

Remote teaching and Learning at Gosforth Academy – October Update

Teaching and learning remotely over an extended period is extremely challenging for both staff and students alike. The circumstances have changed regularly since March, with all schools having found themselves in an unprecedented situation. Some students have had to cope with prolonged periods of time without face-to-face contact with their teachers and find ways of making an online approach work for them. Since September, we have strived to minimise the disruption experienced by students when they are asked to self-isolate or miss lessons due to COVID. In doing so, workload for teaching staff has increased significantly as they continue to set meaningful work for self-isolating students whilst still teaching a full timetable in school.

We are constantly reviewing our provision and ensure that this is appropriate for the challenges that we continue to face. A Contingency Plan for potential future disruption has been created and current trials look positive for future developments. We are pleased to say that feedback from trials has been overwhelmingly positive, but has also raised additional logistical challenges.

Teaching and support staff have used the resources available to them to develop an entirely new way of working and learn new skills to deliver content remotely too. We have tried to adopt an approach that is fair and manageable for both staff and students. This way, provision will be effective and consistent.

In answering the questions below, we hope that you will understand our approach to remote learning for isolating students whilst school is open and why we have adopted it.

How will students know what they have to do?

We use Frog, our Virtual Learning Environment, to set students their assignments. They should check this on a daily basis when they need to miss school and are well enough to work. To access Frog, all you need is internet access. There is also a Frog App that students can use on their phone. All parents have a login to Frog as well, where they can see these assignments. We have asked subject teachers and departments to provide work that should:

- Be set using a Frog assignment. Instructions will be provided by teachers.
- Be set promptly (usually within 24 hours of being notified that a student will be absent from school for a period of time).
- Be, wherever possible, the work that students would be doing in class and that is being taught to their peers. In the rare cases where this is not possible, work should be relevant, meaningful and ambitious with appropriate sequencing.
- Offer the opportunity for assessment and feedback, in line with department assessment policy. This could be through the file drop facility, Frog feedback, using the text box or by some other means.

How much work should students have to do?

We have asked teaching staff to set the work that has been completed in class that week wherever possible. It is apparent that student productivity at home can vary greatly, but if they are able to complete this work, this will allow them to manage their return to school most easily. Work could include content coverage, a range of class activities, assessments or homework provided for the rest of the group.

How often will students receive their assignments?

They will usually receive them on a weekly basis, ideally with one assignment per subject (although this may be more for Sixth Form where two teachers share a class and deliver different elements of

the course). This may include a number of smaller tasks, PowerPoints or other activities. Further work may need to be set as teachers deem necessary or if the absence is longer than a week.

How will new subject content be taught remotely?

The Government has stated that schools need to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education. There is no single strategy that is the right one for all subjects, given the obvious differences involved in their delivery, and we believe that subject specialists should decide upon and use a range of activities to do this.

Teaching staff have been strongly encouraged to use narrated PowerPoints, and have therefore been given detailed guidance as to how to create, store and send them to students as a link in Frog assignments. This will allow students to hear their teachers' voices, and have key information on the slides highlighted, much like they would do in the classroom. Where this is not possible or deemed appropriate, students are urged to contact teachers to seek additional clarification on topics that are new and/or challenging for them.

What can students expect in terms of feedback from their teachers?

We expect that teachers to provide feedback in line with the assessment policy within the department, meaning that self-isolating students will be assessed at the same intervals as their peers in school. This may depend on the content and stage of delivery but please contact the relevant department if you would like further information. Assessments will be set as part of the assignments on Frog or some other means, but this will be monitored by the head of department. It is essential that students and/or parents make contact with teachers where further feedback or support is required.

What should students do if they have difficulties with their work?

Students should make contact with their teachers using their school email account if they need any further advice, support or guidance with regards their remote learning. This may be to ask questions about the content or the tasks that have been set or because they have been asked to communicate with teachers as part of the assignment.

Why is the remote learning at Gosforth Academy different to that offered at other schools?

We have and will continue to offer a provision that is different to that offered in other schools; no two schools have exactly the same circumstances and rationale. We have looked to develop our provision to ensure that is in line with the latest DfE guidance, but more importantly ensure that it fits with the very specific characteristics of our school. This needs to be accessible, consistent and appropriate for each course we offer whilst being safe and manageable for each student involved.

We will continue to review what we offer, and liaise with other similar schools in the area, sharing our practice with them when asked. We will update you with any changes when they are put in place.

Why are all lessons not being livestreamed?

We will continue to examine the research in this field and currently have several new initiatives planned including trials of new technology and its use in different circumstances. Where we feel these are viable, we will continue to expand the provision to offer new methods of delivery for those who are studying remotely.

Livestreamed lessons seem attractive at first, but their efficacy and suitability is not yet proven. We aim to ensure that our provision is consistent and as effective as possible, whilst being sustainable as we move through the challenges that may be presented in the future. We are very aware that families have a considerably varied level of availability of devices at home for their children to use, and that some are finding it difficult to manage the competing demands of their children for access to them. Having to be online at specific times for specific lessons means a lack of flexibility for students and for staff. This has the potential to complicate learning still further for students whilst access to teachers is available in other forms.

We are working on strategies we can use to mitigate some of the issues involved with such delivery methods. This has involved discussions and sharing best practice with other schools in our MAT, the wider area and those who are part of the various networks we engage in. We are aware that the majority of schools are not livestreaming lessons. However, exploring ways in which we might be able to start to expand our approach for specific purposes in the coming weeks is the right thing to do, whilst ensuring that its use is fair and feasible for our students.

What will happen in the future if further restrictions are introduced?

We have plans in place for how our provision will change when and if we move into each of the tiers of intervention, but will also continue to examine the research in this field. We currently have several new initiatives planned, including trials of new technology. Where we feel these are viable, we will communicate with parents and students. Critically, these would need to prove to demonstrate efficacy, whilst being logistically possible.

What further restrictions could be introduced?

The four tiers of intervention in education that have been outlined by the Government are outlined below. We are using this advice to inform future planning.

| Tier | Definition |
|------|--|
| 1 | Tier 1 involves remaining fully open, as the government has been clear that ensuring schools and educational settings remain open should be prioritised over other areas when restrictions are considered. |
| 2 | Tier 2 asks secondary schools to adopt a rota system to limit on-site attendance. |
| 3 | Tier 3 requires secondary schools to limit on-site attendance to just vulnerable children and young people, the children of critical workers and selected year groups, other settings remain fully open. In the event of tier 3 local restrictions being implemented the Department for Education will issue operational guidance for the affected area that will confirm which year groups should be prioritised. |
| 4 | Tier 4 goes further to limit attendance to just vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers at all settings. Where there are no local restrictions in place, education provision should continue to remain fully open to all, and these tiers do not apply. |

Please check the website and Frog for updates on changes to our remote learning provision.

My household does not have wi-fi and/or adequate devices at home. What can I do to make remote learning easier for them?

There are a number of Government schemes which we are involved in which aim to improve access for students in this situation. Please get in touch with your child's Head of Year if this is the case, as they may be able to help.

How can I best support my son/daughter if they are self-isolating?

This will be a very challenging circumstance for students, regardless of their previous progress and focus on their learning. You know them better than anyone, and encouragement should be supplemented with reminders where they are needed. Routines and accessing the help of their subject teachers is also very helpful.

Where can I find out more information about remote learning and the expectations placed on schools?

Please use the following links to understand more about expectations of schools and helping to ensure that your child is able to learn safely online.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-remote-education-support-for-schools-colleges-and-teachers>
- <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/safeguard-and-support-pupils/safeguarding-while-teaching/remote-teaching-safeguarding-pupils-and-staff/?marker=content-body>
- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely>
- <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/safe-remote-learning/>