home, to deliver any online lessons. However, there may be others situations, in which colleagues may agree that a key aspect of learning would be best delivered by the class teacher who is currently at home and the use of online teaching would facilitate this approach. The professional judgements of the self-isolating or clinically vulnerable teacher who is working from home and the in-class cover teacher would form a key part of the decision-making process.

4.7 A collegiate approach to determining what will be offered to pupils while they are learning at home is advised. Colleagues will feel better supported to and more confident in providing a range of remote learning experiences in circumstances where professional dialogue has already taken place among colleagues, including senior managers, and where this is ongoing as required.

4.8 If a teacher is concerned for any reason about being asked to deliver live or pre-recorded lessons from home, they should raise these concerns with the school management team and seek advice and support as necessary from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary.

4.9 In situations when remote learning is in place and the delivery of in-school teaching is restricted to the children of Key Workers and vulnerable children, teachers who are attending school for the provision of this education should not also be asked to provide online learning experiences for their own classes on days when they are not rostered for this provision.

**Do's and Don'ts of Online Teaching**

5.0     Where teachers are delivering online lessons in the context of COVID-19, either pre-recorded or on a live basis from home, teachers **SHOULD**:

- follow the agreed LNCT policies, protocols and guidance, including those pertaining to workload control;

- communicate only through agreed official channels, e.g. GLOW or other local authority-endorsed digital platforms;

- ensure that any associated communication with parents is in accordance with agreed policies and protocols, including those in relation to the roles and responsibilities of parents in supporting their children with remote learning generally and specifically to access any live lessons;

- act in accordance with the [EIS Social Media Policy](#) and the GTCS [Professional Guide, 'Engaging Online: a guide for teachers](#);

- take all appropriate measures to protect their personal privacy and safeguard their professionalism, e.g. by ensuring neutral backgrounds and appropriate dress;

- **be aware that nothing shared online is private.**

5.1     Where teachers are delivering online lessons, either pre-recorded or on a live basis, teachers **SHOULD NOT:**

- share, or be asked to share, personal phone numbers, email addresses or social media IDs with pupils or parents;

- live-stream lessons from their homes, unless they are using a secure platform, such as GLOW;

- engage in any phone or video-calling with parents unless this has been arranged through the school in accordance with LNCT agreements, and with the knowledge and/or participation of the appropriate line manager and the consent of the teacher involved;

- be compelled to use their own personal phones or other devices should they not wish to do so.  The onus is on the local authority to provide any devices as necessary to support remote teaching.

**Protocols to protect staff and safeguard pupils**

6.0     Schools must have in place protocols to protect staff and safeguard pupils, prior to the delivery of any online lessons, either pre-recorded or on a live basis by teachers working from home.

6.1     No teacher should be expected to carry out any online teaching

(i)      with which they feel uncomfortable, or

(ii)     in the absence of agreed protocols.  Such protocols should include measures for handling incidences of pupil behaviour which is

disrespectful of others, including the teacher, or is disruptive of learning; and for responding to incidences of inappropriate parental intervention.

6.2     The teacher delivering online teaching from home, is solely responsible for the delivery of education.  The health and safety of pupils engaging in lessons remotely and the management of discipline is the responsibility of the school and not the teacher working from home.

6.3     Teachers should not routinely be in phone contact with children and young people who are learning at home as they self-isolate or in the context of a remote or blended learning model.

## Use of, and Access to, ICT

7.0     Local Authorities should be responsible for the provision of all required hardware and software in relation to any recording or live streaming of lessons from home. The ability of Local Authorities to ensure the capability, reliability and security of digital infrastructure to enable the smooth delivery of online learning should feature in LNCT discussions relative to such provision.

7.1     As far as possible where digital technology is being used to support learning and teaching at home, this should be familiar both to teachers and to pupils.

7.2     Appropriate training on the use of the resources, technology and digital platforms used, shall be provided by the school or Local Authority to ensure that teachers are supported and confident in delivering this contingency model of education.

7.3     Appropriate professional learning opportunities should also be facilitated to ensure that teachers are supported pedagogically in delivering this contingency model of education.

7.4     Arrangements for the delivery of remote teaching should be underpinned by the principle of equity, and provision made to ensure that pupils impacted by poverty have access to appropriate resources to maximise engagement with learning and to address the poverty-related attainment gap.

7.5     Teachers delivering remote teaching should also be furnished with the appropriate resources as required from the school or Local Authority to facilitate the delivery of teaching in this manner.

7.6     Where teachers have concerns about the use of particular software, for example, in relation to the capacity of companies to access and harvest personal data, these should be raised with the school and/or Local Authority, with a view to alternative possibilities being explored.

## Quality Assurance

8.0     Whilst it may be appropriate in some circumstances for colleagues to work together in a team-teaching capacity on providing remote learning for pupils, the use of digital platforms for the purposes of quality assurance of

learning and teaching in the context of any contingency arrangements is **not appropriate and should be resisted.**

8.1 Whilst it is understood that senior managers have a responsibility to quality assure learning provision, this should be done on the basis of collegiate, professional dialogue with teachers. All staff should be involved in collegiate discussion about what the school's remote learning offer will be and opportunities for professional dialogue among colleagues, including senior managers, should be created ongoingly throughout the period of remote learning and teaching. It is not acceptable for quality assurance processes to be in the form of observation of live virtual lessons.

**Workload**

9.0 The EIS is clear that priorities at this time should be streamlined to ensure that there is no additional strain on weekly working time within the parameters of the 35-hour working week.

9.1 In accordance with the Scottish Government Guidance on Education Recovery, priorities should be centred around the well-being of teachers, as well as of children and young people, and be agreed on a collegiate basis. Teachers should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

9.2 Adjustments to the balance of normal pupil-contact time are recommended for digital learning contexts- neither children nor teachers should be engaged for duration of the pupil day in screen-based learning and teaching. This would be an excessive and unhealthy demand to place upon pupils, is pedagogically unsound and is not conducive to maintaining good health and wellbeing among teachers working in relatively restricted conditions at home and without the usual supports from colleagues and senior management being in place.

9.3 This view is shared by Education Scotland in their advice (embed link), referred to above, which states that 'Learners should not engage in online learning for the entirety of the school day. Learning may include activities such as research tasks, project work, practical opportunities, discussions and other activities that can be carried our away from a digital device'.

9.2 If a teacher has a concern about workload, this should be raised with the management of the school setting in the first instance. If necessary, the EIS School Rep and/ or Local Association Secretary can assist in helping the setting to reach a collegiate and bureaucracy-light solution.

**Further advice on curricular and pedagogical approaches within COVID-secure teaching environments and in the context of education recovery can be accessed [here](). Further guidance to members working at home during a period of school closure can be accessed [here]().**

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