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Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School

# Distance Learning Policy

Teaching & Learning

Version: 1

Reviewed: September 2020

Approved: Curriculum & Standards

Date: Autumn 2020



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## 1. Introduction

Distance learning was an integral part of education for many of our pupils during the Summer Term 2020. We believe that no child should be at an educational disadvantage if they are required to be away from classroom teaching as a result of COVID-19 related issues, life limiting illnesses or other situations. At Thongsley Fields, our aim is to create a culture of rich and effective learning, planned by teachers, and using approaches which research and evidence suggest are the most useful.

This policy also recognises the significant impact that teacher feedback can have on pupils learning and therefore seeks to make the most effective use of teacher and support staff time in relation to this.

However, this policy also recognises that there can be no substitute for strong classroom teaching led by familiar, highly capable teaching staff. There can be significant limitations, particularly at Primary level, with any model of distance learning.

## 2. Aims

This distance learning policy for staff aims to:

- ensure consistency in the approach to distance learning for all pupils (inc. SEND) who are not able to be in school
- set out expectations for all members of the school community with regards to distance learning
- support effective communication between the school and families and support attendance
- provide appropriate guidelines for data protection and safeguarding.

## 3. Scope

Children who **are** displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or any other illness will be considered unwell and therefore it would not usually be appropriate to expect them to complete school work. No distance learning materials will be provided in this instance beyond the ability to access the various [online learning platforms and resources available from the schools website](#).

Children who are absent from school awaiting test results but **not** displaying COVID-19 related symptoms may continue to access the various [online learning platforms and resources available from the schools website](#). Further distance learning materials will not be provided as guidance dictates that these children should be in school.

Distance learning materials **will** be made available for:

- any child who is required to self-isolate because a household member has tested positive
- any child whose whole group 'bubble' is not permitted to attend school because they, or another member of their bubble, have tested positive for COVID-19

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#### **4. Educational Provision**

The most effective access to distance learning materials has been shown to occur when the boundaries between class and home based learning are blurred. Pre-emptive work is required to introduce children to online learning platforms, ways of accessing resources and appropriate ways of troubleshooting problems. Class teachers will allocate regular time within the school timetable to setup and practise routine, consistent tasks in order to build children's familiarisation. Retrieval tasks have been shown to be particularly effective and can benefit all forms of learning whether children are at home or in school.

Agreed online platforms e.g. ClassDojo and Tapestry will be used to post routine home learning tasks, communicate with parents (and children where appropriate) as well as to celebrate achievements and engagement. The school will endeavour to include any child or group 'bubble' who are not able to attend in the celebrations and events happening in school.

Competitions and the development of healthy rivalry between classes can help to further engage and build a sense of belonging and achievement. This has been shown to support children's mental health and wellbeing at times when they cannot be together in school. However, the school recognises that this work needs to begin in school in order to be effective for the benefit of distance learning.

#### **5. SEND & equality of access**

The school recognises the huge variety of personal and family circumstances within our school community. The school has measures in place to ensure that children have distance learning materials available that are appropriate to their age and stage of development including children with additional needs.

Many children may not have the means or suitable conditions at home to access online, digital materials and so the school will endeavour to provide comparable paper based materials to support those children where requested.

Where possible, we believe it is beneficial for children and young people to maintain a regular and familiar 'school day' routine. We will also encourage parents to support their children's access by finding an appropriate place to work and, to the best of their ability, support pupils where necessary and encouraging a good level of concentration.

#### **6. Roles and responsibilities**

As systems for distance learning develop and numbers of pupils accessing this learning changes, some amendments or reasonable adjustments to the outlined roles and responsibilities may be required. However, class teachers are best placed to ensure that quality learning opportunities can be provided to all pupils within their class.

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**Office Team:** monitor absence and inform staff of any pupils not attending school due to COVID-19 related issues, life limiting illnesses or other situations.

**Safeguarding Team:** ensure those pupils that have little or no access to online learning receive printed materials to access. Ensure regular contact is made with pupils and families who are not attending the setting due to COVID-19 related issues, life limiting illnesses or other situations.

**Inclusion Lead (SENDCo):** monitor and support staff to ensure that distance learning opportunities are accessible for all, especially pupils with additional needs.

**Curriculum Subject Leads:** monitor and continue to develop designated curriculum areas, supporting staff to plan and make available high quality distance learning opportunities.

**Phase Leaders:** monitor and support class teachers to ensure distance learning opportunities provide for an appropriately high level of challenge with sufficient support to enable access beyond the classroom environment. Phase Leads will monitor learning across their phase and between other phases to ensure progression and a consistent and equitable provision for all.

**Class teachers:** ensure high quality, age and stage appropriate distance learning opportunities are regularly provided for pupils. Class teachers will maintain regular contact with parents and carers to provide children with appropriate support and feedback to minimise the impact of non-attendance on pupil's educational and pastoral progress and development.

**Teaching Assistants:** support class teachers where directed; monitor and encourage pupils' engagement and provide feedback to as appropriate.

## 7. Data protection

### 7.1 Accessing personal data

When accessing personal data for remote learning purposes, all staff members will:

- Access data via the usual in-school methods such as ScholarPack and use of OneDrive.
- Staff should ensure that, where possible, data such as pupil telephone numbers or home addresses are accessed using devices provided via the school such as laptops and tablets rather than personal devices such as mobile phones.

### 7.2 Processing personal data

Staff members may need to collect and/or share personal data, such as email addresses as part of the distance learning system. As long as this processing is necessary for the school's official functions, individuals won't need to give permission for this to happen.

However, staff are reminded to collect and/or share as little personal data as possible online.

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### **7.3 Keeping devices secure**

All staff members will take appropriate steps to ensure their devices remain secure. This includes, but is not limited to:

- keeping the device password-protected and not revealing passwords to anyone else – strong passwords are at least 8 characters, with a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters (e.g. asterisk or currency symbol)
- making sure the device is locked if left inactive for a period of time
- not sharing the device among family or friends
- ensuring the physical security of all devices.
- maintaining security software and measures (e.g. antivirus and anti-spyware) remain in place and active
- keeping operating systems up to date – always install the latest updates when prompted.

### **8. Safeguarding**

Our updated Safeguarding Policy including any COVID-19 specific amendments is available on our school website. Further information and requirements for school staff is available in the attached appendices.

All children and adults are subject to The Cam Academy Trust's 'Acceptable Use Policy' at school which includes online safety rules. This policy also applies when children are using school provided devices or online platforms whilst outside of school.

### **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed informally following any local whole group closures and formally on an annual basis. At each formal review, it will be approved by the Curriculum & Standards Committee.

### **10. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Acceptable use and online safety policy
- Attendance Policy
- Data protection policy
- Feedback Policy
- Calculation Policy
- Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
- Critical Incidents Policy

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## Appendix A

Further details about roles and responsibilities.

### Teachers

If teachers are required to be available for work (as defined by their individual contracts) and assuming they are not unwell, they should be available via Teams, email or telephone during usual school hours (8.30am – 3.30pm). The school recognises the additional pressures and difficulties that can be present when working away from school

If they are unable to work for any reason during this time e.g. due to sickness or caring for a dependent at home, they should report this using the usual absence procedures.

(A telephone call should be made to the Deputy Headteacher before 8am. SMS or similar messaging is not usually appropriate as important messages can be easily missed. See the staff absence management policy for further information and the most up to date procedures.)

### Setting appropriate work

When providing distance learning materials, teachers are responsible for:

- ensuring planning is saved in the shared curriculum and planning folders for delivery in ample time
- uploading remote learning onto Class Dojo/Tapestry by 8:30am each day
- updating Spelling Shed spelling lists at least weekly
- monitoring and updating Times Tables Rockstars assigned tasks at least weekly
- regularly monitoring Bug Club and update texts for pupils in relation to their needs as required.

### Communicating with others

When providing distance learning materials, teachers are responsible for:

- liaising with other class teachers within the year groups to ensure consistency across class and subjects.
- communicating with the wider staff team such as: Office staff, Inclusion Lead (SENDCo), SLT, Safeguarding Team or Subject Leads where required.
- maintaining regular contact with pupils who are not in school via Class Dojo/Tapestry, moving to emails and phone calls if adequate responses are not received.

Staff may be required to communicate via telephone with parents and carers of pupils with limited access to devices. Staff are expected to use the 141 service to ensure personal numbers are ALWAYS withheld. Staff should not use personal social media accounts to contact pupils, parents or carers.

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**Staff are not expected to answer emails from parents outside of usual working hours and should not have email conversations directly with pupils in order to ensure safeguarding of themselves as professionals.**

Where a pupil is failing to complete work, a direct conversation should be had with parents to ascertain any barriers that the school can support with. If contact with parents is not possible or despite the school's best endeavours concerns remain, the matter should be referred to the school's safeguarding team.

When attending virtual meetings such as Key Stage meetings and/or staff meetings, staff should ensure they are suitably dressed and ensure that they are positioned appropriately to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct and confidentiality.

If recording presentations for pupils to view remotely, such as teaching videos, staff must ensure they are appropriately dressed and be mindful of what could be seen on camera or overheard in the background. Suitable areas will be chosen to minimise 'noise' and distracting or inappropriate backgrounds.

**Feeding back to pupils and/or parents:**

When providing distance learning materials, teachers are responsible for:

- providing feedback to pupils and/or parents on completed work via Class Dojo/Tapestry, within usual school hours only at not at weekends
- adapting learning task based on feedback
- remaining in contact with all pupils and/or families to ensure those with limited access to electronic devices are able to access and complete distance learning and communicate any concerns to Key Stage Leads/Safeguarding Team or SLT as appropriate.
- continuing to follow expected safeguarding procedures, referring concerns using MyConcern as usual.

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**Appendix B**

Further details about roles and responsibilities.

**Teaching Assistants**

When assisting with remote learning, teaching assistants must be available during their usual contracted working hours. If they're unable to work for any reason during this time, due to sickness or caring for a dependent for example, they should report this using the normal absence procedure.

When assisting with remote learning, teaching assistants are responsible for:

- undertaking tasks directed by: class teachers, Key Stage Leads or members of the Senior Leadership Team
- providing feedback for pupils accessing remote learning in consultation with class teachers
- recording stories or RWI tasks as directed.
- regularly communicating with the wider staff team and attending meetings where directed
- supporting with the distribution of home learning materials where appropriate
- if appropriate, working on other tasks or within other year groups as required
- engaging with CAM Academy Trust CPD library and/or other directed CPD opportunities



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## Appendix C

Further details about roles and responsibilities.

### Subject leads

Alongside their teaching responsibilities, subject leads are responsible for:

- considering whether any aspects of the subject curriculum need to be adapted to accommodate distance learning scenarios
- working with and supporting teachers to teach their subject remotely, to make sure all work set is appropriate and consistent and that appropriate CPD or teaching resources are shared with staff
- working with other subject leads and senior leaders to make sure work set remotely across all subjects is appropriate and consistent
- monitoring their subject area and updating their curriculum action plan in relation to any needs arising from distance learning provision.

### Senior leaders

Alongside any teaching responsibilities, senior leaders are responsible for:

- co-ordinating the schools approach to distance learning
- monitoring the effectiveness of and engagement with distance learning by:
  - receiving regular feedback from class teachers and phase leads
  - receiving feedback from subject leaders
  - receiving feedback from pupils and parents engaging with online and paper based learning materials
  - monitoring distance learning platforms to review work set and feedback given.

### Office staff

Office staff will support the school by being responsible for:

- helping to resolve issues reported by parents or staff e.g. username reminders or accessing resource links and liaising with the Trust's IT Team where appropriate
- supporting parents and carers with systems used to set and collect work
- helping staff and parents with any technical issues they're experiencing
- continuing to monitor absences and supporting staff where contact with parents and carers is proving difficult
- reviewing the security of distance learning systems and referring any data protection breaches to the data protection officer
- assisting pupils and parents with accessing the internet and/or online resources on school issued devices

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- supporting the delivery and/or collection of paper based learning materials where necessary.
- report any safeguarding concerns using MyConcern and liaise with members of the Safeguarding Team as appropriate.

**Pupils, parents and carers**

Staff can expect pupils and/or parents with children not in school to:

- be contactable during the school day (although school will be mindful of individual family and household circumstances)
- complete work to the standard and deadlines expected by class teachers
- seek help if they need it via school provided online learning platforms, email or by telephoning the school office
- alert teachers if children are not able to complete work
- alert teachers when paper based resources are completed.
- make the school aware if their child is sick or otherwise cannot complete work

**Local Governing Body**

The governing body is responsible for:

- monitoring the school's approach to providing distance learning to ensure education remains high quality and equitable for all.

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Appendix D

**Key contacts**

If staff have any questions or concerns about distance learning, they should contact the following individuals:

- issues in setting work – talk to the relevant subject lead, Key Stage Lead or SENDCo
- issues with behaviour – talk to their Key Stage Lead, NQT mentor, Safeguarding team
- issues with IT – talk to Office staff or Computing Lead
- issues with their own workload or wellbeing – talk to a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- concerns about data protection – talk to the data protection officer (Office Manager)
- concerns about safeguarding – talk to a member of the Safeguarding Team