⚜ GOV.UK

Guidance

Adapting the curriculum for remote education

Schools have been using various methods to adapt the curriculum for remote education to best meet the needs of pupils.

Published 5 May 2020

From:
> Department for Education (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)

Applies to:
> England

Contents

- The amount of curriculum content schools are trying to teach
- Balancing the consolidation of prior knowledge with teaching new content
- Tailoring to phase and subject
- Collaborating and sharing approaches
- Tailoring the remote curriculum for pupils with SEND
- Case studies

> This guidance is part of Remote education practice for schools during coronavirus (COVID-19) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-practice-for-schools-during-coronavirus-covid-19). The Department for Education has been working with schools to develop this series, based on the current experiences and practices of teachers and school leaders.

Even though teaching remotely will not be the same as education in a classroom, schools have found that the essential principles of good curriculum design apply to remote education as well as classroom teaching.

Many teachers who are developing curricula for remote education are continuing to carefully sequence material. Any new knowledge is integrated into larger concepts and themes to ensure richness through breadth and variety, and to build in spaced opportunities to revisit prior content.

The amount of curriculum content schools are trying to teach

Teachers should think carefully about what is most important for their pupils to learn and remember. Many schools are finding they need to take a pragmatic approach to covering the curriculum, prioritising important concepts and particular groups of pupils where necessary.

Teachers might decide to postpone particularly tricky concepts until a later stage, although the flexibility to alter the sequence will depend on the nature of the subject.

Louis Everett of West London Free School described their approach to managing workload. "We knew that the pressures of working from home would vary and there would be increased workload whilst adapting to remote learning," he said. "Therefore, we taught year 10 and 12 only for the first two weeks following school closure. We have devised a new reduced curriculum for key stage 3 in which they will receive 2 live, interactive lessons a week for core subjects (maths, English and science) and one for all other subjects. This approach also helps to manage demands at home for families (for example, access to technology in families of more than one child)."

Balancing the consolidation of prior knowledge with teaching new content

While adjusting to providing remote education, many schools are finding it's helpful to take a phased approach to curriculum content when familiarising teachers and pupils with new ways of working.

Some schools are postponing the introduction of new curriculum content until remote education practices are better embedded. They're spending the first few weeks reinforcing long-term memory by consolidating topics and concepts already taught.

But many schools are finding that consolidation does not have to mean repeating old lessons. Familiar concepts can be reinforced through new examples, such as using the 'Meanwhile, elsewhere…' approach when teaching history. In this way, some schools are finding it helpful to focus on breadth, teaching new material that revisits known concepts and supports retention.

"We have sequenced remote lessons just as we would in school," said Janine Ashman of St Peter's Church of England Primary School. "This has meant consolidating existing knowledge before moving onto new and ensuring links are there to support children's schema when new concepts are introduced."

Tailoring to phase and subject

Schools have tailored approaches to remote education by phase and subject. Year 10 pupils, for example, need more exposure to new material than children in key stage 1. And in many primary schools, there is a strong focus on reading for their younger pupils.

Lewis Matheson, Director of GCSE and A Level Physics Online Ltd and school-based physics coach at Beechen Cliff School, explained his experience. "We are setting theme-based project work once a fortnight at key stage 3 but are mainly consolidating GCSE content with year 10," he said. "Any new material we introduce for year 10s will be the more straightforward topics. Year 11 are revising GCSE content, so we are not setting new work for them."

Collaborating and sharing approaches

When reshaping schemes of work for remote education, schools are sharing the workload as far as possible. Many teachers are finding collaboration particularly helpful, both within and across schools.

"We have found that staff communication has been key to maintaining our collaborative ethos and to ensure that staff do not feel alone," said Steve Smith of HISP Research School at Thornden. "As everyone is trying something new, it can get frustrating and tiring. Many departments have set up WhatsApp groups to support each other and are having online Teams meetings to share ideas and collaborate."

Tailoring the remote curriculum for pupils with SEND

Consideration will need to be given to how remote education approaches can be tailored to ensure the content is accessible to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including children who are in receipt of SEN support.

Many schools have found that through the support of teaching assistants (TAs) and special educational needs and disabilities coordinators (SENCOs/SENDCOs), they have been able to produce personalised learning packs that meet individuals' needs appropriately.

Janine Ashman of St Peter's Church of England Primary School described her experience."For SEND pupils with top-up funding, we have provided individual learning packs that our SENCO has created to meet their Individual Education Plan (IEP) objectives," she said. "These are physical resources that we deliver to families' homes."

Jonathan Bishop of Cornerstone Academy Trust highlighted that: "teachers continue to plan personalised work for those with SEND, which can be delivered in a targeted fashion through many of the platforms that we use."

The Pavillion Pupil Referral Unit explained: "TAs/SENCOs with specific knowledge and experience of working with key pupils with SEND are asked to plan adaptations of tasks and learning activities for their key pupils (especially for those pupils who have a one-to-one relationship with a key TA). They are also asked to provide video conferencing support where required to aid pupils to complete learning activities."

Case studies

Teachers can read the following case studies from schools and teachers about their experiences adapting curriculum content for remote education:

- adapting the primary school curriculum (https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/adapting-the-primary-school-curriculum)
- adapting the secondary science curriculum (https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/adapting-the-secondary-science-curriculum)
- adapting the secondary geography curriculum (https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/adapting-the-secondary-geography-curriculum)
- adapting the secondary curriculum across multiple subjects (https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/adapting-the-secondary-curriculum-across-multiple-subjects)

Published 5 May 2020

Explore the topic

- School curriculum (https://www.gov.uk/education/school-curriculum)