

Victoria Park Primary School



Remote Learning Policy

(Incorporating remote teaching, home learning and the continuation of school business)

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Victoria Park Primary School Vision

At Victoria Park Primary School we are proud to be an inclusive school providing a high quality, creative and challenging education within a secure, caring and happy environment, where every child experiences a sense of enjoyment and achieves their full potential. We aim to provide each child with a broad and balanced education which encompasses the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2007) and the social, moral, physical and aesthetic aspects befitting the needs of adult life. Emphasis is placed on each pupil developing a caring and respectful attitude towards peers, adults, the community and themselves. Ultimately, we seek to fulfil the vision of preparing pupils as best we can for adult life by 'living to learn and learning to live'.

1.2 Remote Learning Policy Rationale

At Victoria Park Primary School, we believe that it is vitally important that as a school community, we endeavour to ensure that children consistently have access to a good quality education, as is their protected right noted by Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As such the school is committed to continually reviewing and developing its practices to ensure that all members of the school community have access to a consistent and effective education. This includes learning occurring remotely at home at the end of the school day in addition to homework, periods of time when children are required to self-isolate due to government guidelines and short term and long term closures of the school building. The Covid-19 pandemic, beginning in 2019, made it clear that such a policy would be effective in helping all within the school community better understand the school's plans and expectations during emergency closures.

1.3 Scope & Aims of this Policy

This policy sets out clear guidelines and procedures that should be followed in the event of a school closure, as well as providing advice on remote learning throughout the year. It is applicable to all within the school community for understanding the plans of the Board of Governors in ensuring the continuation of education for all pupils and school business, including the statutory responsibilities of the school. This policy works alongside and should be taken in the context of wider school policies, including but not limited to, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the Pastoral Care Policy, Video Conferencing Policy, Online Safety and Acceptable Use of Digital Technologies Policy and curriculum policies.

This policy is devised in line with the Department of Education's Circulars 2020/05 and 2020/06, as well as taking account the Education Authority's guidance of 'Readiness for Continuity of Learning at Home'. It also takes into account the specific needs of the school community and those lessons learnt from the first national lockdown from March to June 2020.

This Remote Learning Policy incorporates the school's previous home learning strategy and seeks to address remote teaching, home learning and the continuation of school business. This policy seeks to;

- Provide reassurance to all within the school community in times of uncertainty.
- Outline the response of the school during a range of unexpected closures.
- Outline the procedures for pupils that may not be able to attend school for reasons beyond their parents'/guardians' control, such as government or medical guidance to self-isolate or shield.
- Outline the procedures for staff that may not be able to attend school for reasons beyond their control, such as government or medical guidance to self-isolate or shield.
- Set out clear expectations that parents can have of the role of the school during such times.
- Set out clear expectations that the school will have of the role of parents during such times.
- Set out clear expectations that the school will have of pupils during such times.
- Set out contingency plans for the continuation of school business, including statutory responsibilities and reporting.
- Outline the procedures that will apply if a bubble is required to self-isolate due to suspected or confirmed outbreaks of disease in the school.

1.4 Considerations and Previous Learning

As reflective practitioners, all within the school community believe it is important that we reflect on our previous experience of remote learning in the national lockdown of 2020. This policy aims to reflect the very diverse circumstances in which members of our school community are endeavouring to access school resources during remote learning. Below are just some of the considerations that have been taken into account.

Considerations for Remote Learning		
Some families have limited internet access or poor connectivity. Some find remembering a range of credentials difficult.	In families with multiple children, timing can be an issue and parents can find balancing time between all children difficult.	Parents are trying to either work from home or go to work and children are staying with other family members, including grandparents.
Parents enjoy having regular and positive communication with teachers. This relationship proved extremely valuable.	Not all children are comfortable with video conferencing tools. Many find them anxiety producing and do not wish to partake. Can cause severe reactions amongst children.	Flexibility is key. Our families and staff are working in very diverse situations.
Not all families have access to a printer. Some families find the cost of ink difficult.	Some children find the motivation for home learning difficult. As time goes on this becomes more problematic.	Children really miss the social element of school.

1.4 Remote Resources Available

The school has established a Home Learning Zone on the school website under the Information for Parents menu. This zone is the key central hub for all remote learning resources. It is freely available on any internet browser without the need of additional apps or credentials making it the most easily accessible resource available to the school and its users. In addition, the school benefits from regular use of the Bug Club Digital Reading programme. The school also has access to the full C2K network managed by the Department of Education.

SECTION 2 – SCHOOL CLOSURE OVERVIEW

2.1 Types of Closure

There are a number of scenarios in which the school may need to adopt to a model of remote learning. This includes sudden closures and those that have more advanced warning. These closures can last for a wide range of time. Below are the school's definitions of such closures.

Emergency Closure (1-2 Days)	Short Term Closure (3-7 Days)
• These types of closures are hard to predict. • They may include closures due to inclement weather or loss of power or heating.	• These types of closures are generally unplanned. They may be the result of a longer emergency closure. • It may be caused by enhanced cleaning being required at short notice.
Covid-19 Isolation Closure to Pupils of Bubble	Long Term Closure (Over 1 week)
• This is a closure that applies only to an individual or small group of children. • It will be the result of government guidelines informing an individual they need to isolate for 3 days. This is currently under review and reliant on DoH guidance.	• These types of closures can be either unplanned or planned with very short notice. • These closures will usually be imposed on the school by the Department of Education.
Blended Learning (No set timeframe)	
• This is where a mix between in class teaching and learning and remote learning is required. • It will likely be imposed by the Department of Education. The exact outworking of this will therefore be dependent on the Department's specific guidelines when it is imposed.	

2.2 Emergency Closure Procedures

Due to their nature, these closures generally occur without much warning and last for a very short period of time. A 'snow day' is an example of such an emergency closure. For these closures the following procedures will apply;

- Seesaw, School App and school social media channels will be updated to remind parents about the Home Learning Zone. Pupils and parents carrying out self-guided learning using the designated resources already present on the school website.
- Teachers will use Seesaw to remind pupils of the Home Learning Zone. No new activities will be uploaded. They may direct pupils to certain resources.
- Mr Ryden will update social media channels with updates regarding closure/reopening.
- Mrs Gourley will communicate to staff updates regarding closure/reopening.
- All staff should routinely check their C2K emails for updates.

2.3 Short Term Closure Procedures

These closures usually occur at short notice and last up to one week. With this in mind the following procedures will apply;

- The first day of closure will be used to allow staff to prepare work for the remaining closure. For the first day, parents and children should explore the existing resources on the school Home Learning Zone.
- From day two onwards, daily work will be set by teachers for Literacy and Numeracy. Additional work may also be set in other curriculum areas.
- Pupils should complete the work and then use Seesaw to send this to their teacher who will provide feedback.

- Regular updates will be communicated with parents using Seesaw, the School App and the school's social media channels.

2.4 Covid-19 Isolation Closure or Bubble Closure Procedures

This closure will apply to individual pupils or a class bubble based on advice from the PHA or Track and Trace, and in line with the prevailing government guidance at the time of the incident. In these situations, the following procedures will apply;

- A parent should inform the Principal if their child tests positive for Covid-19. **They must not attend school for the duration of the isolation period.**
- A parent should inform the class teacher if their child has been identified as a close contact outside of school and is required to self-isolate as per current government guidance. In these circumstances work will be provided by the class teacher, either online or over Seesaw. Paper packs may be available for collection depending on family circumstances. **They must not attend school for the duration of the isolation period.**
- In the event of a positive case identified in a class bubble, the Principal will contact the PHA. The Principal will issue the PHA advice to parents on the Covid-19 section of the school website and through the School App, Seesaw and text message in line with current guidance from DENI. She is available for contact if any parent has a query regarding this. **Pupils must not attend school for the duration of the isolation period.**
- During whole bubble isolation periods (when in force by DENI/DoH), the class teacher will remain working from home. This will follow the short term closure procedures, with the first day being independent work and then for the remainder of the isolation period the teacher will set work on the school website to be completed and sent through Seesaw for feedback.

2.5 Long Term Closure Procedures

These closures can either be unplanned or planned with little notice. In these situations, the following procedures will apply;

- At the discretion of the Principal depending on circumstances, the first day of closure will be used to allow staff to prepare work for the remaining closure. For the first day, parents and children should explore the existing resources on the school Home Learning Zone.
- From day two onwards, daily differentiated work will be set by teachers for Literacy and Numeracy. Additional work may be set in other areas such as the World Around Us or the Arts on a weekly basis. The aim will be to provide a well-sequenced curriculum which enables good progression, prioritising key knowledge, understanding and skills in each key area of learning where the intended learning intentions and success criteria are clear and shared with pupils and parents.
- Teachers will aim to provide a mix of online learning and offline tasks for children to complete. Where appropriate, they may include short video demonstrations or link to explain tasks to pupils.
- Pupils should complete the work and then use Seesaw to send this to their teacher who will provide feedback.
- Parents should remain in regular contact with class teachers using either Seesaw or email. They should endeavour to check in with teachers at least once each week to let them know how their child is finding home learning.
- Regular updates will be communicated with parents using Seesaw, the School App and the school's social media channels.

2.6 Blended Learning Procedures

Blended learning is when a mix of in school teaching and learning and remote learning is required. It is likely that when this is required it will be imposed by the Department of Education and the school will be obliged to follow its pattern of attendance. The procedures below outline roughly what would happen in this scenario, pending guidance issued by the Minister of Education.

- From the instruction to run a blended learning model, the Principal will inform all parents and guardians in a timely manner. She will advise of the attendance pattern for individual children and if appropriate, the application process for this.
- If the decision is to run a two-day attendance model, then the class is likely to be split into two groups. Group 1 will attend Monday and Tuesday, while Group 2 attend Thursday and Friday. Wednesday will

have no children in attendance to enable a deep clean of the classroom and allow for planning.

- Group 1 will then be taught directly on Monday and Tuesday. For the remainder of the week they will be set tasks on the Home Learning Zone which reinforces the work taught on Monday and Tuesday.
- Group 2 will complete work on the Home Learning Zone for Monday to Wednesday. This work will focus on skills taught the previous week. They will then attend school on Thursday and Friday for direct teaching, and their work the following week will reflect this.
- The curriculum will be adapted to allow for a blended learning approach.
- Pupils should complete the work and then use Seesaw to send this to their teacher who will provide feedback.
- Parents should remain in regular contact with class teachers using either Seesaw or email. They should endeavour to check in with teachers at least once each week to let them know how their child is finding home learning.
- Regular updates will be communicated with parents using Seesaw, the School App and the school's social media channels.

SECTION 3 – ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

3.1 The Importance of Flexibility

We realise that the circumstances that cause our school to close and move to a model of remote learning can affect families and staff in a number of ways. In our planning and expectations, we are aware of the need for flexibility from all sides. Parents for example may be trying to work from home and so time and access to technology may be limited. Family illness may make learning less of a priority. Teachers may be trying to manage their home situation and the learning of their own children or planning for a blended approach. Technology may give some problems that hinder access to resources. An appreciation of these difficulties that can impact remote learning and increase pressures on all concerned should be understood. As such, the school urges understanding and will endeavour to be as understanding as possible, whilst still fulfilling its statutory obligations. It will try to promote a flexible approach to learning to meet the needs of all learners. We ask parents and guardians to be mindful that we all share the same goal of providing the best possible education for all pupils in the difficult circumstances of a school closure.

The Department of Education has noted the importance of flexibility. Their research suggests that asynchronous learning (learning that is not live) is as effective as synchronous (live) learning. In their Circular 2020/05, they state;

'Asynchronous approaches provide greater flexibility and are easier for parents to manage at home. Therefore, these will remain prevalent when organising distance learning.' As such, and taking into consideration the demographics of the school population, the school has adopted an asynchronous model of remote learning. This allows parents to access and prepare resources around their own working day, provides flexibility for work to be completed by others minding their children or for work to be completed in houses with limited access to technology.

3.2 Expectations for Teachers

Unless members of staff are experiencing sickness or other extenuating circumstances that have been made known to the Principal, there is an expectation that they will be available to work from home during periods of remote learning. This includes if a member of staff is required to self-isolate or work from home due to medical or government advice.

Staff should;

- Maintain regular contact with the Senior Leadership Team and follow the normal reporting procedures for absences.
- If a member of staff intends to have a test for Covid-19 they should share their result with the Principal.
- Set differentiated work to match pupils' abilities and needs on the school Home Learning Zone as agreed and noted above. Communicate clearly to families the timeframe for completion of tasks, such as those which should be completed on certain days.
- Provide feedback to pupils as appropriate in a timely manner.
- Place significant emphasis on the pastoral care of all pupils.
- Endeavour to maintain strong, ideally daily, communication with parents over Seesaw, email, telephone and the School App. Regularly check these platforms for updates from parents or use these to communicate periods where a delayed response may occur, such as if having meetings or covering classes

in person in school.

- Monitor and encourage engagement of pupils. Regularly check in with families who appear to be struggling with engagement.
- Any concerns regarding a child's welfare or concerns over engagement should be shared with the Senior Management Team. Concerns of a child protection nature should be shared with the Designated Teacher following normal protocols.
- Regularly check their C2K emails.
- If a member of staff is required to work remotely during a period of school opening, they may be assigned tasks by the Principal to complete.
- Maintain understanding of the difficult situations families may find themselves in and apply flexibility as appropriate.

3.3 Expectations for Parents

As a school community we realise that the pressure of remote learning lands firmly at the feet of parents and guardians, many of whom are already under a great deal of pressure with their own work or family situations. As such we seek to work in strong partnership with parents to make remote learning as beneficial and stress free as possible. Our priority remains the health and wellbeing of all children. All main work is set on the school's Home Learning Zone. This is an easy to access resource available from any web browser. There is no expectation that work must be printed, rather work can be copied by parents or pupils from the screen.

Parents should;

- Support their child's learning to the best of their ability by following the resources, explanations and advice on the school's Home Learning Zone.
- Encourage their child to complete tasks to the best of their ability.
- Maintain regular contact with the class teacher through Seesaw or email. We would encourage work completed each day to be forwarded to the class teacher daily as soon as possible for feedback. However, we recognise that home circumstances may make this difficult and so would encourage checking in with teachers at a minimum, least once a week.
- Complete tasks set on Bug Club.
- Share any concerns they have firstly with the class teacher, including queries regarding tasks or if their children are finding tasks difficult.
- Be appreciative that not all families share the same circumstances. Not all families have access to technology, so for example, live lessons may disadvantage others in the class.
- Check that their child has completed work each day and encourage the progress that is being made.
- Keep the class teacher informed of any pastoral care needs as normal.
- Keep the school updated on the test results or sickness of their child.
- Follow all government advice regarding isolation and testing.
- Ensure children's behaviour online is appropriate. The school's Acceptable Use Policy extends to all remote learning opportunities as advised and agreed at the start of the academic year.

3.4 Expectations for Pupils

The school understands that remote learning can be a difficult time for pupils as they adapt to new ways of working. Throughout previous periods of remote learning we have been very proud of the achievements of our pupils and how they have adapted to a different style of school. Below are some expectations that class teachers will have of the pupils in their class.

Pupils should;

- Work with their family at home to access the Home Learning Zone and work set by their teachers each day.
- Follow their parents' or guardians' instructions as they are trying their best to help them.
- Try their best to attempt all the activities set.
- Take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Check their work carefully.
- Let their parent or guardian know if they are finding a task difficult. They will then let the teacher know, who will be able to help.
- Take regular breaks from work, just like in school. We all need a quick break during tasks with some light

physical activity.

- Take some time each day to carry out activities away from a digital screen.
- Recognise that remote learning can make everyone feel different and experience a range of emotions. Talk to a trusted adult if you are feeling sad or under pressure.
- Know their teacher is only expecting them to try their best. Everyone makes mistakes and that is okay. It is how our brains learn and get bigger.
- Remember that the school's rules about using the computer and staying safe online apply to all remote learning work.
- Remember that there are always adults in school ready to help them.

3.5 Feedback and Celebrating Success

Feedback is an important element of the teaching and learning cycle. When work is sent to class teachers on Seesaw they will provide age appropriate feedback. The Department of Education (2020/05) note that feedback can take on a range of forms. This can include, for example, tailored written feedback to pupils, voice notes to pupils, encouragement videos or explanations, self-marking resources, virtual stickers or certificates, pupil of the week or showcasing pupil's work.

Teachers are eager to celebrate pupil success. The Principal continues to distribute her postcards on recommendation of class teachers and the school likes to celebrate success by showcasing work on its social media channels, website and within each class's Seesaw.

SECTION 4 – CONTINUATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS

4.1 Continuation of Statutory Responsibilities

The school has in place systems to ensure it can continue to provide its statutory responsibilities during remote learning. Meetings, such as Annual Reviews for Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs, will take place over video conferencing. Financial returns and the return of attendance will be completed remotely. The school recognises that often the Department of Education will reduce such statutory responsibilities in times of national crisis, but the Senior Leadership Team remains ready to carry out the school's statutory responsibilities as required.

4.2 Contingency Planning

The Board of Governors of Victoria Park Primary School remain committed to contingency planning and can carry out remote meetings (as noted by the Education Authority) as required. The Principal and Senior Leadership Team continually review and adapt remote working practices to enable the continuation of all the school's functions to the best of their ability.

SECTION 5 – PASTORAL CARE

The pastoral care and safeguarding of all pupils is of paramount concern during such closures. The school has put in place a number of measures to ensure the continuation of effective pastoral care and safeguarding, but should any member of the school community still have concerns they can contact the Head of Pastoral Care or the Principal.

5.1 Onsite provision for Vulnerable Children and those of Key Workers

Onsite face to face provision for vulnerable pupils and those of key workers (if government guidelines allow such provision to be provided and under the direction of the Board of Governors) will be provided. The Principal will communicate the application process for this to parents as soon as possible during a period of extended closure. Parents are reminded that in the main the safest place for pupils during a global pandemic is at home. A designated teacher for child protection will always be on site in the event of the school providing onsite provision for vulnerable and/or key worker children.

5.2 Remote Pastoral Care for Pupils

Teachers will maintain strong and regular contact with parents during each week of closure by telephone, Seesaw messaging, The School App and email. The main reason for this contact is to stay up to date with the pastoral needs of all pupils in their class to enable the school to support families appropriately. If teachers

discover that a family is finding any element of remote learning difficult or experiencing difficult times, then this is reported to the Senior Management Team of the school so that appropriate action or monitoring can take place. The school maintains a record of how each child is engaging in home learning. This is reviewed weekly by the Vice Principal and follow up action is undertaken as appropriate.

5.3 Holistic Development of Pupils

Work set for children will be a mix of online and offline activities, with a strong focus on Literacy and Numeracy, as well as a range of active areas of learning to promote children's holistic development. The school takes every opportunity to promote children's mental health. The Home Learning Zone provides resources and activities for parents to help maintain a positive mental disposition with their children. Events such as Children's Mental Health Week are celebrated.

Online Safety remains an important element of remote learning. Parents and children are regularly encouraged to discuss this important element of safeguarding, especially with remote learning. Parents are reminded of the availability of resources on the school's Parental Online Safety Zone. The Acceptable Use Policy extends to all home learning opportunities (See Acceptable Use of the Internet and Digital Technologies Policy).

5.4 Child Protection and Safeguarding

The school maintains a strong working relationship with the Educational Welfare Service and CYPPS during periods of extended closure. The Head of Pastoral Care continues to maintain regular contact with families on the Child Protection Register, children who are looked after and those known to her at possible risk. The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Team remain contactable during periods of remote learning and all staff are aware of the processes to raise concerns. Information for parents concerned about children is available on the school website, and included the Gateway telephone number and processes as appropriate.

5.5 Connections with Other Children

One of the most difficult aspects of closure for a large number of pupils is the inability to meet with members of their class or their friends. With this in mind the school has in place a number of options which class teachers may wish to use to promote engagement of individual children to meet together remotely or to work remotely towards a common goal. These activities are not required but rather are additional opportunities for children to participate in. Teachers can use these at a level specific to the age of the class. These include challenges, the compiling of videos of children engaged in work, sharing of children's work or providing video conferencing sessions to allow children to meet together virtually. Video Conferencing is only allowed through C2K managed platforms following the Video Conferencing Policy of the school.

SECTION 6 – PARENT SUPPORT

During remote learning, parents are encouraged to maintain regular communication with the school. The primary channel of communication remains the class teacher. Parents can also raise concerns with the Head of Pastoral Care, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, the Parent Support Officer and the Principal.

6.1 Combatting the Technological Divide

The school is very aware of the technological divide that can have major impacts on a family's ability to access remote learning and children's overall progress and pastoral care. With this in mind the Principal will endeavour to source and assign supporting devices to families in need to allow them to access the Home Learning Zone; including lending printers to families she identifies in need and laptops, tablets and internet access assistance sourced from the Department of Education and other support and voluntary agencies.

Teachers will regularly check with families regarding their access to technology, particularly at the start of a period of extended closure. This will be passed onto the Principal to review how the school can assist in remedying such issues.

6.2 Parental Support Officer

The school's Parent Support Officer will continue to be available to assist families. Referrals for support can be made to her by members of staff and she will, as a matter of course, continue to check in and work with families previously known to her. She is also in a strong position to signpost families to support available within the community.

6.3 Technical Assistance for Parents

The school provides technical assistance to parents. This includes the availability of the school's IT technician to help families experiencing problems. The ICT Co-ordinator is also available to assist parents with technical difficulties.

SECTION 7 – SPECIAL AND ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

7.1 Provision for Children with SEN or AEN

The school recognises that often it can be difficult for pupils with special or additional educational needs to work remotely with greater independence. The class teachers are best placed to assist these children with encouragement and differentiated tasks suited to their ability. The school maintains a section on the Home Learning Zone with a range of resources aimed at helping parents support their children with additional needs. The Learning Support Team are on hand to provide further assistance to families with pupils with English as an additional language. Peripatetic services are supported in school in working remotely with the children they are assigned as appropriate. The school's counselling service continues to operate remotely and referrals can continue to be made through the school website and through class teachers.

7.2 Provision for Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

In addition to the approach noted above, the school's SENCO and Deputy SENCO maintain regular contact with pupils on the SEN Register as appropriate.

SECTION 8 – REMOTE LEARNING DURING NORMAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Victoria Park is committed to exploring new and innovative digital tools to support both pupils and their parents/guardians at home. Both class teachers and subject co-ordinators seek new opportunities to reinforce learning across the curriculum at home. This includes through the use of the Bug Club reading schemes by Pearson Education utilised in school aims to support parents in developing their children's learning at home in a real and meaningful way. The school maintains a Home Learning Zone with a list of suitable resources for pupils to explore at home even outside of times of school closures. These can be updated as appropriate by curriculum co-ordinators.

SECTION 9 – MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

The Board of Governors and the Senior Leadership Team recognise that remote learning is a relatively new challenge facing primary schools. The age of our pupils, the technological divide and the current public health situation mean that many factors influence this policy and the school's strategy to providing remote learning. Ultimately we seek to meet the needs of the school community as best as we can in challenging circumstances. This policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Principal, Senior Leadership Team and ICT Co-ordinator. It will be reviewed annually to take account of the fast pace of change in this important area of provision and may be adjusted throughout the year at the discretion of the Principal or to reflect incoming guidance from the Department of Education and Education Authority.