

Digital Learning Team

Distance Learning Policy



Midlothian
DIGITAL LEARNING

Background

The potential impact of COVID-19 virus presents an unprecedented challenge for education in Midlothian. Population distancing strategies are included as part of the UK's 'Delay Phase', aiming to slow the spread of the disease, and include school closures and home-working for staff. In this event, distance learning will play a vital role in maintaining education provision and supporting Midlothian's children and young people.

What is Distance Learning?

Distance learning is a way of learning remotely without being in regular face-to-face contact with a teacher in the classroom. This is used extensively across Further and Higher Education settings and, as technology plays a greater role within education, is becoming increasingly relevant to support traditional teaching methods within primary and secondary education.

Preparatory Tasks

The effective implementation of this policy requires key preparatory tasks to be completed and procedures to be implemented as soon as is practical:

- Ensure Emergency Closure Activities are Available
Many schools already have a range of activities prominently accessible on their website or on online platforms in the event of an emergency closure. These resources form the initial response to a prolonged closure, whilst staff receive professional learning and are given preparation time. Access to SCHOLAR is an expectation for pupils who are presented at a course/level supported by SCHOLAR.
- User Information Gathering
Access to GLOW for all staff and learners is an essential element of the Distance Learning Policy. A member of the Senior Leadership Team is required to audit and collate users that are unable to access GLOW, requiring account details/passwords. Additional information relating to access to devices will help the Digital Learning Team plan to support staff and learners without access. This should be completed on the proforma spreadsheet and returned to the Digital Learning Team.
- Staff Devices
Staff with a Midlothian Council laptop should ensure this is taken home at the end of each day and over the weekend. Where devices are shared, a member of the Senior Leadership Team should allocate these in consultation with staff, prioritising staff without access to technology at home.
- Device Cleaning Procedures
Isopropyl wipes, suitable for cleaning electronic devices, will be delivered to your school in the coming days. These should be issued to staff with a Midlothian Council laptop and used should an incident of COVID-19 be identified in your establishment.

Implementation Timeline

In the event of a widespread school closure being announced, the following timeline will be followed to implement distance learning:

Day 1: Intensive staff online Professional Learning (*mandatory*)
Issue of Additional Distance Learning Guidance for Teachers
Issue of Suitable Learning Tools for Independent Study

Day 2-3: Continued staff online Professional Learning (*optional*)
Digital Learning Team Drop In 'Office Hours'
Staff begin to curate resources for distance learning

Day 4-5: Staff curate resources and schedule lessons for distance learning
Continued staff online Professional Learning (*optional*)
Digital Learning Team Drop In 'Office Hours'

Day 6+: Distance Learning begins
Digital Learning Team Sessions for Learners
Continued staff online Professional Learning (*optional*)
Digital Learning Team Drop In 'Office Hours'

Supporting Distance Learning

The pedagogies included in a sudden shift toward teaching and learning online are largely unfamiliar to both Midlothian's teachers and learners. However, the technology is in place to facilitate such a model and the Digital Learning Team are prepared to scaffold teacher's within the pillars outlined below:

- **Intensive Professional Learning Opportunities**

- Digital Workflow

Managing the provision of resources, assignment of tasks, mid-task intervention, marking and feedback will be the largest challenge for both teachers and learners.

- Connecting & Collaborating

Connecting teachers with teachers to share resources; connecting teachers with learners to facilitate bi-directional, synchronous communication.

- Creating Digital Content

Creating content accessible anytime, which can support learners' independent study.

- Distance Learning Formative Assessment

Leveraging online tools to inform teacher judgement, plan next steps and to provide suitable interventions for learners.

- **Drop In 'Office Hours'**

- Technical Support

Supporting the technical implementation of tools for distance learning. Requests via email outwith drop in sessions will receive a response within 24 hours.

- Pedagogical Support

Supporting staff on an individual basis with how to achieve particular learning outcomes.

- User Administration Support

Supporting the creation and maintenance of the user accounts and passwords to access the specified learning tools.

Addressing the Digital Divide

Consideration must be given to the diverse population of Midlothian; it is not appropriate to expect all children and young people to have access to a device they can use for learning. In this exceptional circumstance, the Digital Learning Team have developed a solution to manage the short term loan of a Midlothian-owned device (Chromebook), including record keeping, delivery and collection. At present, no workable solution is available to subsidise or provide connectivity for those without a broadband internet connection at home.

Roles & Responsibilities - Staff

<u>Senior Leadership Team:</u>	<p>Communicate with staff, parents and the wider school community.</p> <p>In consultation with all staff, formulate establishment-specific curricula for distance learning.</p> <p>Ensure effective implementation of the Distance Learning Policy and an establishment-specific curriculum.</p>
<u>Principal Teacher, Curriculum</u>	<p>Oversee the deployment of distance learning for their faculty.</p>
<u>Classroom Teachers:</u>	<p>Collaborate with colleagues to design Distance Learning experiences for learners.</p> <p>Communicate with and provide timely feedback to learners.</p> <p>Communicate with parents, as needed.</p>
<u>Support for Learning Teachers:</u>	<p>Partner with classroom teachers to accommodate the Distance Learning curriculum they are providing to the learners requiring extra support.</p> <p>Communicate with parents of learners with Individual Education Plans to discuss any additional support requirements to access the Distance Learning curriculum offered by the classroom teacher.</p>
<u>Guidance Teachers:</u>	<p>Communicate with learners identified as requiring additional support in accessing the Digital Learning curriculum.</p>
<u>Learning Assistants:</u>	<p>Provide support to Classroom Teachers by assisting with learner questions and providing interventions to further learner understanding.</p>
<u>Specialist/Peripatetic Teachers:</u>	<p>Collaborate with relevant Classroom Teachers to design subject-specific Distance Learning experiences for learners.</p> <p>Communicate with and provide timely feedback to learners.</p> <p>Communicate with parents, as needed.</p>

Roles & Responsibilities - Learners

- Dedicate appropriate time to learning, as guided by your teacher/s.
- Check appropriate online platforms for information on courses, assignments and resources daily.
- Identify a comfortable and quiet space to study/learn.
- Submit all assignments in accordance with provided timeline and/or due dates.
- Ensure a social and emotional balance by keeping healthy habits.

Roles & Responsibilities - Parents

Support their child/ren in their learning by:

- Providing an environment conducive to learning (access to technology, safe and quiet space during daytime).
- Engaging in conversations on posted materials, assignments.
- Monitoring time spent engaging in online and offline learning, including variables like that of preferred learning times (morning, afternoon, evening).
- Support emotional balance by providing ample room and time for reflection, physical activity, conversation, and play.

General Guidelines for Distance Learning

When designing learning experiences to be delivered by Distance Learning, please consider the following:

- **Feedback**
 - Timely feedback is essential to learning; this is especially so in online learning environments when/where learners are unable to ask questions as they normally would in classroom setting.
 - Provide clear communication regarding where/how learners should ask questions and seek clarification specific to learning targets, task requirements, and/or deadlines..
 - Actively monitoring your email and online tools such as Teams and Classroom for questions and communications from learners, families and colleagues.

- **Offline Tasks**
 - Avoid tasks which require printing. All tasks must be completed on a device or uploaded as a picture.
 - Consider including offline activities in your lessons such as reading, engaging in discussions with a family member or friend remotely, writing, taking pictures or making a video.
- **Bandwidth**
 - Consider the size of the files to be downloaded by learners; learners' internet connection may have limited bandwidth.
 - If you embed videos, keep the size of the files small and avoid HD quality.
- **File Management**
 - Try to post only PDF or documents available online (G Suite, Office 365) as they are universal and available on all platforms without conversion difficulties.
 - Avoid email and 'Shared with Me' submissions of work. Consider requiring all submissions to take place through a digital workflow tool such as Google Classroom.
- **Time Management**
 - Keep tasks simple and directions clear to ensure learners understand what they are required to do and to be able to complete tasks in quantifiable sections.
 - Provide learners additional time to complete learning tasks. This can be up to double the time normally required in class.

Recommended Technology Platforms

Each school has the autonomy to use their preferred resources to address the curriculum; digital resources are no different. However, the Digital Learning Team have a wealth of experience in available tools and make the following recommendations:

- [G Suite for Education \(Documents, Presentations, Workflow and assessment\)](#)

G Suite for Education is an online productivity suite similar to Microsoft Office and is accessible via GLOW. It is recommended in this case over Office 365 due to its ease of use and the digital workflow tool Google Classroom. This is currently being used extensively in two Midlothian high schools and in specific departments in others. Many upper primary classes are beginning to engage, too.
- [Google Hangouts Meet \(Video Conferencing\)](#)

Hangouts Meets can be used for easy-to-join video calls and this tool would be initially used to

provide webinar-style professional learning for Midlothian staff. With training, teachers could host virtual lessons, recording the content to be available to watch at a later date.

- Microsoft Teams (Staff Collaboration)

Microsoft Teams (available via GLOW) is a communication and collaboration platform that combines persistent workplace chat, video meetings and file storage. It is the ideal platform for staff groups to coordinate the distance learning opportunities they intend to provide, either at a school level or by subject area, and for school leaders to communicate remotely with their staff.

- WeVideo

WeVideo is a web-based video editing platform for schools which works on any platform. Extended premium features, including the ability to record screen presentations, are available to schools affected by the COVID-19 virus.

- Seesaw

Seesaw is an online tool which allows learners to build a digital portfolio, using the built-in creativity tools or by uploading other types of media. The Activities features allows for tasks to be assigned, managing the digital workflow for younger learners. Schools wishing to use Seesaw should contact the Digital Learning Team if they do not already have accounts established.

- Kahoot!

Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform, featuring multiple-choice quizzes that allow user generation and can be accessed via a web browser. Typically, these are accessed 'live' in the classroom as an engaging formative assessment tool. However, self-paced 'games' can be assigned to learners to facilitate independent practice. Extended premium features are available to schools affected by the COVID-19 virus.

- FlipGrid

Flipgrid is a website that allows teachers to create 'grids' to facilitate video discussions. Each grid is like a message board where teachers can pose questions, called 'topics,' and their learners can post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display. Teachers and learners can use their GLOW credentials to access this resource.

- PearDeck

Pear Deck is an interactive presentation tool used to actively engage learners during lessons. During a remote lesson, learners would connect to the teacher's PearDeck, be able to view teaching presentation and provide responses on the appropriate slide to demonstrate understanding or contribute to discussion. Extended premium features are available to schools affected by the COVID-19 virus.

- EducationCity

EducationCity provides interactive resources to teach Literacy and Numeracy concepts to primary school learners. Engaging, fun activities can be assigned to individual learners, with their success tracked within the administration panel. EducationCity is funded centrally to all Midlothian primary schools.