

St. Joseph's N.S. Rathdonnell,
Trentagh, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
074 91 37315 rathdonnellns.weebly.com

1. Introduction

In response to the schools closure announcement made in January 2021, St. Joseph's NS has developed the following distance teaching and learning plan.

We recognise that online safety is of huge importance and the aim of this document is to help to protect both school staff and pupils, while teaching and learning online.

This policy does not set out to replace our Acceptable Usage Policy. Rather, it is proposed as an important addition to the area of learning from a digital platform. The policy presented here should be read also in tandem with our school's Code of Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying (including Online Bullying) Policy.

The primary obligation of all schools is to the welfare of the learners in their school. This policy, therefore, seeks to ensure that remote learning is safe for all student learners and that personal and sensitive data is also protected under GDPR legislation. Schools must ensure that learning takes place in an environment that is respectful and fair and meets its statutory duties.

This Policy has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education and relevant sections of:

- a) The Education Act (1998)
- b) Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- c) Equal Status Act (2000)
- d) Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- e) Disability Act (2005)

- f) Children First Act (2017)
- g) GDPR
- h) Data Protection Act (2018)
- i) Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary schools
- j) NEWB Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour (2008).
- k) DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools (May 2020)
- l) DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: *Supporting Primary Pupils at very High Risk to Covid 19* (August 2020).
- m) Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020

This is a working document. As we continue to explore options available to support distance learning, the document will be updated accordingly.

1. Context

Teaching and Learning is ever- evolving. We are all learning and picking up new skills. Developments in ICT provide us all with great opportunities as learners and teachers. Never before has there been greater scope to learn using technology and it continues to change the learning relationship between teachers and students. Advances in technology mean that assignments can be delivered remotely and that greater access to information on the internet affords the opportunities for real learning to take place under the watchful and professional guidance of the teacher. However, whether a child is being directed remotely or via a traditional classroom environment, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher/ SNA, whether at home or school, the same statutory rules apply i.e. the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and all of the school's policies apply.

We recognise that online collaboration is essential for distance learning and that families are in favour of increased opportunities to maintain the connection between school and home. Rathdonnell NS uses a variety of child-friendly, online tools, which assist in providing more effective teaching and learning, while also enabling greater communication between staff, families and students.

2. Guidelines for good online communication in Rathdonnell NS

1. Video calls should never be recorded.
2. Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.
3. It is the duty of parents/guardians to supervise children while they are working online and to ensure that any content submitted to their teacher/SNA is appropriate.

Staff members will communicate with pupils and their families via Google Classroom, which is St. Joseph's, Rathdonnell primary online platform. In certain cases, WhatsApp calls, photos of school work via Whatsapp or mobile phonecalls, and by prior agreement between teacher/SNA and parent/guardian may be exchanged.

4. Any electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families.
5. Students and staff will communicate using tools which have been approved by the school and of which parents have been notified (Google Classroom, Google Meet).
6. Parental permission will be acquired before setting up a profile for a pupil on a communication forum.
7. For video/Google Meet calls, parental permission is implied, as the link to a video call will be communicated via the pupil's school account address. Essentially, by virtue of the pupil logging on to the call, permission is assumed.

8. For security reasons, passwords will be provided to pupils, where applicable. (eg posting a link to the Google Meet call).
9. St. Joseph's NS Rathdonnell cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are compromised.
10. Rathdonnell NS will use mainly the online platform of Google Classroom for communicating and connecting with families/pupils. The Junior Classroom used Class Dojo last year, which may also still comprise some of the (in-school classroom) work. Our 'Remote Teaching and Learning Plan' will include a combination of assigned work, pre-recorded lessons, Screencast-o-matic, Screencastify, audio lessons (Google Classroom) and Google Meet (similar to Zoom).

3. Media which the school will use

Email, school phone, school mobile.

Staff can communicate regularly with parents and pupils via Google Classroom. For example, children can ask the teacher a question regularly as they are doing their work- parents can also use this facility to get in touch. Parents can email the teachers or may ring or text the school mobile (086-1024145)

School Contacts (for distance learning purposes):

graineduggan@rathdonnellns.com

cathyrussell@rathdonnellns.com

lindasweeney@rathdonnellns.com

The school website is another platform containing updates and important information. The Home-Learning page is updated regularly and you can find many good ideas and free resources.

rathdonnellns.weebly.com

Google Meet / Zoom

Google Meet is a video-conferencing platform which will enable teachers, staff and pupils to connect via a live link. Teachers will connect with pupils regularly using pre-arranged Google Meetings. Note: Google Meet is the main video-conferencing tool- occasionally Zoom may be used (this might be if we were linking up with someone from Heritage in Schools, Creative Schools contact for example).

Google Classroom

Google Classroom is for our pupils to connect to their daily lessons. They submit or hand in each lesson as it is completed. This digital learning platform is used from Junior Infants –Sixth Class. Parental/Guardian consent is required prior to using this platform. Each child is assigned an individual password. Google Classroom is the online platform used by all classes in Rathdonnell NS for the purposes of distance learning.

Other

It is important to note that Google Classroom is not a ‘stand alone’ system. Individual work or small group work might be facilitated online either through a Google Meet call or via a phone call with the parent/ guardian consent. Teacher or SNA contact may also be made with a childminder or helper- but always with the parent’s/ guardian’s knowledge and consent. Other ways in which remote learning can take place might be through a conference call with the teacher/SNA, parent/ pupil- trouble-shooting tech issues or discussing level of engagement or ability with the online lessons. Good communication is the key. Hard copies of work may be posted out – for example extra reading and comprehension photocopies, new workbooks if needed.

4. Rules for pupils using online communication

For submitting learning:

1. Do your best to submit good work always. Don't put off getting down to your lessons. Treat the lessons seriously and work to the best of your ability.
2. Use kind and friendly words and be polite when messaging. If there is a problem with the lesson or material, remember to deal with the issue respectfully and the teacher(s) will do her/their best to help.

For Google Meet Class calls/ Zoom calls:

1. **Pictures or recordings of the video call are not allowed.**
2. **Remember our school rules – Respect towards others- they are still in place, even online.**
3. Set up your device in a quiet space, with no distractions in the background.
4. Join the video with your microphone muted.
5. Raise your hand before speaking, just like you would do in class.
6. If you have the chance to talk, speak in your normal voice, using kind and friendly words.
7. Show respect by listening to others while they are speaking.
8. Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the video call.
9. Be on time - set a reminder if it helps.
10. Enjoy! Don't forget to wave hello to everyone when you join!

5. Guidelines for parents and guardians

For learning

1. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that pupils are supervised while they work online. (The same rules of safe internet content apply at home).
2. Please keep a general eye on your child's work and level of engagement with lessons.

3. Continue to revise online safety measures with pupils.
4. Parents/ Guardians can be given the option to receive weekly or daily summary on the pupil's work. You will receive an invitation email. Parents/ Guardians may not directly access Google Classroom. It is a good way to keep an eye on the level of work being done by the pupil.
5. Downloading the Google Classroom app on to your phone may be of help also.

For Google Meet/Zoom calls (eg Parent/Teacher and/or pupil meetings)

1. **Under no circumstances should pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.**
2. Ensure that the school has the correct email address for inviting you to join meetings.
3. Be aware that when participating in group video calls, you can be seen and heard unless you are muted or have disabled your camera. Meetings could be with one/ two parents and the class teacher/ SET.
4. To help your child: please ensure that your child is on time for a scheduled video.
5. Make sure to familiarise your child with the software in advance. For video in particular, show them how to mute/unmute and turn the camera on/off.
6. Participants in the call should be dressed appropriately.
7. An appropriate background/room should be chosen for the video call.
8. For detailed information on security on Google Meet please visit

<https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9852160?hl=en>

6. Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols for Pupils

1. Check assigned work each day.
2. Communication should generally only take place during normal school hours. (Some corrections may be returned after school hours from your teacher.)
3. Please make sure work is completed (or a reasonable attempt made) before handing it in. There is no point in clicking the 'Turn in' tab if there's no work to show.
4. The teacher or your parent may show you how to upload photos of your work.
5. The normal school calendar will apply.
6. The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:
 - a. Code of Behaviour
 - b. Anti- Bullying Policy
 - c. Acceptable Use Policy
7. Teaching and Learning best practice will continue to apply, with students expected to present all assignments to the best of their ability and on time, where possible in this evolving and unprecedented situation.
8. Provision for SEN pupils will be made when using Remote Learning methodologies, eg using a differentiated approach, engaging on a one-to-one basis or focusing on targeted SET/ SNA strategies.

7. Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols for Parents/Guardians

1. We ask parents/guardians to ensure protocols for students are adhered to.
2. To check-in on their child's school work on a daily basis and talk to their child about the work being assigned.
3. Communication may generally only take place during normal school hours (however, in cases of shift-working or front-line working, reasonable accommodations will be made).

4. The health and wellbeing of all is paramount. Circumstances may change for any of us unexpectedly, teachers/ SNA or parents, so please keep schooling in perspective and a positive narrative regarding the online learning.

8. Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols for Teachers/SNA

1. Teachers will survey parents re access to laptops/ devices and also Internet access at home. The school will endeavour to ensure that all pupils have the equipment needed to complete lessons.
2. Check uploaded work each day and provide meaningful feedback.
3. Communication may generally only take place during normal school hours (however in cases of shift-working or front-line working, reasonable accommodations will be made).
4. The normal school calendar will apply
5. The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:
 - a. Child Protection Policy
 - b. Data Protection Policy
6. Teaching and Learning best practice will continue to apply with students expected to present all assignments to the best of their ability and on time, where possible.
7. Relevant and meaningful feedback will be given on completed assignments.
8. We encourage school work every week day for routine and to keep continuity of learning for the pupils. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered, curriculum-based, and based on the work/ text-books etc. that the children are already using in school. We provide work and guidance and ask parents and pupils to do their best and that is all.
9. Teachers will engage early and often to help all children and families, if such support is required.

9. Remote Teaching and Learning Provision specifically for the following Covid 19 related scenarios (also for when back at school)

Provision for children who are at very high risk to Covid 19:

The school will engage directly with relevant parents/guardians, regarding remote educational provision for children who are deemed to be at **very high risk** to Covid-19 (see HSE Guidelines) where medical certification has been provided to the school.

Provision for all other children who are instructed to self-isolate by their GP or HSE Public Health, educational provision will be provided as follows:

- 1. Children who are awaiting Covid 19 test results for themselves or a family member and have been instructed by their GP to isolate at home for a few days.**

These pupils will be supported to catch up on their learning on their return to school.

- 2. Children isolating at home on instruction from their GP due to a confirmed case within their own family/close contact outside of school (14-day isolation period).**

Teacher will link in with the pupil via Google-Classroom (not video conferencing).

- 3. School pod (smaller group_ instructed by HSE Pubic Health to self-isolate.**

Teacher will link in with the pupils via Google-Classroom (not video conferencing)

4. School bubble (whole class) instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate (14day isolation period).

Teacher will engage with the bubble daily on Google Classroom and regularly on Google Meet.

5. Whole school closure as instructed by HSE Public Health (duration of closure will be advised by Public Health)

Teachers will engage with pupils, using a blended approach of pre-recorded lessons, Google Classroom and regular contact on Google Meet. SNA support may continue also.

Please note that the current situation is quite fluid and these circumstances may vary throughout the year.

10. Summary:

1. Do what you can, within your circumstances. Make sure you engage with class teacher/support teacher/SNA/principal to develop a plan that best supports your child.
2. There will be no school work set for planned school closures/holidays. There will be no interaction on Google Classroom or Google Meet during these times.
3. We ask parents/guardians, students and teachers to ensure protocols are adhered to at all times.
4. If you are experiencing difficulties please email the school/ ring or text the school phone and we will help you in any way that we can.
5. We thank the school community for adhering to the above guidelines for everyone's safety and welfare.

This draft plan will in the first instance be circulated to parents and guardians/ school staff and of the BOM of Rathdonnell NS. It will be proposed for

ratification at the next BOM. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

This plan/ policy may be is subject to change, in light of any guidance or instruction received from Department of Education and Skills/HSE Public Health.

Signed: *Gráinne Duggan* Principal, on behalf of B.O.M.