

# A guide to effective remote education

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Alliance  
for Learning  
BRIGHT FUTURES EDUCATIONAL TRUST



Teacher training at  
**Culcheth Campus**  
in partnership with Alliance For Learning SCITT

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# Remote Education



As we find ourselves in these difficult and challenging circumstances that are resulting in us having to move our curriculum offer on online, it is important to consider how we can deliver a remote learning curriculum that is effective, efficient, comprehensive and ambitious. Ofsted (2021) have defined remote education as “a broad term encompassing any learning that happens outside of the classroom, with the teacher not present in the same location as the students.”

The DfE (2021, p47) stipulates that schools must “teach a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practised in each subject so that pupils can progress through the school’s curriculum”. The obvious challenge with this is that teachers have not been trained to deliver their curriculum through a screen. Since the first Covid-19 lockdown, schools have been forced to adapt their curriculum offer. Now we find ourselves in a second Covid-19 lockdown, schools have the benefit of hindsight in order to begin reflecting upon and improving what they do to ensure that students have the opportunity to engage with high quality remote education.

Of course, there are many factors that impact the engagement and progress of students during this process. In particular;

- Access to digital platforms at home.
- Sharing devices with many people within the household.
- A change in routines and expectations.
- Lack of face-to-face teacher interaction.

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Ofsted (2021) have outlined a number of common myths that are particularly relevant to remote education. These include:

- Remote education is fundamentally different to other forms of teaching/learning.
- Remote education is a different curriculum/offer to the content that would be delivered normally.
- The best forms of remote education are digital.

- The best way to deliver remote education is always through live lessons.
- The most important thing is pupils' engagement.

In response, Ofsted (2021) argue that:

*“Everything we know about what a quality curriculum looks like still applies to remote education. The remote education curriculum needs to be aligned to the classroom curriculum as much as possible. Our brains don't learn differently using remote education, so everything we know about cognitive science and learning still applies.”*



We don't have to make huge changes to the way we teach, but we must understand that we cannot control the external environment in which the student is part of. The principles of effective teaching and learning must be at the forefront of our remote education curriculum offer. As we adapt our teaching and learning materials, we must focus on the basics, ensuring that we do not offer too much new subject matter at once. To ensure curriculum delivery is effective (Ofsted, 2021), we must:

1. *Consider the most important knowledge or concepts pupils need to know. Focus on those.*
2. *Consider what alternatives exist for traditional practical activities. What can be done at home, or using simulations, for example? Worked examples and modelling can work very well in remote digital education.*
3. *In many cases, practising and a focus on developing existing knowledge and skills, such as handwriting or simple arithmetic, may be useful.*

Once again, in the face of adversity, we rise to the challenge! Although there is little robust evidence around what effective remote education looks like, we can be sure of a few things that we know are more likely to have a positive impact on student engagement and progress.

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The EEF (2020) published their Remote Learning Rapid Evidence Assessment that 'sought to find the best evidence behind the wide array of approaches that schools might choose to use' for their remote education offer.

The key findings from this review suggest that:

- Teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered.
- Ensuring access to technology is key, particularly for disadvantaged students.
- Peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes.
- Supporting students to work independently can support learning outcomes.
- Different approaches to remote learning suit different tasks and different contexts.

Most schools have opted for one of the below approaches:

- A full 'live' teaching offer – where all teachers deliver live lessons via a digital platform.
- An asynchronous mix of pre-recorded teacher-led lessons and live lessons.
- An instructional offer, where teachers provide instructions and resources for fully independent learning.



Of course, there are pros and cons to all of these approaches. Ofsted (2021) argue that a full Live offer is not necessarily the 'gold standard' and, whilst there are many benefits to live delivery, there are also many challenges. However, the principles of excellent teaching and learning should remain at the forefront of any remote education offer. The DfE (2021) stipulate that we should "consider how to transfer into remote education what we already know about effective teaching in the live classroom by..."

- Providing frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources.
- Providing opportunities for interactivity, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion.
- Providing scaffolded practice and opportunities to apply new knowledge.
- Enabling pupils to receive timely and frequent feedback on how to progress, using digitally facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate.
- Using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' needs and addresses any critical gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Avoiding an over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities.

# E ffective delivery of remote education

There is an abundance of research that we know enables us, as expert teachers, to do this effectively.

## Explanations

Explanations should be clear, concise and accessible to all students. Remember that you always teach a range of abilities within a class, regardless of whether you teach in sets of mixed ability classes. In the absence of being in the classroom, we only have limited opportunity to provide these explanations for students. Where possible we should

- Maintain high expectations and continue to use ambitious, subject specific language.
- Always explain the meaning of complex terminology.



- In the absence of live delivery, pre-recorded videos or voice notes are the most efficient way to provide clear and effective explanations which can help to eliminate lots of questions from students.
- Make use of appropriate examples, metaphors or analogies to support your explanation.
- If you are not able to produce a video or voice recording, ensure that your written instructions are explicit for each stage of the lesson and every activity you wish students to complete – *never assume that students will be able to understand what they need to do by uploading a simple worksheet or PowerPoint without context or instruction.*



## Questioning and interactivity

Rosenshine (2012) found that expert teachers spend more than half of their teaching time explaining new concepts and asking questions in order to check for understanding. In the absence of the classroom, this may feel almost impossible to achieve. It is probably easier to accept that no method outside of the classroom can be *as* effective as having the students in front of you. However, it is absolutely possible to apply many of the same strategies we would use in the classroom to remote education.

Rosenshine (2012) found that expert teachers asked a variety of questions to check for understanding. These include:



- Asking factual questions
- Asking students to elaborate on their answers
- Asking students to elaborate on other students' answers
- Asking students to defend or justify their own answers

Clearly, live lessons afford a greater deal of opportunity for asking real-time questions.

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However, teachers are reporting that students do not generally feel as confident offering verbal responses through the screen. Different approaches that have been found to be useful include:

- Allowing students to respond in the chat function during a live lesson.
- Making use of online forms/quizzes/surveys that provide instant feedback to your questions.
- Ensuring that activities include an element of comprehension where you ask students to provide written responses to questions.
- When providing a pre-recorded lesson, be available to answer questions immediately during the scheduled lesson slot via emails/chat/comments.



Interactivity is often the most difficult element to achieve during remote education and is entirely dependent upon the digital platforms at your and the students' disposal. However, it is thought that interactivity with the teacher and peers supports student engagement and improves student outcomes (EEF, 2020). Some ideas include:

- Engaging students through live delivery – this could be a full lesson, or part of the lesson to provide instructions and respond to questions.
- Use of digital forms such as Google/Microsoft forms that can be created as a quiz.
- Digital platforms such as Kahoot or Quizziz that can be played 'live' and provide instant feedback for both the teacher and the student.
- Using collaborative documents such as Google Docs where all students can offer ideas and suggestions at the same time.
- Providing timely feedback for students so that they know you 'see' them and value their effort and motivation to engage.
- Providing students with opportunities to reflect upon their learning, respond to feedback and improve their work.



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## Scaffolding



“Our working memory, the place where we process information, is small. It can only handle a few bits of information at once—too much information swamps our working memory. Presenting too much material at once may confuse students because their working memory will be unable to process it.” (Rosenshine, 2012).

This is particularly important when considering the impact of cognitive load on remote education. We must consider that every student will have a different home learning environments many will be working with other siblings who are also engaging with remote education, alongside parents who are working from home. This means that it is critical that we consider how to effectively scaffold teaching and learning materials to ensure successful student engagement and outcomes. Effective scaffolding for remote education might include:

- Providing models and worked examples – *this would be most effective if presented through screen share during a live lesson or pre-recorded video as this enables you, as the expert, to discuss the features of worked examples.*

- Making use of visualisers during live or pre-recorded lessons to allow you to provide verbal explanations to support the work.
- Ensuring that instructions are clear and explicit, including making clear reference to relevant slide numbers if using PowerPoint or digital slide programmes.
- Ensuring that all resources have been edited appropriately so that they do not include information or talks that could only be used in the classroom.
- Ensure that resources are kept as simple as possible, avoid overcrowding slides on PowerPoints etc.
- Provide excellence/success criteria and checklists to help students review the content and quality of their work.
- Anticipate student errors and misconceptions and warn them about these errors before they start their work.
- Provide students with very clear timings to complete a task.



### Feedback and Assessment

It is widely accepted that assessment and feedback is one of the most effective tools a teacher can use to support successful outcomes. However, feedback can be time consuming for the teacher and even more difficult to execute in the absence of providing live immediate verbal feedback during a classroom-based lesson. Some ideas for providing meaning and purposeful feedback, that does not inhibit teachers' workload too much include:

- Making use of self-marking digital quizzes that provide immediate feedback for students. These tools, once created, can be re-used over and over again which can be a huge time saver for teachers.
- Making use of whole class feedback – either by providing a populated template or discussing verbal feedback in a live / pre-recorded video lesson.
- Making use of matrix or rubrics which require the teacher to highlight areas of strength and development.
- Embedding regular self-assessment activities within all lessons.
- Use of voice notes that can be embedded within platforms such as Teams or Google Classroom (['Mote'](#) is one example that has proved to be a huge timesaver).
- Ensuring that students are given dedicated time to review their feedback and respond appropriately.



Some ideas for providing meaningful assessment opportunities include:

- Providing regular opportunities for retrieval practice at different points of the lesson including:
  - Low stakes quizzes
  - Elaboration practice (providing key words/concepts/facts and asking students to elaborate upon them)
  - ‘Last lesson, last week, last month’ style activities
- Making use of self-marking digital quizzes that provide immediate feedback for students. These tools, once created, can be re-used over and over again.
- Assessing students understanding through questioning during live lessons.
- Assessing students understanding through the chat/poll/Q&A function in Google Meet.
- Providing written assessments, along with excellence/success criteria that you will provide feedback on, giving students dedicated time to review their feedback and respond appropriately.

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### The impact on online learning & health



We know too much screen time and sedentary behaviour is not good for health and wellbeing.

Evidence suggests that long periods of sitting down will have an adverse effect on a child’s ability to concentrate, engage and perform learning tasks with just a short bout of 5 mins of physical activity increasing brain function by 10%”

We know that lessons that incorporate some basic physical movement improves students attainment in those lessons and beyond (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2019/oct/physical-activity-lessons-improves-students-attainment>) so to mitigate against any potential harm try and weave the following into your online learning provision:



- Break up lessons with short bursts of physical activity (e.g. 30 star jumps, running on the spot, 10 press ups).
- Perhaps finish lessons 5/10 mins early and ask students to walk around their house, or room or garden.
- At the end of lessons, remind students to take breaks outside in the fresh air.
- Recommend to students that they can take part in lessons by standing up.

If students are reporting headaches, remind them to drink water regularly and to take regular breaks from their screens.

# Useful links

## [Mote extension for Google Chrome](#)

A useful tool that allows voice notes to be left on students work through Teams/Google Classroom.

## [Dualless - Split Screen in Chrome](#)

A tool that allows you to split your screen so that you can share from one side and see your live tutorial on the other side of the screen.

## [Well Schools](#)

A range of resources and support for maintaining wellbeing at home in this free-to-access community

## [Youth Sport Trust](#)

A range of free downloads of activities and active learning examples that can be incorporated into home schooling schedules and maintain PE and sport during lockdown

## [Google Quiz](#)

This allows you to create self-marking quizzes that can be reused over and over again.

## [Kahoot](#)

An interactive quiz tool that contains many pre-made quizzes suitable for all subjects.

## [Seneca Learn](#)

A free, evidence based, interactive learning platform that provides videos and resources for all subjects across all phases. This platform also contains a wealth of free teacher CPD modules.

## [Vocaroo](#)

A free, online voice recorder.

## [Screencastify](#)

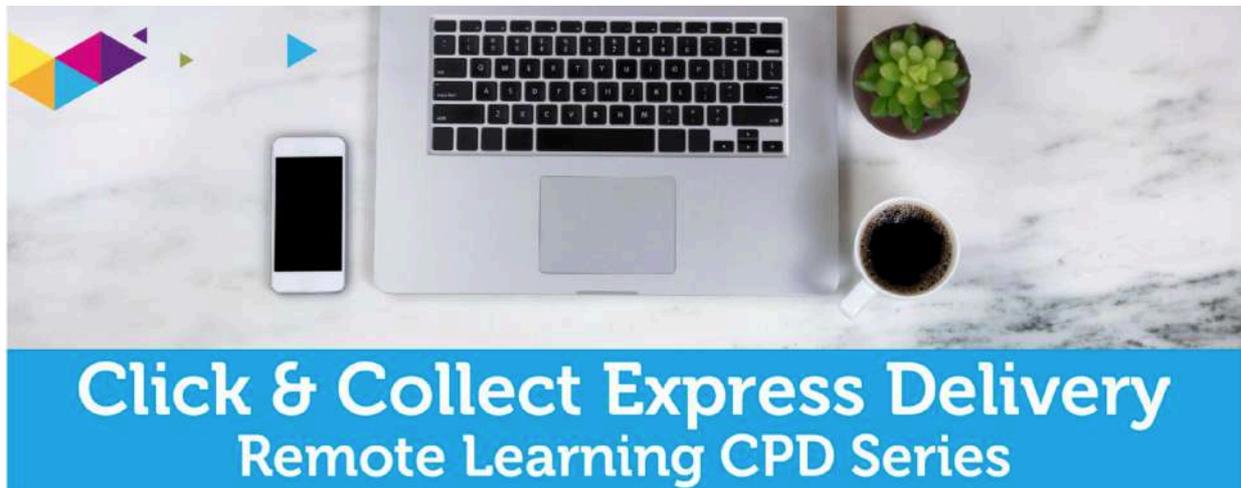
A free screen recording tool to support pre-recorded videos.

## [Wakelet](#)

A collection of resources to help teachers with planning and preparing for online live lessons.

[Click & Collect](#)

A range of free online CPD on a range of topics. Click the link above to see what is available and secure your place.



[CPD Programme with The Alliance for Learning Teaching School](#)

A wide range of CPD courses offered throughout the year.



# R eferences

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