Primary teachers

Coronavirus crisis

What you need to know:
Distance teaching and learning

national education union

Guidance for primary teachers:

1 Teachers and schools have been engaged in distance teaching and learning since schools closed to most pupils on 23 March, providing resources, communicating with pupils and families, and teaching in all sorts of innovative ways. School staff are working harder than ever to ensure children's access to education during this crisis.

2 In a survey of primary members in May:

- more than 90% said they were setting work for their classes online.
- 26% said they were sending work home.

3 Teachers also reported the following:

- 'We sent exercise books, whiteboard, pens, pencils and offered any ICT equipment to those that need it.'
- 'We have a home learning tab on the school website with a list of use-ful and free online sites.'
- 'We have done a couple of phonics videos or news day videos just to reassure and show the children we are still there for them. All parents are on Seesaw [communication platform] and interacting with it in their own way.'

4 The NEU's guidance on distance learning is informed by safeguarding and equality of access to education.

5 It is not desirable for young children to spend hours every day in front of a screen, whether for education or recreational purposes, as it can have a detrimental effect on their sleep, concentration and wellbeing. Young children need a broad range of activities, with time spend outside wherever possible.

6 Online lessons are not desirable as the only tool for primary children, as the teacher-pupil interaction is not easily replicated in this way. The bulk of tasks should be flexible lists of activities that can be chosen by pupils and families to do at convenient times.

7 Work and tasks should suit the age range and capabilities of the children and expected outcomes should be flexible. Try to set tasks that all pupils can complete to some degree, with extra and more stretching activities for the more able.

8 Work that can be done in bite-sized chunks is more likely to be completed than longer tasks. If there are projects, suggest how these could be broken down.

9 Worksheets and textbook pages for maths and English can work if they are already used in school and all children have them at home. However, teachers cannot be expected to mark work. Schools should not be setting SATs tests or mocks at this time.

» Lots of resources are available for schools and teachers **HERE.**

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10 A list of flexible tasks that cover different areas of the curriculum allows children to choose the tasks that interest them, and the ones parents feel they can manage.

11 It is most beneficial and realistic to offer a variety of tasks which can be done working at a table (keep these to a minimum) or while moving around, including creative tasks.

12 If a school has the resources to provide online lessons and teachers are happy to do these, pre-recorded lessons are the NEU's preference, as a great alternative to live lessons. They allow the teacher to explain key ideas and methods, modelling writing, maths, drawing and so on, and can also be paused where necessary and watched at a time that suits the pupil and their family.

13 For some lessons, visuals with an explanation by the teacher may suffice.

14 Providing plenty of tasks that do not need the internet or a device such as a laptop or tablet to access them is preferable, as many children and families will not have internet access or will be sharing devices.

15 Many children need a lot of guidance when working and cannot be left for long periods of time to complete complex tasks. Schools should suggest activities that children can complete on their own. We must recognise that many parents are also trying to work from home, and parents might struggle to assist with schoolwork for a number of reasons. Parents cannot be expected to become teachers.

16 Live-streaming lessons from home should be handled very carefully. This is due mainly to safeguarding concerns, for the pupils and the teacher. Lessons on live video platforms such as Zoom give access into all pupils' (and the teacher's) homes for all participants on the call. Were there to be a safeguarding incident, this could place the teacher and the school in a very difficult position.

17 Additionally, not all pupils will be able to access the lessons when they are live and will therefore lose out on that interaction and instruction.

18 Taking care of your physical and mental health is crucial at this time: this goes for children, parents and teachers. Keeping minds active and happy, ready to return to school when the time comes, is most important.

19 Teachers working at home, especially those with caring responsibilities, can only carry out a reasonable workload, and this must be negotiated with staff.

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