

The new [Guidance from the DFE on Remote Education](#) was published on Thursday 7 January. I thought it was easiest to summarise the new guidance through a series of q and a, in some cases responding directly to questions that we have already received:

Q: Is it true that the government now says you have to offer five hours of 'live lessons' each day?

A: No. The material that is produced on Google Classroom each day should take more than five hours to complete, so if your child is completing it much more quickly please contact their tutor or Head of Year as a matter of urgency. What DFE have actually said is that lessons should include 'both recorded or live teaching time'. As I pointed out last week, our lessons in each subject each week do include significant 'live elements' involving for example direct interaction with a teacher through a variety of methods, whether it be talking over a PowerPoint and explaining the work, a video of a teacher completing an exercise and offering an explanation, or having a live document open and interacting with students in real time whilst it is completed. Recorded material is also used from a variety of national and international sources, including the government's own Oak National Academy which supports best practice in online learning

Q: Why not just offer five hours of live lessons each day?

A: As I set out in our Remote Learning Policy, what we are doing more accurately mirrors real teaching. DFE goes on to say that teaching should include 'time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently' and this is what we do alongside a wide variety of other teaching methods (research, discussion, interaction with others in the class or tutor group, etc) I would have been furious if any of my children had just received five hours of passive lectures whilst attending LSS (I am pleased to say they never did!) and if that is the quality of education I expect for my children, then I expect exactly for your child as well.

Q: What should I do if what you describe does not match what my child is receiving?

A: Contact us as a matter of urgency, via your son's form tutor, since this suggests that we work we are spending so much time preparing and delivering is either not being accessed or not being completed as it should.

Q: What else does the updated DFE policy say?

A: Here are the key points in addition to those already discussed:

Students should receive at least five hours per day, more for Y11 and 13: This is the case for every student and work should be completed in real time, following the existing school timetable. Homework continues to be set, and lessons also include extension activities. As mentioned above, if your experience is different, please contact us and we will address the issue with your child.

Teach a planned and well sequenced curriculum: We do this since lessons follow the existing school day and timetable and the school's detailed and well thought through curriculum continues to be followed.

Select a platform for remote education that will be used consistently: We do this by using Google Classroom. We never just email work to your son or daughter. I would very strongly urge you to look at the work that is being set in Google Classroom - something that I and my colleagues in the senior leadership team do on a daily basis.

Set meaningful and ambitious work: That is the case and a further illustration of why we are not simply asking students to sit in front of a screen and listen each day - for learning to be meaningful and

ambitious it needs to be varied and challenging (please see my First Word article last term on the climbing wall).

Remote education should build in best practice from face to face teaching including frequent clear explanations of new content, provide opportunities for interactivity and discussion, provide practice and opportunities to apply knowledge, enable pupils to receive timely and frequent feedback: I strongly agree with all of this and would repeat once again that this is why we have taken the approach that we have. Our remote learning offers all of this including regular feedback. If you have any concerns about the feedback or cannot find it, please contact your child's tutor.

Assessment should be used to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' needs and address gaps: Our existing marking and assessment policy remains unaltered, with homework and extension tasks being set and assessment information being sent home as per the existing school calendar.

Make provision for those who have difficulty engaging in remote education: We have done this. However, if your child is encountering problems please contact us immediately and we will address the issue immediately.

Have systems for checking daily whether pupils are engaging with their work: This is done through class teachers, subject leaders and tutors. Tutors will be contacting students regularly for a telephone discussion to monitor their progress. Heads of House will also begin contacting families to discuss any issues that have arisen.

Identify a senior leader with overarching responsibility: Ms Temple has oversight of teaching and learning within the school and so will continue to undertake this role.

Publish information on their website about their remote learning provision: Please do look at our policy on the website and the extremely detailed drawing together of the many articles and letters that I have written explaining our approach to the issue.

Keeping children safe online is essential: If you have any concerns at any point about online safety, or indeed any other safeguarding issue, please contact Mr Chislett who is our lead Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Q: My biggest concern is that my child stays in bed and refuses to get up to start lessons at 8.50

A: All pupils, whether they are 11 or 18, should continue to follow the normal school timetable. If this continues to be a problem, please contact your child's tutor and we will seek to help you in addressing the issue.

Q: So just to be clear, are you really saying that the remote education LSS is offering is better than five hours of 'live lessons' each day

A: Yes. Live lessons might look better but what we are offering provides a higher quality educational diet which prioritises learning and progress, rather than just passively sitting students in front of a screen each day. It meets and actually goes beyond the DFE guidelines and takes account of national and international research into best practice in remote education. I recommend looking at the OECD's 'Global Teaching Insights' website (<https://www.globalteachinginsights.org>) which draws together worldwide best practice in live and remote education and which through my role with the International Confederation of Principals I have played a part in promoting. Best practice in remote education is a topic very close to my heart.

Q: But haven't Ofsted have told all schools that they must deliver remote education through live lessons?

A: No. Ofsted's view of remote education is like ours- they emphasise the need for a balanced approach that employs a variety of learning strategies. Below is an extract from their 2021 report 'What's working well in remote education':

Some common myths about remote education

Some unhelpful myths exist about remote education, which are not based on evidence.

These include that:

- ***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***

None of these things are necessarily true

Appendix: The climbing wall of learning (First published in Weekly Word 4 December 2020)

I seem to be writing more and more about my international experience in these columns. Perhaps that is not surprising, since In January 2022 (one year later than advertised owing to the impact of the pandemic) I will take over as President of the International Confederation of Principals. More broadly, I think one of the impacts of Covid 19 has been the realisation that we are all interdependent and that as the world emerges from a terrible set of experiences in 2020 we all need to value and learn from one another, wherever we happen to find ourselves.

Hence I thought I would share with you some thoughts from Pak Tee NG, one of the leaders of the Singapore National Institute of Education (NIE). I attended his virtual seminar on wellbeing and engagement last week as part of my ICP role.

He began by showing the picture below of two students climbing. He asked if we thought the students were engaged by what they were doing (you may wish to pause to consider how you would answer):



The general view of those attending was that yes, they were engaged. He then went on to discuss some of the features of the climb that the student were undertaking- it was difficult, involved a considerable amount of challenge and success was not guaranteed. Despite all of this, the students were fully absorbed by the activity.

He then posed the question: why make them climb? Wouldn't the students thank you if instead of doing this you built them a lift so they could get to the top more quickly and easily?

Finally, he revealed the whole picture and asked for our response (again, you may wish to consider yours):



The general interpretation was that one student had reached the top and was now encouraging the other two climbers to do the same. He pointed out that the task of getting to the top was engaging and something that others were spurred on to achieve precisely because it involved difficulty and challenge. For this reason if students were instead offered a lift to the top it would not be welcome, since the level of challenge was a key part of what made the activity worthwhile.

Pak Tee NG's conclusion, that we best support students in their learning not by making things easy or quick, but by providing opportunity and challenge, seemed to me to chime in very well with the values of our *Sheriff Learner* project. Our focus upon the need to develop resilience and a willingness not to be concerned about getting things wrong is borne out by what Pak Tee NG called *this global metaphor for learning*. His metaphor is also a powerful reminder of our oft repeated point in recent months that learning should not be a matter of passive listening, but should instead centre upon active engagement, high levels of challenge and a focus upon active problem solving.