The Damara School

Specialist SEMH Independent School

Remote Learning Policy

Approved by: Trust Board

Initial Ratification: October 2020   Reviewed: Mar 21, Oct 21, Feb 22, Sep 22, Sep 23, Sep 24

Next review due by: September 2026

Rationale

In the event of a school closure, the school is committed to providing continuity of education to its pupils and will do so through a process of remote (online) learning. Extensive remote learning would apply particularly in a situation in which the school is closed for an extended period of time, but a high proportion of pupils and teachers are healthy, and able to work as normal from home.

This policy does not normally apply in the event of short-term school closures (e.g. as a result of inclement weather) or a short-term pupil absence.

Remote learning may also be appropriate in situations when pupils, in agreement with the school, have a period of absence but are able to work at home, at least to some extent. This may apply in cases such as exclusion from school, or longer-term illness, assuming pupils are able to complete schoolwork at home.

Another relevant instance would be if, following an infectious disease outbreak, pupils are self-isolating at home but are not suffering with relevant symptoms.

There is no obligation for the school to provide continuity of education to pupils who absent themselves from school, with or without parental permission, in contravention to school or government guidance. This may apply, for example, if parents choose to take pupils on holiday during term time. Similarly, this would apply if parents made the decision, without prior agreement with the school, to absent their child from school 'as a precaution', against official guidance, in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease.

The extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning, owing to widespread illness, for example.

This policy is for the whole school and is managed by Mrs. J Cox.

Remote learning for individual pupils

Assuming an absence has been agreed with the school, and the pupil in question is healthy enough to work from home, the school will provide work for pupils who are unable to attend in person. If this occurs for an individual pupil, the collation of work and communication with the parent will be coordinated by the pupil's form tutor.

The pupil's subject teachers will use a specially set up Google classroom page to make work available to the pupil. If there are any issues with the compilation of work, tutors should liaise the Head of School or subject leader (particularly if a classroom teacher is unavailable).

Though every case will have its own specifics, a rough guideline for the frequency of communication between school and parents would be once per week. Work will only be provided to pupils in this way if there is an agreed absence lasting more than three working days.

If a significant number of pupils are absent from school, but the school remains open, the Head of School will decide whether the method of remote learning operated will take the form outlined here, or as outlined below.

Remote learning in the event of extended school closure

In the event of an extended school closure, the school will provide continuity of education in the following ways:

a) Regular direct instruction from teachers, with the ability of pupils to ask questions online (via Teams)

b) The setting of work that pupils complete, written responses (if relevant) completed electronically

c) The assessment of specific assignments that are submitted to teachers electronically and on which feedback is provided.

Pupils and teachers are expected to have access to the internet whilst at home; the school recognises that many families may not have home printers and will therefore not require the printing of material. The primary platforms the school will use to deliver continuity of education are:

- Google classroom accessed via the relevant app or the 'waffle' (9 dots) on any google search page

- Microsoft Teams/onedrive: accessed via the relevant app or desktop application, or via the following URL: https://teams.microsoft.com or www.onedrive.com

Access to these platforms is via a pupil's normal school login; if pupils have difficulty with logging in, they should contact their form tutor who will liaise with the Network Administrator.

The extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning. For shorter closures, for example, teachers may set work on Google classroom for submission in person once the school has reopened.

For longer closures, teachers would make more use of live sessions (see specific guidance below and appendix) and electronic assessment. The school reserves the right to vary the range of methods used to provide remote learning tasks, feedback and interaction, based on the particular circumstances of any closure and based on our experience.

The setting of tasks (using Microsoft Teams)

Subject areas will provide work broadly in line with pupils' timetables through the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Tasks will be set in accordance with existing schemes of work, and tasks will be designed to allow pupils to progress through schemes of work at the same pace as if they were in school, where possible. Naturally, remote learning will require pupils and teachers to take a different approach to working through content, but tasks should ensure the pace of content coverage is as close as possible to in-school teaching, and ensure pupils do not fall behind. The nature of tasks set should allow pupils to learn independently, without the specific support of an adult at home.

Unless there is a good reason not to, tasks will be set for individual classes. The type of task set will vary between subjects, but examples of appropriate tasks might include:

- Reading and noting new material from a common subject area textbook or electronic resource

- Working through subject-specific presentations or worksheets provided by the subject area

- Watching a relevant video resource and making notes on it

- Completing a listening exercise (e.g. in languages)

- Written responses to prompt questions, essay plans etc.

- Completion of practice questions or past papers, particularly for those in examination years

- Working through relevant exercises offered by external providers (e.g. Seneca Learning, Hegarty Maths, MyMaths)

Teachers will set tasks through the tasks function on Microsoft Teams and it is the responsibility of teachers and pupils to ensure they know how to use this functionality effectively (instructions are made available separately). Teachers should include line managers as co-owners of tasks to allow them to monitor and support as required.

Live sessions

Academic subject areas may also arrange for teaching teachers to deliver content in a 'live' manner (either by text or audio and/or visual means). There is no expectation of teachers to carry out live sessions.

Microsoft Teams/onedrive and Google Meet are platforms that allow for resources to be shared, teachers to provide exposition, and pupils to ask questions in 'real-time'. Pupils will be provided with details of the sessions and will be expected to participate in them if they are asked and able to. Live sessions can be particularly helpful as they can facilitate contemporaneous communication, with pupils able to respond to teachers' questions (and ask them) via the conversation functionality in teams and meet.

In a live session, there is no need for teachers or pupils to broadcast audio or video, as the text (conversation) function is adequate. Teachers who wish to use the audio/video functions must follow school protocols and inform Mrs. J Cox in advance of setting up sessions (see also Appendix below).

Assessment

Providing timely and helpful feedback is a cornerstone of good teaching and learning, and whilst this may be more challenging with remote learning, teachers will endeavour to provide regular feedback to pupils on pieces of work that they are required to submit. Under normal circumstances, not all pieces of work are formally assessed by teachers and this would continue to be the case should the school employ remote learning.

Assessed work will be set using via the <mark>google classroom tasks</mark> function, regardless of how pupils' work is eventually submitted (e.g. by google classroom or onedrive), with clear due dates given to pupils for completion, thereby helping pupils to organise their time. The tasks function on Zoom also allows pupils to submit work to the teacher before a task can be signed off. Pupils and teachers should keep accurate records of all work completed, submitted and assessed.

Given the nature of the tasks, the type of feedback teachers can provide may not have the same format as marking an exercise book. Teachers are encouraged to ensure, when they set assessed work, that it is designed in such a way that meaningful feedback may be provided.

Possible methods may include:

- Providing whole class feedback rather than feedback on individual pieces of work – this is an effective way of providing feedback, supported by findings from educational research
- Using the "Comments" function on online documents on google or microsoft
- Providing feedback directly in the tasks function on Microsoft Teams
- Sending a direct email to pupils with specific feedback / targets
- Feedback via another website / piece of software (e.g. onenote, Seneca Learning, My Maths)
- Recording oral feedback and sharing an audio file with the pupil

Additional functionality is available is in Microsoft Teams and google classroom or onenote, if teachers want to create assignments for pupils to complete. These might include, for example, the creation of a tailor-made quiz (containing either multiple choice or extended answers) and teachers are able to use assignments to give feedback within Microsoft Teams.

Expectations of pupils

Assuming that a pupil is healthy and well enough to work, pupils will be expected to participate as fully as possible in the remote learning process, attending relevant live sessions, completing independent work, and submitting assessed tasks promptly and to the best of their ability. Pupils will also be expected to read and respond to communication from the school (e.g. an email from a form tutor) on a regular basis.

In the event of an extended school closure, teachers will continue to deliver content in line with existing schemes of work once the school is reopened; if any pupil misses significant parts of the content, they will be able to view material posted online and the school will give consideration to the practicalities of helping pupils to catch up once the school reopens.

Pupils should ensure that, in addition to completing the tasks promptly, they should complete any administrative tasks that allow the school to monitor their progress. For example, where tasks are set using Microsoft Teams, then they should mark tasks as "done" so teachers can monitor their progress. If pupils or parents have any questions about the nature of specific tasks set, these should be directed towards the relevant subject area. If there are questions about a pupil's overall workload (e.g. a pupil feels they are overwhelmed or falling behind), these should be directed to the pupil's form tutor.

Teachers must work on the assumption that pupils will not necessarily have the full range of books and equipment that they would usually have in school. However, if advance notice is possible, teachers will instruct pupils to take relevant equipment from their lockers home, or for parents to ensure they have duplicates. The school does not expect pupils to have access to any specialist equipment that would usually be provided by the school (e.g. science or art). Teachers should ensure they are able to scan or upload

photos of important resources in case pupils do not have access to them at home. Online textbooks are helpful in this regard and many subjects are now moving over to these.

The school expects that parents have internet access at home to access remote learning resources, but teachers will make no presumption of the pupil's ability to print at home.

Expectations of teachers (and subject areas)

Teachers should ensure they have effective internet and a phone connectivity at home. If this is not available for any reason, teachers can request a school device. If there are IT related issues while remote working, teachers can contact Mrs. J Cox.

The setting and assessment of remote learning tasks will take place in accordance with school and subject area policies. Under normal circumstances, subject areas take different approaches to the setting and assessment of pupils' work – for example, the frequency of substantive task set, and the regularity of written assessment provided – and subject area policies will be applied in the event of remote learning.

In order that we are providing a consistent approach, teachers are responsible for overseeing the nature and frequency of tasks set and assessed within their subject areas. All teachers should pay due care to the nature of tasks set, so that pupils have a range of activities to complete at home and are not exclusively working on a screen. The Head of School and subject leaders will monitor this and should be included in the tasks set in Microsoft Teams as a co-teacher.

Teachers are responsible for providing constructive feedback to their pupils in a timely manner. Subject leaders are responsible for overseeing the form and regularity of feedback and will liaise with Mrs. J Cox to ensure consistency.

In the event a teacher is unwell during a period of remote learning, it becomes the responsibility of the line manager to ensure work is set to her/his classes. Note that illness in these cases will treated as normal and recorded with back to work discussions conducted remotely if required.

Subject areas are expected to:

- Plan and deliver 'live sessions' where appropriate

- Respond to reasonable amounts of communication from pupils, parents and teachers

- Plan and set tasks for their pupils using the tasks functionality in Microsoft Teams

- Be able to set and mark assessed work promptly, in line with school and subject area policies, returning it to pupils electronically (or after the period of remote working for written and project work)

Teachers should be available to contact parents if needed, by email or phone (when phoning from personal devices, dialing 141 before the number will ensure the teacher's own number is kept anonymous). If contact is deemed excessive the line manager will be able to support and, if necessary, escalate to SLT.

If parents ask for additional work beyond that set as part of the requirements above, subject areas should have a bank of general resources available in Microsoft Teams, such as interactive websites and support activities, and point pupils and parents in that direction.

In order to ensure teachers are able to perform the minimum expectations outlined above; the school will provide a range of training opportunities that teachers should access to before any planned school closure. Teachers should ensure that they have looked through specific instructions, watched walkthroughs, and attended teacher training sessions. If teachers require support with any aspects of remote learning, they are encouraged to consult their line managers or Mrs. J Cox.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, teachers will be expected to be contactable remotely by colleagues, pupils and parents. Teachers also should ensure their communication with pupils does not encourage unhelpful work habits. All communication should take place during usual office hours, with no expectation for colleagues to read or respond to emails after 4pm, although responses should be made to electronic messages within one working day in normal practice. For those who are on part-time contracts, communication is expected only on the days on which they would usually work.

Communication must always occur via official school channels, and not through personal accounts or other websites. Permitted methods are (please also see appendix regarding live links and flipped learning):

- Email using school email addresses only (both teachers and pupil)

- Microsoft Teams

- Google classroom (docs/sheets etc.)

Support for pupils with SEND, EAL and other specific learning enhancement needs

Teachers should ensure that work is differentiated as required for all learners when setting online tasks. In addition, the SENCO will maintain contact with pupils on their lists requiring regular support, by email or phone with parents/pupils and feed back to teachers using CPOMS if required.

Pastoral care during a school closure

In event of a school closure, the primary responsibility for the pastoral care of a pupil rests with their parents/guardians. However, form tutors should check in regularly with their tutees to monitor both academic progress and their general wellbeing. Form tutors will be expected to pass on feedback to SLT, particularly if there are concerns or a lack of communication.

Safeguarding during a school closure

In the event of a school closure, pupils, parents and teachers are reminded that the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy still applies to all interactions between pupils and teachers. In that policy, there are specifically prohibited behaviours and reporting obligations to which teachers must adhere, whether they are at home, in the community or at school.

6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every year while COVID 19 remains a concern. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

7. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Behaviour policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy and
- Coronavirus addendum to key policies
- Data protection policy and privacy notices
- Home-school agreement
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy

Appendix - remote working, flipped classroom, GDPR and safe working practice

Please note that any remote working methods should adhere to GDPR guidelines. In most cases remote working via shared documents and the tasks function on Microsoft Teams will give you plenty of flexibility. However, you must use your school account (google classroom / microsoft teams / outlook etc.) and if you are using flipped learning techniques, uploading videos to Microsoft teams or video conferencing, please ensure your background is blurred or neutral.

Instructions for setting up video conferencing and live links are available in the remote working folder in the information for staff team. Live video links can be particularly useful for staff meetings or small groups. It is possible to record meetings in both google meet and microsoft teams and this is required, both for possible future reuse and to demonstrate safe working practice if needed. Pupils can also be prevented from recording the sessions and this function must also be selected.

Before attempting any audio/video live links teachers must speak to SLT via live text (e.g. conversations in teams) does not require specific permission, however, and can be a good way to keep in touch with classes. Teachers must not set up or join social media groups for school use with pupils (such as WhatsApp etc.).

If you need to use any apps or materials that fall outside the school network, please ensure you have discussed with your line manager. Any possible GDPR queries should be resolved using the GDPR check.