BLENDED LEARNING POLICY

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Review date: **September 2022**
Next review: **September 2024**

A. Introduction

We aim to provide high quality education for the children at Alton School, whatever the circumstances. As a result, the School will continue to take advantage of what we learned through COVID and operate a blended learning system. Nonetheless, we feel strongly that children should be learning at school wherever possible and we have learned that blended learning does have an impact upon staff and the live classroom. It is, therefore, important that we clarify the exceptional circumstances in which this is applied.

Remote learning was originally conceived during the COVID pandemic as a means of continuing our education when the School buildings had to remain closed or where very few children were able to be onsite.

Blended learning was then designed for the situation that followed: to cater for children who are isolating at home but are feeling well enough to continue with their learning. While we now seem to be moving beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be circumstances where increased infections require us to isolate non-symptomatic children.

Likewise, there may be other circumstances – such as a debilitating injury or exceptional absence beyond a family's control - where the School and parents feel that a child ought to access this system. These are expected to be more exceptional circumstances and this is not intended for short absences or periods of ill health.

B. Research Evidence

There is an emerging body of research into "blended learning", a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching. This new approach to teaching and learning has grown exponentially due to widespread school closure. The evidence of what works is clear and strengthening. The EEF have identified the following key areas to consider for successful blended learning provision.

> 1. Teaching quality is more important than how teaching is delivered.

Providing that the established principles for introducing new knowledge are adhered to (explanation, scaffolding, feedback) then there is no difference between the effectiveness of real time remote lessons or pre-recorded material. What matters most is that each learning sequence builds on prior understanding.

> 2. Ensuring access to technology is key.

Lack of access to appropriate technology is a barrier to effective participation in remote learning. We need to be aware of pupils who may have less access than others and require extra provision/ support.

> 3. Peer interaction provides motivation and improves learning outcomes.

Peer marking, modelling and sharing of work, as well as live discussion are all useful strategies to motivate and help progress whilst engaging learners.

> 4. Supporting pupils to work independently can improve learning outcomes.

Using metacognitive approaches to encourage reflection and promote deliberate practice helps learners engage more effectively but also reminds them of key learning and thinking skills.

5. Different approaches to remote learning suit different types of content and pupils.

Teachers will be supported to reflect on different approaches to remote learning and what will be most effective to deliver their subject content through ongoing CPD and coaching.

C. Defining Remote Provision

We recognise that personal contact with our pupils is key to maintaining motivation and engagement, as well as sustaining fruitful relationships, both teacher/pupil, peer to peer and with parents. We also recognise that when providing remote learning variety is key. The research is clear that pupils should be facilitated to engage in a variety of remote learning activities, including direct instruction, real time lessons, recorded sequences, quizzes, formal assessments, discussion forums and online material (including those set on Microsoft Teams, our virtual learning platform in the Senior School). We also consider ongoing pastoral support to be central to ensuring our pupils remain linked to the Alton community. This occurs through a variety of contact with Form Tutors/Directors of Schools and remote assemblies.

The government has specified minimum expectations for remote provision:

• set assignments so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects, including new material - planning a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school

• 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

• gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum using questions and other suitable tasks, and set a clear expectation on how regularly teachers will check work

• enable teachers to adjust the pace or difficulty of what is being taught in response to questions or assessments including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations to ensure pupils' understanding

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#res

D. Specific approaches for different scenarios where blended learning may be required

1. Teacher absence due to isolation.

Staff member will be expected to teach and set work via Microsoft Teams providing they are well enough. Return to work procedures to be followed in liaison with the Bursar. As circumstances dictate and if the teacher remains well, then they should continue to deliver lessons remotely to their classes and set work via Microsoft Teams. If they are a form tutor they will be expected to check in remotely with their tutor group. They will continue to assess work online. This will take immediate effect after the teacher goes into isolation and will continue for the duration of the time they are physically absent from school, providing they are well.

If they are unwell and unable to work, cover would be set by their Head of Department (HOD).

2. Remote learning for individual students (case by case basis)

Assuming an extended absence has been agreed with the school, such as a student shielding or due to mental health concerns, and the student in question is healthy enough to work from home, the school will provide work for students who are unable to attend in person. If this occurs for an individual student, the collation of work and communication with the parent will be coordinated by the student's Form/Class Teacher. The student's subject teachers will use Microsoft Teams in the first instance to set work. If there are any issues with the compilation of work, Form/Class Teachers should liaise with the relevant subject teacher. This will take effect from the next day, 24 hours after school has been notified of the absence.

Pupils who are unwell need to focus on getting better and the School will help them to catch on any work they have missed when they return fit and well.

3. Remote learning for larger groups (bubble closure or year group isolation)

If a bubble is required to isolate, then their timetable will be delivered online in the same model as during a full lockdown. This could (as per EEF research) take a number of formats; real time, pre-recorded, assessments etc. Pupils will receive feedback via Microsoft Teams. Teachers will expect to deliver lessons according to their school timetable.

4. Remote learning in the event of extended school closure

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

a) Regular direct or indirect instruction from subject teachers, with the ability for students to ask questions online via MS Teams in line with the planned curriculum.

b) The setting of work for students to complete; written responses (if relevant) completed electronically

Students and teachers are expected to have access to the internet whilst at home and support will be given where possible to ensure students have suitable access and device. The primary platforms the school will use to deliver continuity of education are:

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

Satchel One SMHW: Teachers will use SMHW to direct students to where they may find the work to be completed.

Access to these platforms is via a student's normal school login. If students have difficulty with logging in, they should contact the school's IT support.

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 students and teachers to participate in remote learning. For shorter closures, for example, teachers may set work on SMHW for submission in person once the school has reopened. For longer closures, teachers would make more use of live, recorded lessons and independent learning. 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.

Pastoral care during a school closure

In event of a school closure, the primary responsibility for the pastoral care of a student rests with their parents / guardians. However, Form/Class Teachers (under the guidance of the Directors of School) 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 the Directors of School particularly if there are concerns or a lack of communication.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

There will always be a nominated DSL or deputy DSL available, either on site or contactable by phone or online video. Where a DSL, deputy or a member of the Safeguarding Team is not on site, a senior leader will take responsibility for safeguarding on site. The DSL will oversee the safeguarding aspects of the return to school, and advise on relevant policy and procedures.

 Pupils or parents with a safeguarding concern should contact:

 DSL Scott Sanderson, Director of Middle School: Telephone 0142082070 Mobile: 07598581889 ssanderson@altonschool.co.uk

 DDSL Sarah Harvey, Director of nursery: Telephone (The Designated Teacher with lead responsibility for child protection within the Early Years Foundation Setting): Telephone 0142082070 sharvey@altonschool.co.uk