

COVID-19

Remote education: safeguarding, expectations, support and monitoring

All schools have had to make significant changes to their operations in order to adapt to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included delivering remote education to pupils at home.

A legal direction came into force on 22 October stating that all pupils must be provided with “immediate access to remote education” should they miss school due to COVID-19. DfE guidance detailing remote education expectations can be found within [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

Ofsted will inspect schools – of any grade – where it has significant concerns about safeguarding or the quality of remote education being provided. Such concerns could be triggered by, for example, parents complaining about remote education directly to Ofsted.

What is remote education?

Remote education includes online teaching using platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom, tailored resources for pupils at home and structured communication with pupils and their families. Often it is a blended approach that involves all of these elements. Lessons do not have to be delivered live by teachers – recorded lessons, and ‘off-screen’ assignments can be as effective.

Monitoring your school’s remote education provision

Monitoring the quality, safety and effectiveness of remote education provision should be a priority for all governing boards at the moment. Governing boards should:

- ensure that [safeguarding pupils learning at home](#) is the highest priority; mechanisms are in place, working effectively and relevant policies have been updated
- be aware of their school’s strategy and plans for delivering remote education, this includes how the provision works in practice and its development to ensure that curriculum aims and the needs of all pupils are met
- ensure that [expectations for remote education](#) set out in [DfE guidance](#) have been met

Tools to support monitoring conversations

Governing boards have a responsibility to hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the pupils in their school(s). This responsibility extends to remote learning.

DfE framework to review remote education provision

The DfE have produced a [framework to help school leaders and governors](#) identify the strengths and areas for improvement in their remote education provision, and to find resources that can help improve practice.

We recommend that governing boards use this framework to support conversations with senior leaders. The framework is not statutory and can be adapted to fit your school context. You may decide to work through the entire framework or focus on specific sections that have been previously identified as priorities.

Questions to ask

Read our [monitoring priorities for governing boards](#), which includes questions to ask in relation to remote education provision:

- Does remote education provision meet the minimum requirements set out in DfE guidance?
- Has the school been able to switch quickly and efficiently to online (blended) learning?
- How are we supporting our pupils and their families to engage with remote learning?
- Have pupils and families with limited or no access to the technology required for remote education been identified? Are they receiving appropriate support?
- How are pupils and staff supported, educated and encouraged to stay safe and behave appropriately online?
- What support, resources and CPD are available to teachers to deliver online learning and adapt the curriculum for online learning to best meet the needs of pupils?
- Is remote education tailored to meet the needs of pupils with SEND?

- Is the delivery of remote learning impacting on the wellbeing of teachers and support staff? – do plans support a good work-life balance?

Keeping pupils and teachers safe

Keeping pupils and teachers safe during remote education is essential. The principles set out within existing school policies (such as the staff code of conduct) will continue to apply. However, other policies and procedures, such as reporting routes for raising safeguarding concerns, may need to be reviewed. Governing boards are responsible for ensuring the required policies are in place and working effectively.

The statutory guidance [keeping children safe in education](#) provides schools with information on what they should be doing to protect their pupils online. The DfE has also collated remote education safeguarding [resources](#) including [NSPCC guidance](#) which outlines measures that school leaders should consider when revising safeguarding policies and procedures, including:

- how staff will check on pupil's wellbeing while they are spending more time at home, considering how best to do this in a way that is suitable for each pupil and their family
- maintaining professional relationships between pupils and staff; online teaching is different to teaching face-to-face, but staff should be clear what behaviour is expected, in line with the staff code of conduct
- where live lessons take place, parents, carers and pupils should feel comfortable with the arrangements and understand the benefits and risks (such as potential privacy issues); written consent should be obtained for pupils to be involved
- the suitability of online platforms for the pupils' age group and ensuring the correct privacy settings are in place (not using teachers' personal accounts)
- ensuring that when recording or teaching live lessons, teachers are in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background

The expectations for remote education

Schools are expected to build on their existing remote education provision, ensuring a strong offer is in place for all pupils.

The amount of remote education provided should be equivalent to the core teaching time pupils normally receive. As a minimum:

- Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children
- Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day
- Key Stages 3 and 4: 5 hours a day

The DfE details [expectations for remote education provision](#) within 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools' guidance (page 46). In summary, schools are expected to:

- identify a named senior leader with overarching responsibility for remote education quality and delivery
- ensure pupils make good progress through the school's curriculum as a result of clear planning for each subject
- set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects
- deliver live **or** recorded direct teaching as well as setting independent tasks
- use a digital platform consistently across the school that allows for interaction, feedback and assessment (ensuring staff are trained appropriately)
- overcome barriers to digital access by distributing school-owned laptops or providing printed resources (such as textbooks and workbooks)
- check pupil engagement with work on a daily basis, and work collaboratively with families to find solutions where engagement is not as expected
- identify pupils who have difficulty engaging in remote education and who may be eligible to attend school in person
- tailor their approach and make reasonable adjustments according to pupils' age, stage of development and special educational needs (SEND), considering the demands being placed on parents' help or support
- publish information for pupils and parents about their remote education provision on their website by 25 January – an optional template is available to support schools

The characteristics of effective remote learning

Schools should think about how to transfer effective teaching methods from their live classroom teaching to remote education. Examples of effective methods include:

- pupils receive timely and frequent feedback from teachers
- assessment ensures that teaching responds to pupil needs and addresses gaps in knowledge
- new content is introduced clearly, using high-quality curriculum resources
- there are opportunities for interaction including discussion and questioning
- pupils practice new learning in a way that builds on existing knowledge
- avoiding too many long-term projects or open-ended research activities

Support available for schools

The DfE's [Get help with remote education page](#) is a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support available. This includes teaching resources, best practice webinars and information on accessing technology.

Ofsted have also produced a short guide to [What's working well in remote education](#) which covers topics such as 'when adapting the curriculum, focus on the basics' and 'live lessons aren't always best'.

NGA's [GOLDline advice service](#) provides governing boards with independent and timely advice. Our expert team of advisers will respond to any question relating to the role and duties of governing boards and provide the advice that is needed to deliver effective governance in challenging circumstances.

Our annual GOLD membership is £275 for boards and provides access to all our best practice resources and expert tailored advice. [Sign up](#) to help your board save time and develop professional governance.