Saint Helen's Junior School, Portmarnock, Co Dublin

Roll no. 19578P

Distance Learning Policy

In response to this time of uncertainty regarding Covid-19 school closures, we have formulated this policy to outline how the school will maintain the link between school and home. In the event of another whole or partial school closure, we aim to continue to communicate with our pupils through various means. 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 and Anti-Bullying Policy. The Acceptable Use Policy, Code of Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy are available to view on the school website

https://www.sthelensjunior.com/policies-and-documents/

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).

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

Teaching and Learning is always evolving, especially, as we move deeper into the 21st century. Developments in IT 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, 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. St Helen's 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.

Guidelines for Good Online Communication in St Helen's JNS

- Under no circumstances should pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.

- Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.

- 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 is appropriate.

- Staff members will communicate with pupils and their families using school approved platforms: Aladdin Connect, Gmail, Google Classroom and Google Meet

- Any electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families.

- For security reasons, passwords will be provided to families, where applicable.

- St Helen's NS cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are compromised.

- Parental permission will be acquired before Google Meet is used to communicate with students. The following will be sent to parents before permission is signed:

In order to proceed with Google Meet, it is important that the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Acceptable Use Policy is followed. Please note that children are not obliged to participate in the Video calls. The above policies are available to read on our school website

https://www.sthelensjunior.com/policies-and-documents/

Please note the following guidelines;

- all children should be seated at a kitchen table/ office-desk for the duration of the video call.

- children must remain under parental supervision throughout the sessions.

- no photographs or recordings of participating children should be taken.

- should any behaviour be deemed inappropriate by the teacher, the teacher will immediately terminate the meeting. Parents may contact the teacher to discuss any concerns.

- two members of staff will be online for the duration of each call.

St Helen's JNS will use four online platforms for communicating and connecting with our families / pupils. Our 'Distance Learning Plan' will include a combination of assigned work and lessons via Google Classroom and video calls via Google Meet.

1: Aladdin Connect

Staff will communicate regularly with parents and pupils via Aladdin Connect. All families are asked to download the Aladdin Connect and log into the School's account and to check it daily for updates and important information from the principal and teachers. Parental queries will be addressed during school hours only (8:30-2:30) and should relate strictly to your child's teaching and learning.

2: Loom

Use of Pre-made Videos: Staff may use 'Loom Screen Recorder' to record and send videos to the pupils. The videos should have an educational or social benefit.

3: Google Classroom/Gmail

Google Classroom is a secure online platform which effectively enables teachers to set tasks or assignments and include instructions for students to use at home. Our teachers may also provide feedback and communicate with pupils via Google Classroom/Google Mote (Voice message recorder). At the beginning of each school year, students will be issued with a school email account for educational purposes only. Throughout the year Google Classroom will be used to set weekly homework to enable a smooth transition should the children be

required to work remotely. Both the school email address and Google Drive are to be used for educational purposes only. The students will be confined to sending and receiving emails within the St Helen's JNS domain. The email address provided by the school to each student is the property of St Helen's JNS. Use of email addresses is purely to access the Google Classroom/Google Meet. All student email accounts and connected google drive accounts are deleted once children leave the school permanently. If a child receives any inappropriate emails, he/she should inform the class teacher and a parent/guardian. Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person. Internet chat/social networking sites: Students will not have access to 'Google Hangouts chat'. Information on how to access Google Classroom can be found on the website.

https://www.sthelensjunior.com/covid-19-links/google-classroom-letter-to-parents/

4: Google Meet

Class teachers will engage with the children using the video call service Google Meet. The children are not obliged to participate in the video calls. A link to the meeting will be available to view on Google Classroom. Parents will be asked not to share the meeting link with anyone else. The students will use their own account to access the call. Children must remain under parental supervision throughout the sessions. Two staff members will be on the call at all times. No photographs or recordings of participants' should be taken by the teacher, parents or children. Should any behaviour be deemed inappropriate by the teacher, the teacher will immediately terminate the meeting. 'Google Meet' will be used through Google Classroom. Students will only have access to the meeting while the teacher is online and in the video call. Students will be unable to video call each other. It is important that the school's Child Safeguarding Statement is followed. Consent for use of group video chats will be required from parents. Consent will be requested using Aladdin.

Parents will be asked to agree to the following: I have read and understand the guidelines issued to me associated with Google Meet. I give permission for my child to participate in online video calls with teachers from St Helen's JNS

Rules for Pupils using Online Communication Methods

For submitting learning:

- Submit work and pictures that are appropriate. Having an adult look over the work before submitting is also recommended.
- Use of kind and friendly words.

For video calls:

- Pictures, screenshots or recordings of the video calls are not allowed.

- Remember our school rules – they are still in place, even online.

- Set up your device in a quiet space, with no distractions in the background.

- Join the video with your microphone muted.

- Raise your hand before speaking, just like you would do in class.

- If you have the chance to talk, speak in your normal voice, using kind and friendly words.

- Show respect by listening to others while they are speaking.

- Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the video call.

- Be on time – set a reminder if it helps.

- Enjoy! Don't forget to wave hello to everyone when you join!

Guidelines for Parents / Guardians

<u>For learning:</u>

- It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that pupils are supervised while they work online.

- Check over the work which pupils send to their teacher, ensuring it is appropriate.

- Continue to revise online safety measures with pupils. More information on internet safety can be found on Webwise https://www.webwise.ie/

- Ensure that the school has the correct email address for effective communication

<u>For video calls:</u>

- Under no circumstances should pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.

- The main purpose of a video call is to engage in online learning activities while maintaining a social connection between the school staff and pupils. Encourage pupils to listen and enjoy the experience.

- 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 ensure that your child is on time for a scheduled video.

- 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.

- Participants in the call should be dressed appropriately.

- It is important to note that any breach of the above guidelines will result in a discontinuation of this method of communication. A breach may also result in a person being immediately removed from a meeting or a meeting being immediately terminated.

Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols for Students:

- Check assigned work each week

- Communication may only take place during normal school hours

- The normal school calendar will apply

- The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:

  Code of Behaviour, Anti- Bullying Policy, Acceptable Use Policy

- 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

- In so far as possible, provision for SEN students will be made when using Remote Learning methodologies,

- As far as possible, provision for students at very high-risk to Covid 19 will be made when using Remote Learning methodologies.

Responsibilities of the Student

  - To cooperate with their parents and teachers.

  - To work well, to do what they can and to do their best.

  - To complete lessons the teacher has set.

  - To make sure that the teacher gets to see the work they have asked for when it is finished (with the aid of a parent if necessary)

Remote Teaching & Learning Protocols for Parents

- To ensure protocols for pupils are adhered to.

- To check-in on their child's school work on a daily basis and talk to their child about the work being assigned.

- The health and wellbeing of all is paramount. Circumstances may change for any of us unexpectedly; teachers or parents, so please keep schooling in perspective and do not allow anything school related to impinge on your child negatively. You are the primary educator of your child and you make those calls. We encourage a little work every weekday for routine. We provide work and guidance and ask parents and pupils to do their best and that is all.

Responsibilities of the Parent

- To provide the time and space to support their child/children so that they can engage, complete and return the work that the teacher has set.
- To support the development of the child/children's reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.
- To encourage the development of the child/children's number skills.
- Student use of web-based tools is for educational purposes only and at the direction of a teacher and under the supervision of a parent/guardian. Please supervise your child/children online.
- To keep in touch with your child's teacher and to respond to any messages sent to you. Communication may only take place during normal school hour

Remote Teaching & Learning Protocols for Teachers / SNAs

- Check uploaded work each week.
- Communication may only take place during normal school hours.
- The normal school calendar will apply.
- The following school policies apply to remote teaching and learning:

  Child Protection Policy, Data Protection Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, code of Positive Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy

- 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.

Responsibilities of the teacher

Our staff have made a considerable effort to develop their skills to provide for distance learning. If distance learning becomes necessary in the future, they plan to continue to:

- Motivate and engage pupils
- Check uploaded work each day
- Facilitate the further development of reading and writing skills
- Develop number skills
- Provide opportunities for students to practice listening and speaking skills
- Develop children's creativity
- Provide a variety of ways in which pupils can demonstrate learning

Remote Teaching & Learning Provision specifically for the following Covid-19 related scenarios

Children who are High Risk:

Provision for children who are at very high risk to 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 to Covid-19 (see HSE Guidelines) where medical certification has been provided to the school.

Children and/or teachers who are instructed to self isolate:

In the case of 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): Work will be allocated by the Class Teacher via email/phone call. Work folders will be delivered to their home. The SEN Teacher will follow up with the pupil via email/phone call.

3. School POD (group of six) instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate: Work will be allocated by the Class Teacher on Google Classroom. Work folders will be delivered to their homes. The SEN Teacher will follow up with the pupils via Google Classroom.

4. School bubble (whole class) instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate (14 day isolation period): Class Teacher will engage with the class daily on Google Classroom and weekly on Google Meet. Loom will be used to send a daily pre recorded lesson (focusing on maths/literacy). Books will be collected by parents at the school. Work should be submitted by the children weekly using Google Classroom. The Class Teacher will use Google Mote to provide verbal feedback.

5. Whole school closure as instructed by HSE Public Health (duration of closure will be advised by Public Health). Class Teacher and SEN teacher will engage with pupils, using a blended approach of daily pre-recorded lessons (using Loom), Google Classroom and weekly contact on Google Meet. (Note: Google Meet calendar will be decided on to avoid sibling clashes and to ensure two adults are on each call.) Work should be submitted by the children weekly using Google Classroom. The Class Teacher will use Google Mote to provide verbal feedback.

6. If a situation arises where the class teacher is sick, the SEN Teacher or a substitute will assign lessons and engage with the children.

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

- We are encouraging parents to "Do what you can, within your circumstances"

- There will be no school work set for planned school closures / holidays: there will be no interaction on Google Meet, Gmail or Google Classroom during these times.

- Please keep abreast of postings on the school Aladdin app and Google Classroom – These are our main modes of communication.

- We ask parents/guardians, students and teachers to ensure protocols are adhered to at all times.

- Families experiencing difficulties accessing devices should contact the school for support.

- If you have yet to connect to any of the on-line platforms/school App, please do so. If you are experiencing difficulties please contact the school and we will assist you in any way that we can. Eimear Kane is the school's IT Coordinator and can be contacted via email eimear.kane@sthelensjunior.com

- You may also contact your class teacher on his/her school email address or the school principal on principal@sthelensjunior.com

- We thank the school community for adhering to the above guidelines for everyone's safety and welfare.

Recommended Apps and Websites

In addition to a pared back plan of work for your child/children, we suggest the following Apps/websites for your child's use too, if you can access them. Educational websites are available on our school website

https://www.sthelensjunior.com/covid-19-links/educational-links-244/

Apps:

Cúla 4: Excellent for younger pupils for Irish vocab – very child friendly. There are also videos of your children's favourite cartoons here as Gaeilge which would be useful to watch occasionally to keep up with Irish

Starfall: For spellings. Again, very child friendly and useful to keep spellings progressing without feeling like schoolwork

Jolly Phonics App: to keep up phonics learning for infant classes

Dolch Words Apps: (there is a wide range available): for the development of sight words

Nessy Apps: for reading for pupils with dyslexia or difficulties

PinkFong: Digital stories for infant classes. Excellent and engaging

Toontastic: pupils can devise their own digital story, picking a range of characters, settings, even musical background. They plan a beginning, middle and end to their story and can record their own voices to tell the story

Puppet Pals: similar to toontastic – useful for younger pupils. They can record themselves telling the story also

Review

Our Distance Learning Policy will be subject to regular monitoring and reviewed by the In School Management Team.

The plan was ratified by the Board of Management of St Helen's JNS on25th June 2021 and is subject to change, in light of any guidance or instruction received from the Department of Education and Skills/HSE Public Health.