

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 find new ways of teaching and interacting with young people. One way this may be achieved is through on line SKYPE/App type interactions/ C2k online.

The physical hardware may or may not exist to do this, or be developed as a way to keep in touch with young people. This paper is designed to provide staff with good practice prompts should online technology facilitate discussion with young people or delivery on individual lesson plans. We could have a situation where staff themselves are working from home or more likely a closed school or EOTAS setting. The decision to contact children in this way should be agreed with the school or centre management and as part of a pupil plan. It may be that the same objectives could be achieved by telephone contact though the principles below could be applied:

- Staff should ensure that where online methods are used to conduct lessons, proper consent is obtained from parents, this could be obtained by e mail. Staff should avoid the use of personal mobile phones, rather EA or school approved equipment. Should staff need to use their own mobile phone this needs to be agreed by the principal or direct line manager and should be recorded. Staff should additionally only use school email accounts such as c2k and not any personal account if contacting children or their parents.
- Young people should be encouraged to take online contacts in more public rooms in their accommodation.
- Staff should be aware that in the interaction with young people all normal professional teaching norms and standards will apply to streaming and on line contact with children. This includes dress codes, use of professional language, and standards of behaviour. Similarly children and young people should be encouraged not attend online lessons in pyjamas or sleep wear.
- Computer technology should be located in a public space in the school/ EOTAS establishment and be part of an agreed processes to work with young people by the staff and management.

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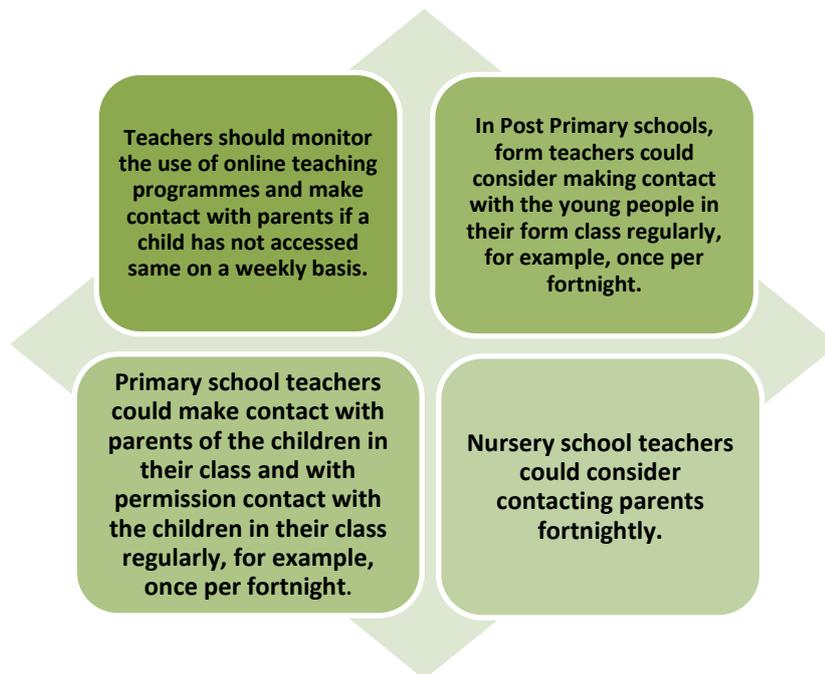


- Staff should be aware of general online guidance from such bodies as the NSPCC: see: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/online-safety-for-organisations-and-groups/>
- Parents and carers should be encouraged to be part of online discussions and included in lesson plans with their children, where possible.
- Staff should only use online methods for short periods of time for checking in and setting wider goals and as part of an individual education plan for the young person.
- Should staff have any concerns about what they see or hear on line - given they may be seeing houses and living standards where young people live - this should be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Team for the centre or Designated Teacher in School.

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.



The purpose of this contact, that can be via skype, telephone call or face to face 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.

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Education Authority

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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.



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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