Blended Learning/Distance Learning Policy 2020 – 2021

Updated: October 2020

Review Date: (To be ratified by Governors)

Contents

1. Context

The closure of schools in March 2020 due to Covid 19 saw a wide variety of home learning policy and practices implemented over the lockdown period, with a range of different outcomes for pupils. Difficulties included access to IT (staff and families), lack of time to prepare staff, pupils and families for long term home learning and a lack of training for staff on how to undertake and deliver 'virtual' learning.

In September 2020 as schools fully reopened, the issue of further outbreaks of Covid 19 quickly became an issue. However unlike in March, pupils are being sent home either individually or in smaller groups (bubbles) to self-isolate, leading to a need to provide teaching both virtually and face to face. This is an ever-changing situation and the requirements for pupils' isolating at home is likely to continue throughout the coming academic year with little notice. So, this needs careful planning and whole school policy and procedures which are understood and followed by all staff and understood by the school's community. Equally, the issue of access to IT remains a concern for many children and families and so strategies other than online learning continue to need to be provided.

The policy is written with reference to the latest research available from the EEF (September 2020)

2. Rationale

This policy is an opportunity to ensure that homework and home learning is fully embedded into delivery of the school curriculum in a meaningful and sustainable way, whether pupils are self-isolating or not. Its purpose is to provide a structured approach to blended learning which ensures consistency and equity for all pupils. The policy will be used in conjunction with the Blended Learning Action Plan.

3. Aims

- To ensure equity of learning and curriculum opportunities for pupils in school and at home
- To set out expectations for all members of the staff community with regards to blended learning across the school
- To ensure a consistency of approach to blended learning which is understood by staff, pupils and families
- To provide appropriate guidelines for data protection and safeguarding

4. Principles

- Pupils are inspired, motivated and engaged to learn, through blended learning approaches that vary according to their appropriateness to the particular learning context.
- Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners
- Staff are encouraged and supported to adopt fit-for-purpose and innovative blended learning approaches. These approaches are enabled by academic and professional partnerships and appropriate institutional investment in learning technologies.
- Digital literacy is recognised as an important attribute and a core skill for academic staff.
- Flexible delivery options are offered to reflect the needs of pupils, the intended learning outcomes and the availability of resources.

- Blended learning will not always include flexible delivery and so will not always provide pupils a choice of where and when they can study.
- Blended learning and flexible delivery are chosen to enhance pupil engagement and learning outcomes.
- It is recognised that blended learning and flexible delivery may require increased investment of resources to ensure sustainable delivery of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Technology is considered an opportunity to capture data regarding patterns of pupil participation (learning analytics) to inform monitoring for at-risk pupils, to promote just-in-time learner support and to provide information to pupils.
- Teacher workload has to been taken into account when deciding on the blended learning offer.

5. Online learning

The School's platform for sharing online resources and setting work will be Microsoft Teams. Pupils will also be able return/submit completed tasks through this platform. The continued use of this platform is consistent with this policy and to be encouraged. However, for consistency (and to minimise the number of emails pupils receive) resources and links associated with the work on alternative platforms should be posted on Microsoft Teams instead of being emailed.

A blended learning approach is where students learn at home via electronic, online media, through paper 'packs' of resources as well as traditional face-to-face teaching to ensure pupils are given equal opportunities to access the curriculum, whether in school or learning at home. Home learning builds on and complements what is done at school. The blended learning approach considers how to incorporate:

5.1 Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning is teaching and learning that happens where the teacher is present at the same time as the pupils, meaning that there is real-time interaction between them.

- Resources and activities delivered online, e.g. through Microsoft Teams.
- Recorded lessons/video instruction/podcasts.
- Flipped learning - pupils engage with material before discussions in class.

5.2 Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning is learning that does not necessarily happen at the same time for the teacher and the pupils. There is no real-time interaction; the learning resources are created and made available for pupils to use later.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Senior Leadership Team

- Develop, monitor and evaluate the whole school strategy for blended and distance learning
- Communicate with, and provide support to, departments, staff, pupils and parents, to ensure effective implementation of blended and distance learning
- Provide opportunities for appropriate CPD training to ensure that staff can deliver blended and distance learning effectively
- Ensure accountability of the blended and distance learning process, through departmental self-evaluation

6.2 Heads of Faculty/Heads of Department

- Lead and support the department in the design and development of high-quality blended and distance learning experiences for pupils, by ensuring that departmental plans are fit for purpose and audience
- Monitor and evaluate the provision of blended and distance learning through departmental self-evaluation
- Communicate with pupils and parents, as appropriate, as per the Behaviour Policy, to ensure engagement and progress with the blended and distance learning experience
- Disseminate excellent practice amongst colleagues, both formally and informally
- Ensuring that lessons taught are relevant to the current schemes of work.
- In the case of absence of a member of staff pupils are informed that the lesson is cancelled, or pupils are invited to join another class or independent work is placed on their class team for students to complete.
- Work set is appropriate to the length of time pupils have to complete it within the lesson.
- Alerting members of their team to accessing available resources to support their lessons.
- Regular feedback is given to pupils regarding any work submitted in their subject.
- Ensuring that the workload of team members is commensurate with their normal teaching commitment.
- Ensuring that team meetings take place within the normal working hours.
- Ensuring that any additional tasks set for team members is commensurate with their normal roles and responsibilities
- Informing their Line Manager with any issues regarding the delivery of online learning

6.3 Teaching and Learning Team

- Research, trial and develop excellent practice and new innovation, using varied strategies for blended and distance learning.
- Provide a forum for colleagues to discuss, trial and implement strategies to: improve the quality of blended and distance learning; share good practice; develop ideas; and, reflect on teaching and learning.

- work towards helping to create a proactive school culture where the quality of blended and distance learning is openly observed, discussed, challenged and enhanced within a supportive and non-judgemental environment.
- promote high quality blended and distance learning.

6.4 Subject Teachers

- Continue to strive to deliver consistently excellent lessons in accordance with theTeaching & Learning policy.
- Engage with CPD training to ensure proficiency in delivering effective blended and distance learning.
- Collaborate with colleagues to design and develop high-quality blended and distance learning experiences for pupils, in accordance with departmental plans.
- Plan and deliver blended and distance learning experiences for all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, taking into account Individual Development Plans and ensuring that pupils' needs are fully catered for.
- Communicate with, and provide timely feedback to, pupils in line with the Arena's Assessment Policy.
- Carefully monitor pupils' work completion and deadline compliance.
- Communicate with pupils and parents, as appropriate, as per the Behaviour Policy, to ensure engagement and progress with the blended and distance learning experience.
- When providing remote learning, teachers must be available between 9:30am and 3:00pm. If they're unable to work for any reason during this time, for example due to sickness or caring for a dependent, they should report this using the normal absence procedure. Any absence must be reported to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher before 7:00am on the day via email or telephone.
- Staff will teach a 'live' lesson according to the published timetable for Years 7 -11.
- Each one-hour lesson will consist of at least 20 mins of live teaching followed by a guided learning task in which students can complete independently.
- Teachers will remain in the lesson for the duration of the hour to provide support for, and answer questions when requested from pupils as well as providing feedback and additional work if necessary.
- A register will be taken at the start of each lesson on SIMS.
- Pupils will gain access to the lesson via Microsoft Teams.
- Pupils to submit work to the teacher via school emails or through the assignment tab within their class team on Microsoft's online platform. Staff should not give private email addresses to pupils. At no time should teachers engage with pupils via social media.
- Any communication between pupil and teacher should occur via Microsoft Teams or email.
- Teachers should inform Pastoral Team if pupils are consistently absent from lessons or failing to hand in any work.
- Teachers should inform the relevant Pastoral Team of any inappropriate behaviour that occurs both within the lesson; or any inappropriate comments made within an email.
- Should a teacher have any Safeguarding concerns they should refer to the procedures as set out in 6.8 below.

- Teachers are expected to respond to pupils and/or parents within the normal working hours only. If teachers wish to work flexible hours outside the main working hours due to their own personal circumstances they do so at their own discretion.
- Pupils in school will be following their individual online timetable and attend their online lessons.
- Teachers will be requested to attend meetings via Microsoft Teams. Staff briefings will be held Monday and Friday mornings at 8:15am. Other meetings will be as per the published timetable. This will give staff the chance to take part in additional CPD, Curriculum planning time for September and gain pastoral support.

6.5 Support staff

- Provide support and assistance to departments and teachers, in accordance with the SEND Policy
- Assist with implementation of pupils' Individual Support Plans so that their needs are fully catered for through blended and distance learning
- Supporting their designated form class.
- Ensuring that their identified cohort of pupils are
  - Attending all timetabled lessons
  - Completing work set
  - Submitting work via email or in Teams to their teacher and cc in their Teaching Assistant.
- Support to the pupils will be via Microsoft Teams or school emails
- Teaching Assistants must not use private email addresses or social media to communicate with parents or pupils.
- Inform the relevant member of the Pastoral Team of any attendance or behavioural issues in relation to their cohort of pupils.
- Should a member of support staff have any safeguarding concerns they should refer to the procedures as set out in 6.8 below.

6.6 IT Staff

- Fixing issues with systems used to set and collect work
- Helping staff and parents with any technical issues they're experiencing
- Reviewing the security of remote learning systems and flagging any data protection breaches to the data protection officer
- Assisting pupils and parents with accessing the internet or devices
- Ensure infrastructure of student feedback systems, learning management system, wireless networks and online student services are maintained in a timely fashion to ensure minimum disruption to learning patterns.
- Provide timely responses and support to pupils, parents/carers, and departmental requests regarding technology issues.
- Should a member IT support staff have any safeguarding concerns they should refer to the procedures as set out in 6.8 below

6.7 Pupils

- Record tasks set at the end of each face-to-face lesson in school, noting the due date for completion
- Dedicate appropriate time to distance learning, in order to complete the tasks set by the due date.
- Check Microsoft Teams for information on tasks, assignments and resources daily, throughout the school week
- Identify a comfortable and quiet space to study/learn
- Engage in all learning set with academic honesty
- Submit all tasks and assignments in accordance with provided timelines and/or due dates
- Appreciate that when working at home, teachers will be delivering lessons every day at school

6.8 Parents

- Contact the school via email if their child is unwell and unable to register or participate in any remote learning sessions.
- Inform the school if their child, or any member of their household is showing any signs or symptoms of Covid 19.
- Inform the school if their child is showing signs of anxiety or emotional distress and would welcome support from the school's welfare team.
- Seek help if their child is struggling with any aspects of the remote learning, including accessing the provision.
- Inform the school if they are eligible for Free School Meals and have received their voucher entitlement.
- Report any concerns they have via email the address; enquiry@arena-birmingham.academy or school telephone, in a respectful manner.

6.9 Designated safeguarding lead

- Ensuring that the referral system for dealing with any Safeguarding matters is known to all stakeholders.
- That all referrals are responded to as per normal safeguarding practice.
- Should the DSL Lead be unavailable the Deputy DSLs are fully informed.

7 Data Protection

7.1 Accessing personal data

When accessing personal data for remote learning purposes, all staff members will:
- Make sure they know how they can access the data, such as on a secure cloud service or a server in the Arena IT network
- Know which devices they should use to access the data e.g. school provided laptop. Staff should not be using their personal devices

7.2 Processing personal data

Staff members may need to collect and/or share personal data such as parent email addresses as part of the remote learning system. Pupils will be provided with a school email address to avoid any issues regarding GDPR, there will be no expectation for parents/carers or learners to provide their own email addresses for use. As long as this processing is necessary for the school's official functions, individuals won't need to give permission for this to happen. However, staff are reminded to collect and/or share as little personal data as possible online.

7.3 Keeping devices secure

All staff members will take appropriate steps to ensure their devices remain secure. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Keeping the device password-protected – strong passwords are at least 8 characters, with a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and special characters (e.g. asterisk or currency symbol).
- Ensuring the hard drive is encrypted – this means if the device is lost or stolen, no one can access the files stored on the hard drive by attaching it to a new device.
- Making sure the device locks if left inactive for a period of time.
- Not sharing the device among family or friends.
- Installing antivirus and anti-spyware software.
- Keeping operating systems up to date – always install the latest updates.

8. Links to other policies

This policy is linked to our:
- Behaviour policy
- Curriculum policy
- Safeguarding policies
- Data protection policies
- Teaching and Learning policies