

Wicklow Educate Together National School

Distance Learning Policy

Introduction

In response to this time of uncertainty regarding school closures, we have formulated this policy to outline how WETNS will maintain the link between school and home during periods of school closures. Our aim is to continue to communicate with our pupils, and to continue to provide purposeful and meaningful teaching and learning experiences for all of our pupils, whilst also being cognizant of maintaining student wellbeing and welfare.

We recognise that online safety is of huge importance and the aim of this document is to help to protect both school staff and pupils while teaching and learning online. Whether a child is being taught remotely or via a traditional classroom environment, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher, whether at home or school, the same statutory rules apply, i.e. the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and all of the school's policies apply.

This policy therefore does not set out to replace our existing policies. Rather, it is proposed as an important addition regarding the area of distance learning from a digital platform. This new policy therefore operates alongside all of our existing policies which can be viewed on our website www.wicklowetns.com.

A primary obligation of all schools is to the welfare of the learners in their school. This policy seeks to ensure that distance learning is safe for all student learners and that personal and sensitive data is also protected under GDPR legislation. Schools must ensure that learning takes place in an environment that is respectful and fair and meets its statutory duties.

This Policy has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education and relevant sections of:

- a) The Education Act (1998)
- b) Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- c) Equal Status Act (2000)
- d) Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- e) Disability Act (2005)
- f) Children First Act (2017)
- g) GDPR
- h) Data Protection Act (2018)
- i) Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary schools
- j) NEWB Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour (2008).

- k) DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools (May 2020)
- l) DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: *Supporting Primary Pupils at very High Risk to Covid 19* (August 2020).
- m) Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020
- n) DES Press Release, 6 January 2020

This is a working document. As we continue to explore options available to support distance learning, the document will be updated accordingly.

Context

We acknowledge that online collaboration is essential for distance learning to maintain the connection between school and home. WETNS uses a variety of child-friendly, online tools, which assist in providing more effective teaching and learning, while also enabling greater communication between staff, families and students.

The following factors were taken into consideration when drawing up this policy:

- Access to devices for children
- Access to devices and media hardware for staff
- Access to quality broadband for children and staff
- Pressures and stress on parents, families and staff
- Wellbeing of pupils
- Wellbeing of staff
- Lack of training for staff on Distance Learning

Distance Learning and Teaching Approach

Distance Learning and Teaching will take an approach which is known as a *blended approach* and teachers may differ slightly in their methods under this approach dependent on the class level, the pupils' needs and the teaching and learning point being covered.

The primary focus will be on pupils continuing to use their text books and copies as much as possible. Teaching points across the three core subjects of English, Irish and Maths will be provided via written instruction, audio, and/or pre-recorded video lessons via Seesaw each day. One other subject will be included also from the other eight subjects, including Learn Together. Some lessons may integrate more than one subject.

Teachers may augment this work with additional activities or approaches. Some examples of additional approaches may include:

- Children may be asked to upload samples of specific work from their copies or books for teacher correction and feedback

- Children may be asked to complete practical activities at home and then upload a photo, video or audio recording of the task for teacher correction and feedback
- Children may be guided to complete a small project over a time period on a topic being taught to submit to the teacher for correction
- Children may be invited to complete an online activity via a link provided by the teacher
- Children may also be asked to view televised learning programmes such as The Homeschool Hub on RTÉ2 or Cúla4 Ar Scoil on TG4
- Parents may be asked to sign up to free educational websites such as edco.ie, cjfallon.ie, twinkl.co.uk in order to access educational resources or book schemes to aid distance learning.
- Additional learning activities may be offered from teachers throughout the school which the children may wish to engage with. These will always be aligned with the Primary School Curriculum.

Distance Teaching and Learning Protocols for Pupils

- Pupils should check and attempt assigned work each school day, whilst watching, listening or reading teacher instruction before beginning
- Communication should only take place during normal school hours, 8.50am – 2.30pm
- The normal school calendar will apply
- The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:
 - a. Code of Behaviour
 - b. Anti- Bullying Policy
 - c. Acceptable Use Policy
- Teaching and Learning best practice will continue to apply, with students expected to present all assignments to the best of their ability and on time, where
- Pupils may have work returned to them by the teacher to review and to respond to the teacher's comments and corrections. Pupils should review and respond to this work and seek advice from the teacher if needed.

Distance Teaching and Learning Protocols for Parents

- We ask parents/guardians to ensure protocols for students are adhered to.
- Check-in on your child/ren's school work on a daily basis and talk to your child/ren about the work being assigned.
- Please contact your child's teacher about any concerns or areas for which you need additional support, be it to stretch or to scaffold your child.
- The health and wellbeing of all is paramount. Circumstances may change for any of us or our families unexpectedly – teachers, parents and pupils – so please keep schooling in perspective and do not allow anything school-related to impinge on your child negatively.
- We encourage a little work every school day for routine
- Please remain in contact with us via info@wicklowetns.com as needed

Distance Teaching and Learning Protocols for Teachers

- Upload work for completion each day for the three core subjects of English, Irish and Maths plus one other subject
- Check, correct and respond to assignments daily
- Communication will only take place during normal school hours (8.50am – 2.30pm). However, setting and correcting work may take place outside of those hours
- The normal school calendar will apply
- A record of engagement with distance learning will be kept to allow us to support those who need additional support and to recognise efforts and achievements of all
- The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:
 - a. Child Protection Policy
 - b. Data Protection Policy
 - c. Acceptable Usage Policy
- Teaching and Learning best practice will continue to apply with students expected to present all assignments to the best of their ability and on time, where possible. Relevant feedback will be provided on an ongoing basis.
- WETNS operates a collaborative culture amongst the staff with regards to planning for teaching and learning. To this effect, teachers will continue to work collaboratively. This may mean that a teaching point may be delivered by a teacher other than your child's class teacher.

Children with Additional Educational Needs (AEN)

- Support teachers will continue to support the students they normally teach as much as possible, providing additional differentiated teaching. They will use the same methodologies as class teachers, including the use of pre-recorded videos/audio to teach.
- The children's SSP will continue to guide this teaching and the targets that had been set will continue where possible to be the main focus.
- Support teachers are part of a year team and will help to support the entire year in collaboration with their class teachers. They may also provide classes and lessons to other children in the school.
- Class teachers will also continue to support children with additional education needs in their classes through differentiation and collaboration with the Support Teacher.
- Some children with AEN have been allocated assistive technology. This equipment normally remains on the school premises as part of our AUP policy. Parents may seek the assistive technology equipment for their child from the school. A contract will be issued by the school and must be signed by the parent. The child can have access to the equipment for the duration of the school closure.

Communication

This code will be communicated to the school community via

- School website
 - Email
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- A link to the website in the newsletter

Implementation Date and Timetable for Review

This plan was ratified by the BOM of **WETNS** at its meeting on: 27 January 2021 and is subject to change, in light of any guidance or instruction received from Department of Education and Skills/HSE Public Health.

This policy is in effect from 11 January 2021 until further notice.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson, BOM WETNS)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal, WETNS)

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Protocols for use of live online platforms for distance learning

Introduction

The reason this document has been drafted is due to the ongoing forced closure of our school due to the coronavirus pandemic. The document is not a policy but rather an addendum to the School's Distance Learning Policy. **Please note that the use of live online platforms (zoom) for learning may discontinue if there is a partial re-opening of the school as a cohort of staff would be returning to work at the school while the remaining staff would continue with distance learning as outlined in the Distance Learning Policy.**

Wicklow Educate Together National School take Child Protection and Data Protection very seriously and recognises that online safety is of significant importance. This document seeks to ensure that online / virtual meetings are safe for all participants and that personal and sensitive data is also protected. The aim of this document is to help protect the school, staff and pupils while participating in virtual / online video conferencing. This document will act as a guide to staff, pupils and parents in the course of participating in any virtual meetings and will form an integral part of the consent process for participation in such meetings.

For the purpose of this document it has been agreed that Zoom will be the chosen platform/application used in our school. The use of Zoom as a platform/application has been permitted for use in our school as a means to communicate with our pupils during the school closure. Virtual meetings are permitted in these circumstances as a means to cater primarily for the wellbeing of all our pupils.

For the purpose of this document the terms "platform", "application" and "virtual meeting" refer to the use of Zoom.

The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16 and accordingly Zoom account should only be accessed by persons over this age. In order to attend a virtual meeting access is via a parent / guardian email account only. If you would like your child to be part of a virtual meeting you will need to set them up with access to the virtual meeting. By accessing a virtual meeting parents are consenting to their child's involvement in the virtual meeting. Prior to joining a virtual meeting parents should ensure their child knows how to use the platform/application safely and is familiar with security features. For example, they should ensure their child knows how to mute/unmute the sound and switch on and off the camera. Parents should be familiar with the terms of use, disclaimers and associated conditions applicable to the platform used before allowing their child access the application.

It is important for parents to monitor their child's usage. This does not mean hovering over their shoulder but it does mean that a parent/guardian must be within earshot of the virtual meeting at all times. For child protection reasons the parent or guardian must not participate in the meeting unless by prior consent of the class teacher.

General Protocols

Virtual meetings will be pre-organised by the school with a given date and time.

- Unless otherwise specified the class teacher will be the 'host' of a virtual meeting and will issue the relevant details / invitation on Aladdin.
- For child protection and safety reasons there will be another member of staff present at all virtual meetings.
- These login details cannot be shared with anyone other than those to whom the class teacher has invited.
- Please note that teachers will only admit pupils to the virtual meeting if they can be identified by the name displayed on the login point of the virtual waiting room. A child's name of family surname should be used.
- Students who arrive five minutes or more late may not gain access to the Zoom.
- Meetings will purely be for the purposes of 'checking in' on student progress and for children's overall wellbeing.
- The meetings should last an appropriate amount of time and this will be communicated to parents prior to the meeting by the class teacher.
- The teacher / staff member present will keep a record of children attending the virtual meeting.
- All participants joining the meeting will be muted initially and should remain muted until the teacher gives them an opportunity to contribute to the meeting. Ideally, pupils should stay muted unless the child is talking in order to reduce background noise.
- The unauthorised recording of virtual meetings using any device will not be permitted and neither will the sharing of content in relation to such meetings on social media. The taking of screenshots or photographs is also prohibited.
- The screen sharing facility and chat facility will be controlled by the teacher.
- All members of the meeting should be dressed appropriately for the meeting.
- Meetings should be conducted in an appropriate setting. For example, not in a bedroom or a heavily trafficked area of a house where privacy would be compromised.
- Participants should consider what background is visible while online in the interest of privacy of other family members and the security of the home.
- Parents / Guardians should remind their child that they should avoid saying or doing anything on video that they would not feel comfortable sharing outside the group.
- Teachers should inform the school's DLP if they notice or have any concerns of child protection issues or should a disclosure be made to them. This should be highlighted to parents.
- The teacher may end the meeting at any time should he/she deem any content inappropriate.
- Breaches of the Code of Behaviour or inappropriate behaviour will be reported to the Principal and will be dealt with thereafter. In such instances, children may be excluded from further meetings of this nature and

parents will be contacted and informed. In addition, a breach in the Code of Behaviours or inappropriate behaviour will result in the immediate termination of the meeting. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Important Notes

- Please note that parental permission is implied as the link for virtual meetings will be communicated via the parent/guardian's email address. By virtue of the pupil logging on to the virtual meeting permission is assumed.
- Wicklow Educate Together National School cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms in the event they are compromised including unauthorised access.
- Acceptance by a parental/guardian of the terms outlined in this document will be required before a child's first virtual meeting.
- A parent/guardian should monitor their child's usage and must be within earshot of the virtual meeting at all times.
- Parents/Guardians should satisfy themselves as to Zoom's compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations / Data Protection Acts 1988-2018, as amended.
- It is important to note that any serious breaches or inappropriate behaviours will result in the discontinuation of this method of communication.
- This document has been drawn up in consultation with the staff of our school and has been approved and ratified by the Board of Management on 27 January 2021

Zoom Ground Rules

