



St. Fiachra's SNS Remote Teaching and Learning Plan in a Covid 19 Context

Rationale

The aim of this Remote Teaching and Learning plan is to ensure that Class Teachers, Special Education teachers and SNAs in St. Fiachra's SNS will be enabled to support pupils' learning at home in the case where individual pupils or groups of pupils, teachers, or in extreme cases, the entire school community, are requested by the Public Health officials and HSE to self-isolate or restrict their movements because of a case or cases of COVID-19 in the school or the community.

This policy outlines safeguards aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils and school staff engaged in remote teaching and learning.

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) Circular 74/2020 Communication/Teaching and Learning Platform (November 2020)
- (n) DES Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020 (October 2020)
- (o) Updated Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs (January 2021) DES

NOTE: This plan is a working document, and may be updated as the school continues to explore options and platforms available to support distance learning.

Context

This plan arises from the need to clearly outline the school's expectations and protocols for remote teaching and learning over a digital platform.

- This plan seeks to set in place procedures to ensure that remote teaching and learning takes place in an environment that is respectful and fair and fulfils the statutory duties of the school.
- St. Fiachra's SNS has an obligation to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and staff during the remote teaching and learning process. The school recognises that online safety is especially relevant during this time.
- It is also important that personal and sensitive data of pupils and staff is protected under GDPR legislation.
- All the provisions of the school's Code of Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy apply in the context of remote teaching and learning.

A Blend of Guided & Independent Learning Tasks & Experiences

Teacher-pupil engagement will involve both direct instruction by the teacher and the assignment of independent learning tasks for completion by the pupils. Teachers will ensure, as far as practicable, that direct instruction is provided for aspects of learning that require it, using a variety of approaches including pre-recorded video, audio, presentation software and written instructions. This regular engagement with pupils when they are out of school will help them to reintegrate on their return to the classroom.

Appropriate and Engaging Learning Opportunities

Teachers will ensure that the chosen learning tasks give pupils an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a clear and concise way. ***It may be necessary to adjust the number of tasks usually given in the school setting to take account of the fact that pupils are working from home.*** This work is being carried out to enable progress and facilitate successful re-integration after a period of closure.

- *Learning tasks;* Workbook and text book tasks may be reduced, supplemented or replaced with other learning tasks, to support high quality learning from home. The tasks chosen will be specifically aligned to the needs of the pupil(s), including learners with SEN and will enable the teacher to monitor progress and give constructive, developmental feedback to support the next stages in their learning.
- *Skills Development;* Pupils will be supported to develop age appropriate self-management and organisational skills so they can engage in remote learning.

Role of the Class Teacher, SET and SNA

See: Updated Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs, January 2021

The role of the class teacher:

In St. Fiachra's SNS class teachers continue to have overall responsibility for the education of pupils, including those with SEN. During this closure period, mainstream class teachers will continue to differentiate tasks appropriately to match the learning needs of pupils with SEN. They will gauge the success of this differentiated approach through assessment of pupils' efforts where possible, and will provide regular feedback to parents /guardians and pupils. While the feedback provided will necessarily be different to that provided in a classroom setting, teachers will focus on affirming pupils' efforts and motivating them to continue their efforts and use the outcomes of the engagement to further differentiate their programmes. Mainstream class teachers will consult with colleagues and the SEN team to ensure a coordinated whole-school approach to assigning work to pupils with SEN. They will also emphasise opportunities for pupils to learn in their home environment, including participating in structured activities related to life skills and independent living.

The role of the special education teacher

The special education teacher (SET) is pivotal in ensuring that there is continuity in the learning of pupils with SEN. SETs will therefore be regularly communicating and engaging with the pupils on their caseloads. The SET's knowledge of their pupils' priority learning needs and agreed targets as outlined in the pupil support file will enable them to work with parents and guardians to choose appropriate supports in a remote learning environment. SETs will carefully examine how progress on the existing learning targets can be reasonably extended by home learning. They will use this knowledge to communicate with the pupils and their parents and guardians and to establish what methods will work best to achieve continuity of learning for the pupils.

In supporting the learning of pupils with SEN, the following are important elements of the SET's role:

- Liaising with mainstream class teachers to ensure an appropriate programme of work for the pupil with SEN; the programme should, as far as possible, be personalised to the pupil's needs
- Reviewing the pupil's support plans to identify aspects of the programme that can be worked on in the home environment
- Identifying and using technological and resource options available to the teacher and the pupils to support learning
- Supporting parents and guardians, where possible and practicable, to use the technology used by the school to support pupils' engagement in learning

- Providing regular opportunities for the pupil to engage with the SET using Seesaw
- Where possible, sharing specific resources or individualised supports with parents and guardians, for example, those that are calming and regulating for pupils with autism.

Practical ways in which special education teachers can engage with their pupils:

- Phone
- Provision of hard copy work packs to parents and guardians
- E-mail
- Online video communication apps such as Zoom and Seesaw

The role of the special needs assistants

The experience of the last school closure indicates that SNAs, working under the direction of the classroom teacher / SET team can continue to play an important role in supporting pupils with complex needs and their families. In particular, the SNA can act as a liaison between the school and these pupils/families capturing the voice of the parent and the pupil and reporting this back to the SET and the classroom teacher.

Working under the direction of the school principal and class teacher(s) SNAs should:

- Engage with the pupils they usually support in school by assisting in the provision of social stories and advising on appropriate coping and calming skills
- Engage with and support the work of parents of the children on their caseload by providing information on management of behaviour
- Work on providing educational or therapeutic resources / materials in collaboration with the teacher and SET Team.

Developing the Skill Set of Teachers and Support Staff

During the period of school closure March to June 2020, staff members engaged in research and training on a number of platforms including Seesaw. Staff subsequently decided that the online platform Seesaw would be the digital platform used by the school for the purpose of remote teaching and learning. Staff upskilled using the PDST website on pdst.ie/blended learning and the Seesaw platform. A survey of parents conducted after the initial closure in March 2020 indicated by a huge majority that the online platform Seesaw was the preferred choice.

Since September 2020, many teachers have used the Seesaw Platform to share select activities with children to perform as part of their homework. This facilitated pupils to develop skills in the realm of digital learning and ensured pupils had experience of engaging in education within the online sphere via the Seesaw platform.

Where a partial or full school closure is required, the teachers in St. Fiachra's SNS will immediately put into place the following plan of action to enable continuity of teaching and learning for pupils. The staff will use a selection of online platforms for communicating and connecting with each other and with parents/pupils.

Our 'Remote Teaching and Learning Plan' includes a combination of school e-mail and website, assigned work & activities (Seesaw) and periodic teacher/SNA meetings (Zoom).

Remote Teaching and Learning Plan

School Email, Website & Telephone

The school uses the **Aladdin** Pupil Management system for communication with parents and for notifying parents of upcoming events etc. Each teacher has a dedicated e-mail address through which he/she will communicate with parents/guardians and vice-versa.

During the operation of remote learning for a class/or classes, please note that emails from parents related to your child's teaching and learning should be responded to within a 24hr period Monday – Friday. All families are asked to check their emails and the school website for updates and important information.

In certain circumstances, teachers /SNAs may offer a telephone call to support the learning needs of the pupil. It is the responsibility of the teacher/SNA to engage private settings on their own mobile device.

Seesaw as a Remote Teaching and Learning Platform

Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes (NCSE). All Mainstream teachers must implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with SEN.

As Seesaw is our agreed teaching and learning platform, the staff sought permission from parents in order to set up all pupils with a Seesaw account login. The unique login code provided is personal to each child and must not be shared with anyone other than those with responsibility for teaching and learning for the child in question (*See Data Protection Policy*).

Seesaw enables our pupils to connect to their folder and to upload items to their folder for their teacher to see. Activities and lessons will be uploaded via Seesaw with pre-recorded instructions in written, audio or video format which may include PowerPoint presentations. The class teacher will communicate with pupils on a daily basis using Seesaw and will take into account that some pupils may not be in a position to engage with remote teaching and learning each day.

Special Education teachers will continue to engage with pupils on their case load as frequently as they would under normal circumstances.

Teachers will strive to tailor work accordingly, where required, in line with the School Support Plans in place for children in our school. In this area, special education teachers will

liaise with class teachers with a view to supporting and enhancing the process of learning for those with special educational needs, for whom this may be a particularly difficult time.

The staff is aware that the availability of appropriate digital devices and/or internet connection with sufficient band width may be a challenge for some families and every effort will be made by the school to facilitate those families.

We are cognisant of the need for supporting the health and well-being of *all in our school community* and thus, should this be required, we will exercise caution not to overburden pupils and parents. Emphasis will be placed on well-being.

Zoom

Zoom is a cloud based video-conferencing platform to enable teachers, staff and pupils to connect via a live link. Prior to engaging in a Zoom call, please ensure that you are familiar with the protocols for using Zoom.

Protocols for using Zoom

1. Under no circumstances should pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
Breaches of this rule will be dealt with in line with the Code of Behaviour See Appendix A GB9: 'Transmitting, recording or bringing to school any digital material
 - a. that may be offensive or injurious to any member of the school community' is listed as a 'Gross Breach' of discipline. The sanction for this offence includes suspension or expulsion .
2. Ensure that the school has the correct email address for inviting you to join apps and meetings.
3. The main purpose of a video call is to facilitate engagement between teachers, SNAs and pupils in a social context.
4. Supervision of the children remains the responsibility of the parent or guardian and is **not** the responsibility of the teacher.
5. Be aware that when participating in group video calls, you can be seen and heard unless you are muted or have disabled your camera. Please join the meeting with your microphone muted.
6. You will automatically enter a waiting room when the code for a Zoom call has been entered. Please note that school staff will only accept users into the video call if you can be identified by the display name on your zoom account. (i.e. Family Name)
7. Please ensure that you are on time for a scheduled video call, or you may be locked out. Please request to join the Zoom call approximately five minutes before the scheduled start time.
8. Participants in the call should be dressed appropriately.
9. An appropriate room should be chosen for the video call with no artificial background shown on screen.

10. The policy around the use of mobile phone during meetings applies (unless using the device to access the meeting).

For detailed information on GDPR and Zoom, please visit <https://zoom.us/privacy>.

Guidelines for safe and supportive online communication

1. Parental permission will be sought before teachers engage with the pupils over a digital communication platform.
2. Where video calls or Zoom meetings are to be used, parental permission will be a prerequisite. The link will be sent to the parent's email addresses.
3. Parents will be notified in advance of the online platforms being used by teacher/SNA and permission will be sought where necessary. The remote teaching and learning platform adopted for use in 2021 is Seesaw.
4. For security reasons, passwords will be provided to parents/guardians **only**, where applicable.
5. The use of any approved electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes **only** and to allow for home school communication with pupils and their parents/guardians.
6. Pupils, teachers and SNAs must only communicate using digital tools approved by the school.
7. Staff members will use Seesaw to provide teaching and learning resources to pupils and their parents/guardians. Pupils will be taught the relevant skills to access these platforms in school as necessary.
8. Staff, parents and pupils are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe and respectful manner whilst engaged in online communication including teaching and learning.
9. It is the duty of parents/guardians to ensure that their children are appropriately supervised while they are working online and to ensure that any content submitted to their teacher is appropriate.
10. **St. Fiachra's SNS cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are compromised.** However school staff will adhere to school protocols when using online video platforms ie – two school staff present, operation of the waiting room etc.

Remote Teaching and Learning Guidelines

Parents and Guardians should:

- Check-in on their child's school work daily and talk to their child about the work being assigned.
- Note that pupils are expected to present assignments to the best of their ability and on time, where possible, and that the school is cognisant of the unique circumstances in each home and family.

- Ensure that pupils are supervised while they work online.
- Check over the work which pupils send to teacher, ensuring it is appropriate. Remind your child of online safety. (*See Webwise.ie*)

Teachers will:

- Check uploaded work regularly and acknowledge all work submitted.
- Correct assignments and provide suitable feedback to pupils.
- Confine communication with pupils, as far as practicable, to regular school hours on days when the school would normally be open.
- Create and save their long term plans (termly schemes) and their short term plans (Scéimeanna Coicíse). The hardcopy of the Cúntas Míosiúil (a record of work completed in a given month) is signed by the teacher and principal and a hardcopy is kept on file in the Principal's Office. Both a digital copy and a hardcopy is maintained in the classroom for the class teacher and any other professional who may need access to the plans.
- Share a hardcopy or digital copy of plans for remote teaching and learning with the principal. If teachers are working from home and need to share short term plans they can do so via Gmail or Google Drive.

In relation to Special Education, the class teacher will:

- Enable the SET teacher to access the class Seesaw account.
- Ensure that timetables for pupils with SEN include time for engagement with their special educational tasks.
- Collaborate with SET teachers to ensure awareness of the ***differentiated*** work being covered by the class teacher with the SEN pupils.

Special Education Teachers and SNAs will:

- Be guided by the class teacher and will assist the child with appropriate assignments and support. Teachers will be mindful of the challenge presented to the SEN pupil engaging with remote learning and may support the pupil with video link via Zoom to adequately prepare the child to work on the Seesaw platform.
- Offer activities in line with the children's SSPs via the Seesaw platform and will check in with parents of pupils on SSPP at least once per fortnight. (Should the Special Education teacher deem it necessary to arrange a Zoom call to support the well-being of a pupil, arrangements will be made to facilitate same in line with the guidelines.)
- Have their own Seesaw account or be connected to the class Seesaw account. Assignments will be sent directly to pupils via the Seesaw platform.

Where possible, in this evolving and unprecedented situation best practice in teaching and learning will continue to apply. Pupils are expected to make every effort to complete all assignments to the best of their ability and upload them on time.

Data-Protection and Child-Protection Procedures

Pupils should not share photographs of themselves without parents' permission. Photographs containing personal identifiers (e.g. pictures of students) shared by students on the Seesaw platform should remain on the platform, without exception. Students and staff are not permitted to download and share these photographs with others unless it is in relation to child-protection procedures.

Additional Considerations

In the event of an extended period of remote teaching and learning, for those who do not provide permission for their children to utilise the Seesaw platform, or for whom pupils' use of digital technology is not an option in the home, our policy is to email, post, or hand-deliver lists of activities and resources to parents. Parents will be responsible for printing and returning work to teachers via email or post.

Where pupils or teachers are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements during the school closure, continuity of schooling will take place as far as possible.

Communication with External Agencies

During a partial or full school closure, St. Fiachra's SNS will maintain appropriate contact with any necessary external agencies including the HSE, NEPS, NCSE and Túsla Education Support Service.

St. Fiachra's SNS has developed and reviewed all policies relevant to supporting pupils' remote learning, i.e. 'The Acceptable Use' Policy, the 'Child Safe Guarding' Statement and the Data Protection Policy. This Remote Teaching and Learning Policy was developed in response to the Covid19 Pandemic to include learning platforms used and protocols for teachers, pupils, parents and guardians during this period of remote teaching and learning.

This Remote Teaching and Learning Plan was ratified by the Board of Management St Fiachra's SNS at its meeting on: February 9th 2021 and is subject to change, in light of further guidance or instruction received from the Department of Education and Skills/HSE Public Health.

Chairperson : **Date:**

Principal: **Date:**

Appendix 1

Remote Teaching and Learning Provision for the following Covid 19 related scenarios

Provision for children who are at very high risk of Covid 19

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

Provision for children who are instructed to self-isolate by their GP or HSE Public Health

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. If parents feel it is necessary, generic activities will be made available in the library on Seesaw, where only the absent child can access them. Alternatively, parents can collect worksheets from outside the 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).

In this case the teacher continues to teach the class face-to-face and is not available for full-time remote teaching. Parents can collect the child's books from the school and a programme of work will be prepared for the absent child. The child should upload their completed work to Seesaw where the teacher can correct and comment on the uploaded work. Children in receipt of SNA support will be offered regular contact by the SNA.

3.Class pod (group of children) instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate.

Where the teacher is on COVID-19 leave, he/she will prepare daily work for the pod using Seesaw and check in with the pod to offer motivation and social interaction. A substitute teacher will teach the remaining pod groups in the class. Teachers will use their school laptops and substitute teacher will use school resources available.

If the teacher at home with a pod is on sick leave, the Special Education Teaching Team will provide the instructional activities for the pod.

Where a pod is at home and teacher remains in school with the majority of pupils, that teacher continues with the pupils in attendance. SET from that class switches to assign and correct work sent electronically in collaboration with class teacher. SET may need to reduce timetable with other classes also depending on how much time is allocated to the affected class. Children in receipt of SNA support will be offered regular contact by the SNA.

4.School bubble (whole class) instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate (14 day isolation period) or otherwise closed for 2 weeks or longer.

Teachers will provide daily work with a focus on core subject areas, using Seesaw. Children can interact with their teacher over Seesaw and receive feedback on their work.

Teachers may use Zoom meetings or other video platforms as a social forum to check in with their pupils and to promote their wellness.

Children in receipt of SNA support will be offered regular contact by the SNA .

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

Actions as per number 4 above.

6. A teacher / number of teachers in the school are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements.

If the teacher's class group is still attending school, a substitute teacher will be sought to cover this teacher's teaching responsibilities in the school for this period, and the teacher restricting his/her movements will support the work of the school in developing and delivering its programmes of teaching and learning for pupils as per Section 12 of Circular 0049/2020 where possible.

If the teacher's class is also self-isolating or restricting their movements the class teacher(s) will be required to provide remote/distance teaching to all pupils in the class, using the school's digital platform(s) or other agreed method as needed where possible.