

Use of Online Teaching Methods and School Closures: Issues to Consider



The Covid 19 pandemic and closure of schools for a prolonged period of time means that staff will need to adjust their current practice to include teaching and interacting with young people online. One way this may be achieved by all schools within Northern Ireland is through the C2K network which provides a range of online learning tools.

By using these online tools for learning teachers are able to set up activities that fit in with the planned learning for their pupils with some activities involving:

- Using Cloud tools to store organise, complete, share and submit work
- Using discussions for pupil opinions and exploring ideas
- Using online functions such as commenting to leave feedback (peer evaluation)
- Collaborating on a shared document for example (presentations, research projects)
- Sharing work within a platform
- Video conferencing and “Virtual Classrooms” (video conferencing with tools that mimic physical classroom practice - raising hands, polling etc)
- Sharing materials-e.g. work such as images or written activities to a wider audience
- Accessing content and fun activities - C2K Newsdesk

These tools are accessible on a wide range of devices ranging from smart phones, tablets, laptops and PCs. Schools can select the tools that are most appropriate for their pupils’ context.

This paper is to support schools and teachers in transitioning their current resources into the new context. It is important to note that communication with pupils and how this is conducted is a matter for individual schools. Schools will already have Acceptable Use Policies in place and any new arrangements should be in line with your school’s policy. Every school will have different arrangements in place for this time; please identify what is appropriate for your own school and teaching context.

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It may be useful for schools to consider the following steps when considering the use of online tools. Irrespective of which platform is used for communication with pupils/parents, the central focus is supporting pupils.

- Online teaching is an extension of the classroom and should be covered by the school Acceptable Use Policy. All principles outlined by the Acceptable Use Policy will apply to all online teaching activity.
- Staff should avoid the use of personal mobile phones. In the limited circumstances where staff need to contact a pupil by phone, this should be agreed by the principal or direct line manager.
- Staff should use only their school email accounts such as C2k and should avoid using personal accounts if contacting children or their parents.
- Staff should be aware that in the interaction with young people all conventional professional teaching norms and standards will apply to online learning with children. Consider using camera-free conferencing, where the focus is on the content rather than the webcam images. Using the C2K platforms, teachers are able to maintain full control of the audio and video content and what is shared on the platform.
- Schools should consider carefully whether it is appropriate/necessary to use both the children's Christian and surnames when posting photographs on social media platforms.
- Staff should avoid using social media to communicate with children.
- Should staff have any concerns about what they see or hear online, this should be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Team for the centre or Designated Teacher in School, in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Additional Resources to support online safety

There is a Fronter Online Safety room that has access to a range of information and resources for schools and teachers that can support online safety.



Safer Internet Within MySchool, Fronter.

Contact with Families

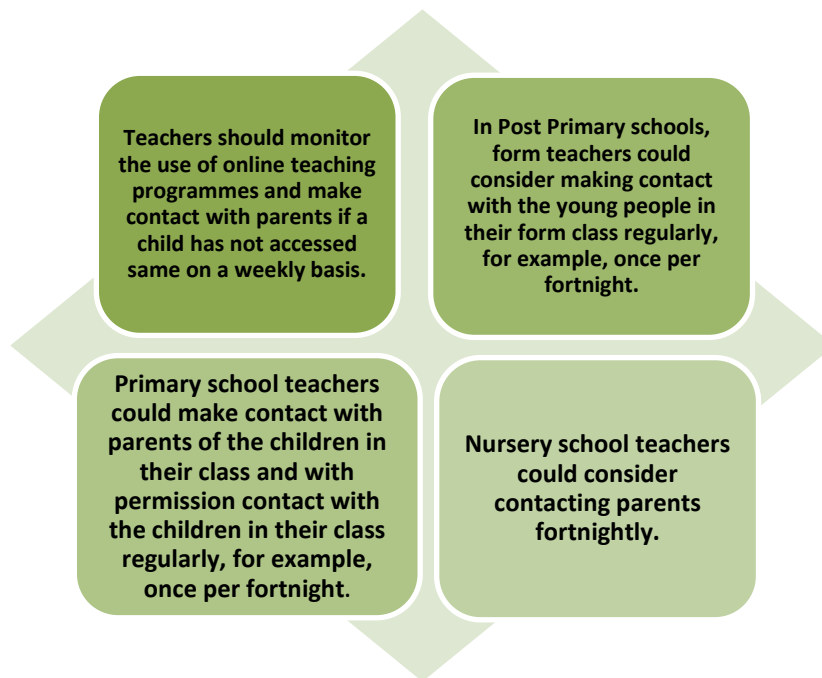


Some schools already have plans in place to allow for regular contact with children and young people, particularly those they have been supporting pastorally. This is hugely important.

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The purpose of this contact is to check in with parents, children and young people on the child or young person's emotional health and well-being, educational needs and to provide feedback on any work completed. Children and Young People will return to school, making individual contact from their school worthwhile and could mitigate against any anxiety or worry about returning. This will also allow the child, young person and family to know the school community cares about them individually. This activity is naturally aligned with your school's Pastoral Care policy and should reflect the importance of the well-being of the child as paramount within all learning contexts.

Multi-Agency Working



School and EA staff have already made contact with other agencies involved in children and young people's lives to share contact details to allow other professionals to keep in touch. During closures School and EA staff will continue to be involved in multi-disciplinary meetings including Child Protection Case Conferences, Looked After Children Reviews and Family Support Meetings. The views and assessment of those staff who know the children and young people are crucial in the decisions made at these forums. Designated Safeguarding Staff should attend, if not physically, then virtually via teleconferencing or skype. If this is not possible a report should be sent to the conference and shared with parents prior to the meeting.

The EA Child Protection Support Service will continue to be available by telephone to give advice and guidance as needed in relation to any safeguarding concerns that arise during online interaction with children or young people.

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CPSS Helpline: 028 95985590

Other EA Support Services

Intercultural Education Service Help Desk
028 9448 2210

Children Looked After in Education Project
028 70511086
lookedafterchildre@eani.org.uk

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