

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY

Remote and blended learning: curricular challenges and approaches

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Providing Inspection services for:
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Introduction

On 20 March 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, pre-school settings¹ and primary, post-primary and special schools across Northern Ireland closed to children and young people². In the interim, children and young people have engaged in remote learning at home either through paper-based materials provided by their setting or school, online learning materials or a combination of both.

Currently the situation in regard to the COVID-19 is changing rapidly and pre-school settings and schools are at various stages of devising safe, effective and efficient arrangements for the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year. It is anticipated that the balance between classroom-based teaching and learning combined with a range of remote learning approaches will vary between individual pre-school settings and schools, as well as for individual year groups, and change as the academic year progresses, with school attendance, dependent on medical and scientific advice, returning to pre-COVID-19 patterns.

The planning for blended learning approaches is dependent on factors, such as: the number of staff and children and young people; the size and layout of the pre-school setting or school; subject uptake; and, the availability of suitable teaching and learning spaces for each curriculum/subject area. The leadership and management of change is crucial in planning for blended learning approaches, a number of considerations need to be taken into account, including: the well-being of children and young people and staff; the curriculum; the uncertainty of the arrangements for examinations and assessment; and, health and safety.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was commissioned by the Department of Education as part of the Continuity of Learning Programme, to provide guidance on effective ways in which the curriculum could be tailored (planned for, implemented and assessed) across the range of areas of learning and subject areas for a phased return for children to full-time education. The Department asked for a series of pieces of work which would reflect the changing circumstances in which schools are working to provide up-to-date advice and guidance on an ongoing basis. This publication represents the first phase of that work. Across June 2020, the ETI met with reference groups of curricular co-ordinators, Heads of Departments and leaders on a cross-sectional basis from across Northern Ireland to seek their views on the challenges of remote learning and teaching, and what approaches they might take in moving towards the return to school with as many children and young people as possible, complemented by blended learning where necessary.

The Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards Directorate of the Department of Education (DE) has initiated a number of projects to ensure that appropriate action is taken to secure, as far as possible, the learning of pupils at home and in school, during the current pandemic and beyond.

 The logo for 'Supporting Learning' features a vibrant rainbow arching over the text. The words 'Supporting' and 'Learning' are written in a purple, rounded, sans-serif font. The 'S' in 'Supporting' is particularly large and stylized, overlapping the 'L' in 'Learning'.	<p>Supporting Learning</p> <p>The Department of Education's Continuity of Learning Project, Supporting Learning provides support for teachers and parents working together so that pupils continue to learn at home and through school.</p>
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¹ In this instance, this refers to all DE funded pre-school settings, nursery schools, nursery units, private pre-school settings, voluntary pre-school settings and Irish medium pre-school settings.

² Other than the children of key workers and vulnerable children who continued to attend their own school or a C-19 cluster school.

[The DE publications](#) provide guidance and support for settings and schools as they plan for reopening and the 2020/21 academic year; this is supplemented with more detailed [Supporting Learning³ guidance](#) which includes resources, guidance materials and case studies to support blended learning. There is also the [Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education](#) and the [CCEA curricular guidance](#) to support curriculum delivery of the statutory Northern Ireland curriculum in schools.

Within the sections that follow, a summary is provided of the challenges and potential approaches that have been discussed by the reference groups with the ETI.

The context for post-primary schools

Post-primary schools are on a continuum in how they are responding to the needs of their communities and addressing the impact within their schools owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Across all key stages, many non-subject specific issues emerged, such as: keeping pupils motivated and engaged; Information Technology deficiencies in pupil access, along with connectivity issues not just in rural areas, but also in urban areas and in families where the connectivity is needed for working adults or siblings or there is only one device in the family; staff training needs around all issues of remote learning; and, teachers trying to compensate for lack of conventional classroom structures and consolidation moments, such as group work, layered learning activities and end of lesson plenaries.

Where a school prior to the COVID-19 pandemic had focused on e-learning, developing their Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provision and its use across the curriculum, it was much better placed to take on online learning on the scale required; teachers possessed the confidence and expertise to do so, and pupils were already familiar with the technology. The converse of this situation also exists, with instances where staff training has just begun in the use of platforms such as Google Classrooms and Microsoft Teams to facilitate approaches to blended learning and training for pupils also needs to be factored in. While many pupils have demonstrated high levels of ICT skills, some were less confident in applying ICT skills to access learning; this is an aspect that will have to be addressed for successful blended learning in the new academic year.

Parental support and the ability to create an environment conducive to learning varies from home to home for a complexity of reasons. Teaching, learning, assessment and providing pastoral support for pupils at a distance has been challenging and pressurised for teachers too. Many schools increased their contact with parents in order to support them and their children pastorally, answer any queries and allay anxieties. However, there is variation in pupil engagement with remote learning across year groups and schools. Some pupils disengaged significantly and this gives serious cause for concern. There are instances of as much as half of a year group not submitting work despite staff following up with letters and phone calls home; this is time consuming and has not necessarily impacted positively on pupil engagement. Some schools are trying to utilise the rewards system to address this concern.

Importantly in discussion with the ETI, the reference groups spoke about analysing and reflecting on engagement levels to inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment going forward. Commonalities exist: for example a decline in engagement by pupils in key transition years, year 10, year 12 and year 14, where year 10 have made Key Stage (KS) 4 subject choices and years 12 and 14 where pupils have had their formal examinations cancelled.

³ This project involves the Department working collaboratively with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CNaG), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC), the Education Authority (EA) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

What schools have in common is the commitment to provide for pupils in the blended learning environment, while recognising that blended approaches to learning can be difficult for pupils and parents too. Despite instances of synchronous lessons taking place remotely in this period, teachers and pupils have missed the interaction in learning between teacher and pupil, and between pupils, that comes from the physical learning environment.

Challenges for delivery of the curriculum and approaches taken or planned

The reference groups identified varied challenges which they have encountered since March; they appreciated the opportunity to come together to talk about their specialist areas. These challenges have changed as time has passed, while new challenges will await when schools re-open for the new academic year.

In the absence of face-to-face interactions, some teachers have found providing feedback via learning online challenging. Synchronous feedback is not always possible and teachers report that conventional summative correcting of work is more time consuming under remote arrangements.

There are particular concerns around pupils who require additional help and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is reported that the pupils who struggle are not necessarily asking for help, whereas more able pupils or those better able to adapt to independent learning are coping well, meaning there is potentially a widening experiential and attainment gap between these groups of pupils.

While it remains the responsibility of each school to ensure that it meets its statutory obligations in respect of all aspects of the curriculum, dealing with the uncertainties around COVID-19 makes planning challenging and adjustments will have to be made as more information becomes available and circumstances unfold.

There is more flexibility at KS 3 given that there are no external examinations; however KS4 and post-16 with external examinations pose greater problems for pupils and teachers. It will continue to be important that sufficient information is provided to enable pupils to make secure judgements and decisions about their next stage in education, training and employment.

Focus is being given to developing positive dispositions and attitudes to learning, and self-regulation in advance of the pupils' return to school. There is a recognition that some pupils struggled with maintaining engagement given the sudden loss of routine, structure and face-to-face interaction with peers and teachers. Moving forward, this lack of engagement will be addressed by re-establishing those connections and systems, with as many pupils as possible returning to school, complemented by blended learning where necessary.

Consideration is being given to what is best delivered through classroom based learning and teaching within school, and what aspects can be managed better remotely. There are discussions about providing appropriate levels of support and scaffolding for new learning to help pupils manage with greater autonomy, through for example breakout rooms online for differentiated work, group feedback and individual support.

Key transition points are a "big step up" for pupils, from Year 7 to Year 8, moving from KS3 to KS4 and beginning GCSE study or moving from KS4 to post-16. After a period of remote learning, some pupils will need support to build their confidence in undertaking courses of study potentially through blended learning approaches. There remains a need to ensure the pupils' experiences in KS3 build on their learning from KS2 and prepare the foundations for subject choices at KS4 and post-16.

A summary follows of the key challenges and some current and future approaches that have been discussed by the reference groups with the ETI.

The Arts

The three subject strands of the Arts are: Art and Design, Drama and Music. All have a significant practical content which needs to be planned for. There are concerns that with the ratio of classroom based teaching and learning to remote learning, time within school will potentially be more limited and the Arts may be squeezed further in the curriculum.

Art and Design

Challenges

- It has not been possible to achieve equity for pupils, KS3 pupils in particular have limited art equipment at home. There are pupils who have had good opportunities at home to continue with their learning in Art and Design; one pupil can have access to resources and materials for art and design and another pupil will produce a drawing homework on lined paper.
- There are unknowns which are central to delivery, pupil engagement and attainment, including being able to undertake visits to galleries and invite visitors to schools and pupils being able to take work from school to home and back again, essential for the completion of pieces of work in Art which require significant investment of pupil time beyond the classroom at any time.
- Concerns about potentially being unable to use certain materials and equipment due to [Public Health Agency \(PHA\) Northern Ireland](#) guidelines and the impact on pupils' ability to complete aspects of courses.

Approaches

- Teachers adapted schemes of work at very short notice to take account of the move from the school to home learning.
- Some schools offered post-16 taster courses in an attempt to maintain pupil engagement in year 12.
- Online resources have enabled pupils to share their work online; additionally there are examples of the creation of teaching videos for Art and Design and Moving Image Arts to support blended learning.
- In maintaining access to materials and equipment, some schools are following the guidance set out in [CLEAPPS guidance](#), others are, for example providing individual packs of materials for personal use by pupils or using personal keyboards.
- The reference group deliver a range of qualifications at KS4/post-16: Art and Design, Creative Crafts, Moving Image Arts and Photography. There are challenges in covering of specification content for the various awarding bodies in time remaining and available.

Music

Challenges

- Teachers are concerned about pupils having missed critical elements of both the GCSE and A Level music specifications, particularly the practical and composition elements.
- Group work is being lost, meaning pupils are unable to talk about their compositions and performances with their peers or to learn from each other. Teachers fear that the group ensembles in music, as well as one-to-one music tuition will be at risk.
- Extra-curricular activities are the passion of music departments and teachers are extremely concerned that without this extra-curricular involvement, it will have a detrimental effect to the music departments and ultimately affect numbers taking on music at GCSE and A Level.
- There is concern about how to encourage and plan for the involvement of all pupils, including the incoming year 8 pupils to take part in choirs, orchestra, traditional groups, school productions and assemblies, as well as playing and singing at various school occasions.
- It is crucial for peripatetic music tutors, from the Education Authority (EA) or private, to continue to provide the service in school especially for Years 12 and 14. Logistically it will be a challenge to co-ordinate the peripatetic music tutors and the pupils so that they are in school on the same days.
- The arrangements for sanitising practical equipment after each class will mean a reduction in how much practical equipment can be used. There is a risk that KS3 classes will disengage and not be able to enjoy the music classes as before due to restrictions on the practical element.

Approaches

- Teachers are having to undertake significant preparation and adapt resources for online learning. They reported that it has increased their knowledge of wider resources that are available online, for example, YouTube videos and PowerPoints.
- Potential of blended learning approaches being explored with listening, practical and composition elements taught in class and followed up with log-books, video tutorials, PowerPoints, worksheets, theory practice and quizzes at home. It was suggested that there is currently evidence the current circumstances are developing a more independent approach from some pupils.
- KS 3 lessons (mainly listening activities) on-line in PowerPoint presentations or via video tutorials and then the pupils complete written work either online or on hard copy worksheets.

- Instances of KS4 and post-16 pupils having lessons twice weekly via PowerPoint presentations and video tutorials and written work is being set and marked by the teachers. Small group tutorials are being held through Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams. The concern is that these pupils may not all have the practical equipment or specific music technology at home and therefore teaching in class is considered crucial for practical work and composition at both GCSE and A Level going forward.
- Going forward, it is considered there is a high possibility that all music GCSE and A Level pupils could attend class, dependant on the size of music rooms and the size of the classes. KS3 classes would have to be reduced to adhere to current PHA guidelines.

English (Irish in Irish Medium Schools) with Media Education Language and Literacy

Challenges

- While Gaeilge is a subject in its own right, it is also the medium through which pupils access the whole curriculum in Irish Medium (IM) schools and some of the curriculum in IM streams. If pupils do not have the opportunity to process the language purposefully while learning remotely then comprehension across the whole curriculum can be compromised.

Within English, many significant subject-specific disruptions emerged.

- Remote teaching arrangements restrict the high quality holistic experiences expected as part of English related subjects.
- Developing pupils as better oral communicators across key stages 3 and 4 was highly problematic, with implications for examination requirements. There are difficulties in developing pupils' oracy skills in formal and collaborative contexts when they are not in school.
- At KS 3, there were also difficulties with novel and drama work due to some practical challenges around downloading and accessing texts where resources are extremely limited in some schools. Aspects of more didactic and traditional instructional pedagogy were compromised and this had consequences in the teaching of literature, particularly in the teaching of novels and drama, where there is a large body of content, alternative readings and interpretations, as well as literary concepts and techniques to master.
- Supporting pupils' writing was considered more straight-forward. Writing is dependent on other variables, such as, teacher instruction, access to wider reading materials and fuller engagement in the *process* of crafting writing in a careful and developmental way. These issues may need looked at again when adopting blended learning approaches.

- At KS4 and post-16, the teaching process was notably 'slower', compounded by other generic issues around disengagement and other pedagogical limitations. For example, dilemmas were faced around how best to optimize teaching time by consolidation of prior learning, or attempting to introduce new material. Choosing to start new texts, or not, was difficult and the group felt this will have implications for examination classes next year.
- The transition for the pupils from year 11 and year 13 is a cause of concern with a potential for knowledge deficits, compared to other years. Furthermore, the remote arrangements have presented challenges around the controlled assessment aspects of the GCSE course.
- Overall, there is concern that there may be a large disparity in lost learning in English which will be extremely difficult to gauge accurately, until well into the new term as and when all pupils return to school.

Approaches

- The teaching of poetry was more manageable than prose and drama, partly due to its more compartmentalized and shorter form and its suitability to be accessed and chunked more easily.
- An example of a solution to support reading has been for pupils to access electronic texts, which reduces the handling and sharing of books; importantly access to texts extended beyond the class novels or textbooks to other reading materials that promote wider reading and reading for pleasure.
- There has been adaptation of existing materials. For example, some teachers provided Power Point presentations with newly added voice-overs for their pupils. The adaptation method builds on existing resources that teachers already have and "tweaking" these, where appropriate, is more manageable. There is an appetite among some teachers to improve their technical skills to help adapt existing resources digitally.
- The understanding of how technology could support learning and teaching increased incrementally as teachers became more comfortable with a particular learning platform.

Environment and Society

While schools are endeavouring to deliver the minimum entitlement, there are some concerns that the Environment and Society curriculum could be impacted negatively for the immediate future.

History and Geography are discreet subjects for pupils in post-primary; delivered through the World Around Us in primary schools, their uniqueness needs to be highlighted and pupils need to be supported to work in a manner that is suited to blended learning approaches.

History

Challenges

- Group work, discussion and debate are key learning approaches in history which also enable pupils to develop their oral communication skills but these are difficult to facilitate remotely.
- Ensuring breadth and balance of historical periods etc. in a reduced timetable.
- Covering all the skills, concepts and knowledge needed within a much shorter time frame.
- Enabling progression in the development of skills and understanding, particularly at KS3 so that pupils have a good baseline with which to enter GCSE.
- Ensuring that pupils who will not choose to progress to key stage 4 leave with a good understanding of history, particularly in relation to an understanding our recent history and the world in which they live.
- How to facilitate remotely the development of attitudes and dispositions such as empathy.
- While there is a wide range of useful online resources such as original moving images, photographs and historical documents, access for pupils can be problematic or indeed, blocked if particular descriptors (e.g. political terms etc.) are used.
- Differentiation to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Assessment approaches to establish a baseline for moving forward.
- Providing feedback to pupils and ensuring they take action to improve their work.
- Maintaining pupils' motivation, in particular when the active learning approaches developed by history departments cannot be facilitated in an online environment.

Approaches

- Using class time judiciously for the development of skills which pupils find challenging such as source analysis, interpretations etc. and using a flipped learning approach with pupils exploring new content before class, so that best use is made of face-to-face learning time.
- Linking history with other subjects (English, Art, etc) in connected learning projects to increase pupil engagement and enjoyment.
- Working more collaboratively with other departments to agree approaches to, for example, aspects of communication, so that these can be taught/reinforced through history.
- Promotion of individual, independent, history research projects linked closely to developing knowledge, skills and understanding.

- Reducing the content at KS3 and placing the focus is on skills and concepts and where these are best developed.
- Reviewing schemes of work to enable learning through a broad and balanced range of historical periods, including overview and in-depth studies.
- Considering alternative ways to facilitate group work in historical enquiries, source analysis, etc. through meeting as online groups.
- Will investigate what is on offer remotely from museums, historical sites etc. in order to enrich the provision.
- If blended learning continues throughout the academic year, ensuring that we keep the aspects of Year 10 that pupils enjoy most, to encourage pupils to keep on the subject at GCSE level.
- Arrangements for smaller classes at post-16 may need to work differently, depending on the approaches determined by senior leadership.

Geography

Challenges

- There are challenges about how to build fieldwork in to the current circumstances; for examinations, the challenge for undertaking and completion of the Fieldwork Module at GCSE is huge. Given the nature of geography as a practical subject, pupils need to experience field work or it may significantly hamper their ability to access the geographical process of inquiry. There are virtual options available but virtual fieldwork is not however suitable for all pupils.
- At GCSE, delivery time for topics will have to be monitored very closely with a potential approach of amending PowerPoints to allow more coverage of topics in place of normal class discussion. It was observed that some topics are challenging to deliver remotely and that a possibility is to alter the sequence of teaching, for example, Weather and Climate normally taught in year 11 to be postponed to year 12 with the hope that pupils will be in school full- time.
- Ability to develop skills could be problematic; an approach being considered of a separate skills book to work on over the summer period.

Approaches

- Resources and PowerPoints have been altered/developed to enable pupils to work more independently. For example, the textbook uploaded to the online platform and booklets for topics to be developed.
- The pupil voice is informing some of the schools about what is working, what could be better.
- To address a concern in relation to the delivery of the AS, one potential approach is to defer the decision making skills-based element until later as the final topic, in the hope that pupils will be attending full-time.

Learning for Life and Work

Planned timetables with a carousel approach in the current circumstances may limit the delivery of the four subject stands of Learning for Life and Work (Employability, Local and Global Citizenship, Personal Development, and Home Economics) and will need to be planned for in other subjects across the curriculum. At KS4, Home Economics is a discreet subject.

Home Economics

Challenges

- There are significant challenges in planning for home economics practical sessions and adhering to social distancing and reducing movement around the classroom, when utilising work areas and equipment.
- In the circumstances, the support of a technician in supporting practical sessions is considered vital; however, some schools do not have full-time technician support.
- Time allocations will be important as practicals will take longer than usual given the challenges. Additionally, there are concerns about the logistics of: sourcing ingredients; distributing ingredients; how will pupils collect their ingredients, for example they are encouraged to weigh/measure/share and collect from a trolley normally. This has potential to impact on the development and application of skills.
- At GCSE, there are concerns about the planning and completion of the controlled assessment, including the extensive bibliography which requires access to IT suites.
- The BTEC Double Award in Hospitality - assessment includes organising an event for teachers and there are concerns opportunities may be limited. There was also concern for those pupils following the Occupational Studies route who are typically pupils who need face- to face-instruction in the physical environment.
- At post-16, there are concerns about coverage of the Nutrition and Food Science qualification. The pupils' feedback in the past has highlighted the research project as very good preparation for progression to university.

Approaches

The reference group talked about specific resources they had used in the current circumstances and gave each other ideas of what beneficial resources they could access, for example a Facebook page has been set up by a Northern Ireland Home Economics teacher which others feed into and a GCSE textbook which is now available digitally.

- Ideas and resources are being shared among teachers on social media.
- Teachers can now access a digital version of some textbooks.

- Consideration being given to practical demonstrations being undertaken via streaming live which will require access to appropriate equipment in the classrooms and agreed processes for pupil attendance; also potential for recording classes that students can access after the practical session.
- Another approach is to front load with theory and ask pupils to do the practical at home – one teacher has done this and two-thirds of the year group carried out the practical at home.

Mathematics with Financial Capacity

Challenges

- The breadth of the mathematical curriculum offer may be impacted negatively, for example, will schools be able to offer GCSE: maths, further maths, and statistics; AS and A level maths, AS and A level further maths, and other arrangements, such as, essential skills, in the current circumstances. There was specific concern over the pace and the content of the specifications for the current Year 10 pupils going into Year 11 next year.
- There are concerns that the pupils who struggle are not asking for help and for some, resilience and perseverance is being lost and a “*can't do maths*” attitude is increasing.
- The use of videos and PowerPoints is leading to more teacher direction rather than a dialogic approach. With remote learning feedback, it can be time-consuming.
- There are examples of activities and investigative type work not being covered because the pupils do not have the equipment at home or the correct type of paper. For some, group work is being lost, meaning pupils are unable to talk mathematically with their peers or to learn from each other. Additionally, there are concerns connection-making is being lost, partly due to the lack of interaction in the physical learning environment which has an impact on pupils making sense of their learning.
- As time has gone on, there has been a dropping off of pupils uploading work. They are losing the sense of purpose and there are differentials appearing. Mathematics classes tend to be streamed or set on ability - it is being reported that ‘top’ sets are “racing ahead”. ‘Strongest’ pupils are getting stronger and working well while those that are less able are some way behind and the gap is widening.
- ‘Synthesising and deepening’ experiences common in the approach to examinations are essential for confident and effective mathematical functioning. There is concern over pupils having missed these critical experiences.
- Practical considerations in relation to resources are a challenge and concerns that this will lead to disadvantage for those who are not in the position to provide such equipment at home. For example, mini whiteboards are used in almost every lesson. Is this safe to do? What about all the mathematical equipment such as rulers, protractors, compasses that are shared also?

- The reference group reported a concern about the expectations of pupils as work is being sent back at all times of the day and a quick response to queries is sought. While older pupils may be more independent learners, those at post-16 still need the work explained to them. It has been reported that it is challenging and time consuming as pupils are all coming back with questions at different times; potential exploration of a way to record common questions for future use.

Approaches

- For some, consolidation has been prioritised rather than starting new topics that have never been seen before to help with the stress levels of pupils. There has been a greater focus on procedural. Have stopped delivery of the “harder” topics at present until a time when they can be delivered face-to-face; however there is concern over the strain this will cause going forward.
- Pupil engagement strategies have included for example virtual hot chocolates being given out as praise and encouragement. Going forward, there is a feeling that when teachers have the pupils in front of them, the onus will be on teaching as much as they can, with reinforcement through consolidation at home.
- Some schools feel that, going forward, the same lesson might need to be delivered a number of times if the full class (or a number of set classes) cannot be present in the same physical space at the same time. In anticipation of what pupils and teachers will be returning to in the new academic year, there are revisions of schemes to include hyperlinks of videos which pupils could watch if they were not in class to support the progression of learning.
- Schemes of work have been adapted; for example, a GCSE scheme of work with *Hegarty Maths/Corbett maths* videos hyperlinked. There has been the use of booklets, commercial videos, teacher videos, show-me videos. An example of a school using this period to make videos for the teaching of the Mechanics part of the GCSE Further Mathematics course and uploaded them to YouTube.
- It was reported that *Hegarty Maths* has been good to keep pupils motivated. It includes a traffic light system on their attainment, feedback from teachers can be easily done, teachers can see how long they have been logged on and can view their various attempts at a question. However it was noted that this can be an expensive purchase for schools. *Blu Tick* was suggested as a free alternative. *Corbett Maths* is being used for videos and worksheets, and booklets are being uploaded to Google Classroom. Some have used *Eedi Maths*, with free diagnostic questions and formative assessment quizzes to identify what each pupil does not understand and why they are going wrong.
- Discussion on the delivery of modules for the pupils from Year 11 going into Year 12 next year centred on a desire for extra ‘past’ papers for the new M7 and M8 specifications; the reference group queried if the papers that were due to be sat in summer 2020 could be released as exemplars.
- Within the reference group, it was indicated that pupils studying the further mathematics GCSE course in Year 12 have kept going as there is a recognition amongst pupils and teachers that the knowledge is needed for A Level study.

Modern Languages

Challenges

- Modern Languages learning and teaching is very interactive, including pair and group work, games and active learning. In the new academic year, there is some potential this may no longer be possible, and the 'fun' element of learning a language will be lost.
- The position of languages on the curriculum is already vulnerable and current arrangements might impact negatively on the pupils' engagement and motivation, resulting in a decline in the number of pupils choosing to study a language at GCSE and A level.
- A big challenge in relation to developing the pupils' skills online is 'Speaking' and teachers feel that the pupils have really missed out during this period. Teachers are hopeful that this will be taken into consideration by examining bodies.
- Being unsure of what the return to school will look like, teachers do not know if there will be time/need for online engagement with the pupils who are not in school. Working on a one week in school, one week at home scenario, schools are developing booklets - some are further on with this work, others feel under pressure to have created booklets by the end of August 2020. The need for open-ended learning activities to ensure that booklets do not close down/limit the pupils' learning was discussed.
- The reference group spoke about the challenges in relation to the lack of time and the amount of content to be covered and the resulting impact on pupils' and staff's well-being.
- The following key questions were raised:
 - How do we really gauge pupil progress over the past 12 weeks?
 - How much do we need to recap/teach again in September?
 - Do we have to cover all of the topics?
 - How do we ensure the pupils are not overwhelmed?
 - Will there be an even bigger gap between the more able and those who require support with their learning?
 - To what extent will those pupils who had been struggling or lacking motivation be turned off from learning languages?
 - What impact will PHA guidance have on contact time?

Approaches

- The past 12 weeks have been a steep learning curve. Schools were at different starting points and with variation in the teachers' understanding and use of IT. However, the schools have adapted well to the situation and report the following approaches.
- Online learning enables the pupils to work at a time and pace that suits them, particularly those who require additional support.
- Enrichment activities have been enjoyable and successful - predominantly for KS3 learners. Teachers have been able to focus on cultural aspects of language learning.
- Teachers are working well together to develop/share resources.
- IT skills have been developed, teachers are learning about different platforms to use, different ways to teach online.
- Teachers are looking forward to integrating their new learning to their practice during the predicted blended period and post COVID-19.

Gaeilge

Challenges

- There has been adaption with the recognition of the potential of, for example, Google Classroom, as much more than just a store for listing homework and that providing content, information and homework is not the same as teaching.
- While teachers and pupils of Gaeilge have access to CCEA's KS3 resource *Snas agus Blas*, a previously identified need for resources at KS 4 Gaeilge remains a priority.
- A key challenge for teachers of Gaeilge is how to expose pupils to high quality oracy while learning remotely. There is agreement that video and/or audio of the teacher is not only essential in maintaining the immersion environment but also in maintaining live contact and building upon relationships. A small number of live teaching sessions have taken place.
- There is a recognition of key challenges ahead, including how to assess individual progression in learning, how to address missed learning for each cohort and how to reach out to those that did not engage. The greatest challenge is considered to be reconnecting with those who did not connect. For those pupils, time will have to be taken to support them in developing more independence in how they approach their learning.

Approaches

- The reference group acknowledged this period has been a steep learning curve for the teachers and pupils of Gaeilge; they have reported that positives have emerged which include the growing confidence and willingness of teachers while teaching remotely, as well as new levels of collaboration within and across departments and schools.
- The reference group felt that it will be very much a pastoral approach come September and are aware that the majority of pupils will have had limited exposure to Irish at home - *what do we know about this pupil?* - *what do we know about their progress?* - *where are the gaps?* - *what must we do now to address individual need?*
- Within KS3, there will be opportunities to revise the way that the KS3 curriculum is approached with a refocus on understanding and wider skills, including creativity. As an approach to blended learning, audio feedback is an opportunity for the learner to hear the appropriate language for learning and for the teacher to expose the pupil to aspects of the language needing developed.
- The teachers of Gaeilge are well practised in sourcing, producing, translating and adapting their own resources and have reported that this continues to be the case.
- The reference group reported that there are newly- and recently-qualified teachers who have led by example in using technology. Departments know what they need and are asking for professional development opportunities to build upon any new skills developed in this period. Improved confidence of teachers and pupils in the use of for example, Collaborate Ultra will also offer pupils the opportunity to participate in structured discussions with peers and facilitate pair and group work.
- The reference group reported that for those pupils who engaged during the current period with remote learning and teaching of Gaeilge, many of their parents report a better awareness of the challenges of learning at home through Irish. It is intended to build upon this new connect with parents moving forward. This will involve more communication with the parents to ensure clear, specific and targeted information on the planned learning and how the parent can help and support their child now and post-COVID-19.

Physical Education

Challenges

Schools and Physical Education (PE) departments face a challenge in planning for the delivery of safe and effective PE on return to school in the new academic year. Adherence to guidance from the [PHA, Northern Ireland](#) is required.

The following challenges and concerns in relation to delivery of the PE Curriculum in the 2020-21 academic year were identified:

- Timetabling for PE (concerns raised that time for PE may be reduced in the new academic year);
- The PE Curriculum and availability of PE facilities (concerns raised about the use of PE indoor facilities being used for other areas of the curriculum);

- Changing rooms;
- External Examinations (concerns raised in relation to time available to cover specification content for the various awarding bodies); and
- Remote learning (applicable to study for PE examinations).

Approaches

The inclusion of PE on the school curriculum will be even more essential on return to school for the new academic year. Due to the COVID-19 situation the current PE curriculum will need to be reconsidered and adapted. This will be dependent on the context and differing needs of each school, dynamic ongoing risk assessments, and adherence to the current PHA guidance.

In discussion with the reference group, the following approaches were highlighted.

- All planning for physical education needs to be within the context of PHA guidelines, prioritising the health, safety, emotional health and wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- As the situation regarding a planned return to school progresses, it may become clearer which PE activities are clearly not possible due to health and safety concerns and which activities may be possible when adhering to PHA advice and guidance.
- Timetabling for physical education classes needs to take account of the “new normal,” that will include the inclusion of appropriate hygiene routines.
- Some considerations for timetabling of PE to ensure:
 - time allocated for PE is not reduced;
 - integration of hygiene routines (before and after) all PE classes (periods of 30/35 minutes would not allow for this), i.e. a reduction in the number of classes timetabled in one school day to reduce the number of set-ups and cleansing routines; and
 - reduction in the number of transitions of pupils moving to and from the PE area(s).
- Going forward, PE Departments could consider the following staged approach to the PE curriculum and availability of facilities, leading in time and in line with PHA guidance to fully engaging in all aspects of the PE curriculum.
- Focus on elements of the PE curriculum that do not involve physical contact or use of equipment e.g. Individual athletic events, non-contact fundamental movement skills, dance, aerobics, walking, Pilates, orienteering within school grounds, health related fitness. Eventually moving, when appropriate, to minimal use of equipment, in clearly defined, physically distanced zoned areas, with small consistent groups/bubbles of pupils and no contact.
- Minimal use of equipment, allocated to the same small groups/bubbles rather than sharing across groups.

- Avoid “pinch points” when planning activities.
- Competitive team games involving contact are currently not possible; schools will keep this under review in line with the PHA guidance.
- Teaching outdoors where possible, while teaching outside rather than indoors is preferable at this time, this will be weather dependent. Inclement weather will restrict the use of outdoor space for PE, so indoor teaching spaces for PE will be required and need to be protected for this purpose.
- Establish clear routines and procedures for the pupils informed by whole school policy; e.g. consider how and when the pupils wash hands, movement to and from PE space including possible use of a one way system in and out from the PE area, how if any equipment used will be cleaned. Such considerations will need to be included in the PE policy, handbooks or other relevant documentation.
- Ongoing dynamic risk assessments carried out. See the [Association for Physical Education](#) COVID-19 *A practical self-review tool for risk assessment*.

There are numerous issues around the use of changing rooms for PE particularly in relation to social distancing.

- Allowing pupils to wear PE clothing to school on days when they are timetable for PE would overcome many of the issues in relation to social distancing.

Science and Technology

Challenges

- In managing the curriculum and modifying content, while ensuring pupils can access their statutory entitlement opportunities, schools are seeking to ensure the science and technology curriculum continues to be pupil centred, broad, balanced and flexible, and develops the pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the materials, and the physical and living worlds.
- In order to sustain realistic and manageable progression within teaching and learning, schools are aiming to incorporate a sufficient balance of the science/technology disciplines across KS3, as well as meeting the practical requirements and experiences for vocational subjects, engineering and occupational studies and other practical subjects.
- Time is required to create and upload teaching materials, including pre-recorded video clips of experiments, to online platforms to support asynchronous learning for all pupils who have access to a digital device allocation of curriculum time for science and technology. This involves review and selection of online resources for remote learning and for simulating practical work and experiments.
- Senior leaders and governors, across the system, when making high-level curricular decisions need to ensure that the science and technology curriculum is broad and balanced across the three sciences and maximises the pupils’ practical experience.

Approaches

- Initial proposals for the proportion of time pupils will spend learning science in class and remotely learning varies across schools. While all schools have been prioritising examination classes and post-16 pupils, there is undue variation in the proposed time allocations for KS3 provision and practical work. The long-term implications for progression in science and related careers are considerable if insufficient time is given to this area of the curriculum. There is a need to ensure pupils have access to vocational science and technology subjects within the [Entitlement Framework](#).
- It will be important that the science and technology planning makes full and safe use of school accommodation to maximise teaching time in school.
- Schools are taking account of the changing requirements for practical activity, and deciding whether it can be safely managed as a class activity (pupils working individually not in groups) or a demonstration, avoiding long and complex multi-step practicals; there is a need to provide sufficient technician time for setting up work areas, and preparing materials in advance for lessons. Additionally, ensure all science and technology practical work is supervised by a specialist teacher.
- Most schools can facilitate practical work in laboratories, manufacturing and systems rooms, and can provide individual apparatus and equipment for pupils to carry out practical work. While this will require a significant investment of time due to: the slower pace of practical work, sanitising of apparatus between practical activities; and the rotation of small class sizes in the laboratories and manufacturing areas, practical work **should not** be excluded from the curriculum. New [CLEAPSS guides](#) are detailed in the appendix.
- Planning for the science and technology curriculum continues to be pupil centred, broad, balanced and flexible, and focused on developing the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the materials, and the physical and living worlds.
- Time is being allocated to devise, pack and distribute "home friendly" projects to supplement the pupils' practical experiences. Projects of a practical nature need to have parental permission and follow the guidance set out in CLEAPSS.
- Pupils need to experience sufficient practical work in order to encourage them to have a positive view of science and technology, recognise its importance in their lives and appreciate the value of science and technology in preparing them for related vocational studies or the world of work.

Planning for Practical Subjects

General considerations

Subjects that have a significant practical content include science, technology and design, home economics, music, art and design, drama and physical education.

All practical work needs to follow the guidance set out by the [PHA](#), [DE](#), [EA](#), [HSENI](#), [CLEAPSS](#), [NSEAD](#) and [AFPE](#). Practical work and demonstrations in non-specialist accommodation need to follow CLEAPSS guidance with appropriate risk assessments in place.

Most schools have sufficient accommodation and resources to facilitate practical work across the curriculum. While practical work in the current circumstances may require a significant investment of time, it is a motivator for many pupils in supporting their learning and their vocational aspirations and needs to be realistically managed during this time.

All health and safety policies (and risk assessment) for practical subjects need to be adjusted and updated for COVID-19 to take account of new ways of working and dealing with emergencies.

In preparing accommodation and resources, practical classes schools should aim to:

- maximise the safe use of classrooms and practical spaces and resources (including ventilations systems) for planning, teaching, learning, assessment and practical work is in line with the guidance set out by the [PHA](#), [DE](#), [EA](#), [HSENI](#), [CLEAPPS](#), [NSEAD](#) and [AFPE](#) in order to facilitate pupils (including those with complex needs or disabilities) returning to school;
- set up and organise room layouts with appropriately spaced individual work areas to enable safe working practices and to reduce movement within the classroom;
- manage teacher and technician time carefully to take account of potential increases workload, new ways of working including preparing materials, washing and reusing apparatus, tools and equipment for carousels of practical classes;
- allocate time to devise, pack and distribute “home friendly” projects if they are to be used to supplement the pupils’ practical experiences. Projects of a practical nature need to have parental permission and follow the guidance set out in CLEAPSS;
- have at least one trained first-aider on the premises at all times during school hours;
- review evacuation procedures - if the layout of the setting is changed, and/or circulation routes or entry/exit points are altered. Evacuation arrangements for pupils with complex needs or disabilities should be reviewed in light of any changes; and
- modify and revise practical activities which are normally carried out in pairs or groups to ensure safe practice for individual completion.

In preparing pupils for practical subjects:

- establish and embed new routines for practical work and supervision. Ensure these routines are taught explicitly to pupils and are reinforced regularly to help pupils (and teachers) feel safe and secure. Class rules for the new ways of working may need to be re-drafted to incorporate these new protocols; and
- update safeguarding and pastoral care policy to take of current guidance including risk assessments.

To create manageable and realistic progression within teaching and learning in practical subjects, schools should aim to:

- take account of the changing requirements for practical activity, and deciding whether it can be safely managed as a class activity (pupils working individually not in groups) or a demonstration, avoiding long and complex multi-step practicals;
- meet the practical requirements and experiences for vocational subjects, engineering and occupational studies and other practical subjects including drama and physical education;
- ensure all specialist practical activities are supervised by a specialist teacher; and
- review and select online resources for remote learning and for demonstrations of practical tasks, experimental investigations. Enhance and supplement practical experiences through teacher demonstrations, modelling and prototyping, simulation and the effective audio-visual demonstrations.

Health and safety considerations

In going forward, it will be important for schools to:

- manage and closely supervise practical work within the guidance set out in [CLEAPPS](#), [PHA](#), [DE](#) and [EA](#);
- modify and revise experiments which are normally carried out in pairs or groups to ensure safe practice for individual completion; and
- ensure experimental investigations and manufacturing sequences are planned to reduce pupil movement around the room.

Contact details for the Education Authority Health and Safety Officers

- Owen Doody 028 8241 1377 Owen.Doody@eani.org.uk
- Orla Martin 028 2565 5366 Orla.Martin@eani.org.uk
- Brendan O'Reilly 028 9056 4162 Brendan.O'Reilly@eani.org.uk
- David Orr 028 3751 2429 David.Orr@eani.org.uk

Conclusion

The reference groups welcomed the specialist discussions as an important opportunity to share experiences thus far and approaches taken or planned. The ETI looks forward to continuing these discussions throughout 2020-21, as schools focus on the vital work of making provision for their pupils, in a time when undoubtedly there will be changing circumstances.

It is essential that planning for recovery happens within the vision, ethos and aims of the individual school. Schools are focused on: firstly, putting pastoral and pedagogical needs first and using the technology to serve this need; and secondly, securing adequate competence and confidence in using the technology, which may need to extend beyond staff and pupils to include and involve parents and carers.

The flexibility within the Northern Ireland Curriculum and, in particular, the use of cross-curricular themes can be used to structure lessons and thereby reduce the need for pupils and staff to move between different learning areas. For example, a whole school connected learning approach across subjects to exploring what everyone has experienced during this time. Group and collaborative work in the physical classroom may be limited but opportunities may present through more holistic assessment tasks (investigations, projects, research-based enquiries, etc) which are focused on developing core skills of literacy, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills and personal capabilities. A flipped learning approach may be beneficial for some pupils in years 13 and 14, where fewer subjects are taken and independent learning is more common.

The reference groups recognised that schools are offering a wide range of examinations at GCSE (and equivalent) and post-16 and from a number of awarding bodies from different jurisdictions. In the context of the demands of the specifications, there are challenges around equality of opportunity during this period and if remote learning is part of normal schooling. These matters are currently under consideration by the examining bodies and regulators; they will take the lead in relation to any adjustments to specifications, to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged in comparison with those who went before them or will come after them.

Post-primary leaders in consultation with their boards of governors, know the context and unique circumstances of their school, and are best placed to make the detailed decisions required when it comes to the safety of their school and how they can best deliver the curriculum to their pupils.

There are a number of factors that will inform making provision for the statutory Northern Ireland curriculum in a way that meet the needs of the pupils and the context within which it is being delivered.

- Whilst we know that many children and young people are incredibly resilient, their mental health and wellbeing is, and will continue to be, a priority for us all; therefore, mental health and wellbeing will need to feature appropriately in curriculum delivery.
- Planning for learning will need to take account of the learning of the children and young people during the period of solely remote [distance] learning, thereby re-dressing and maintaining standards - whilst the context will be different, the principles of effective assessment for learning are the same.
- The need to consider the six areas of learning in the pre-school curriculum and the minimum content of the Northern Ireland curriculum for schools, including the development of wider skills and dispositions; therefore, organisations will need to think about what aspects need to be delivered face-to-face in the classroom environment, what aspects can be delivered remotely online or supported by parents in the home learning environment, and what aspects may not be able to be delivered owing to the context within which the school is operating.

[The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework](#) provides a framework to support the organisation's discussions and reflections which are continuing and will evolve in planning to address the specific challenges and priorities that will be faced in the next academic year as a result of COVID-19.

Resources

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Publications include: Curriculum Planning 2020/21, The New School Day Guidance, Guidance for Schools on Supporting Remote Learning and Guidance on School Development Planning for 2020/21.</p>
	<p>A CCEA video that can help explain to parents what the Northern Ireland Curriculum is all about, how it is a framework that covers all 12 years of compulsory education from age 4 to 16.</p>
	<p>Developing and Embedding Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities: These resources support the development and understanding of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and suggest how they can be delivered and embedded across the curriculum.</p>
	<p>The CCEA Digital Skills Framework for Key Stage 3 takes the concepts behind the three broad tiers of digital skills and applies them to the context of a learner within a school setting – Becoming a Digital Citizen, Becoming a Digital Maker and Becoming a Digital Worker.</p>
	<p>Key Stage Home Learning Resources: Key Stage 3 Resources; Key Stage 4 & Post-16 Resources; Post-Primary Irish Medium Resources; SEN Resources.</p>
	<p>e-Bug is a free external educational resource for classroom and home use and makes learning about micro-organisms, the spread, prevention and treatment of infection fun and accessible.</p>
	<p>Insync: A resource for exploring Personal Development issues at Years 8, 9 and 10 (English Medium or Irish Medium).</p>
<p>Python Year 10 Resource: Whether you are new to Python or reinforcing skills this course will guide you through programming with Python. The lessons explain how to write Python code, explore common coding challenges and you'll create Tic Tac Toe game.</p>	

	<p>Science Through Stories (SEN): Stories are an engaging way to spark thinking about science. These stories have been developed for Key Stage 3 learners with cognitive difficulties.</p>
	<p>The WOW Factor (Irish) is a series of units for each year group (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4). Each unit provides learning, teaching and assessment opportunities that can be run for four to six weeks. The title refers to the need for young people to be able to make informed decisions about their future world of work (WOW).</p>
	<p>The Statutory Curriculum at Key Stage 3: This guidance sets out the minimum requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum that should be taught at Key Stage 3, with examples, and supplements it by providing a detailed rationale to guide its interpretation.</p>
	<p>The “Big Picture” of the Curriculum at Key Stage 4: At Key Stage 4, pupils build on their learning from Key Stage 3. Pupils meet the statutory curriculum requirements through compulsory Areas of Learning and optional courses that lead to general and/or applied qualifications.</p>
	<p>A Literacy Resource for Pupils and Teachers: The pack contains cards to give pupils focus when taking part in activities that involve Talking and Listening, Reading or Writing. The cards are designed to be used across the curriculum in a variety of situations.</p>
	<p>‘Every Sport for Everyone’ means that every sport can be adapted in some way to include all players, with and without a disability. A disability can refer to an intellectual disability, a sensory disability or a physical disability. It is important that every individual is included in sport and this can be achieved across all sports.</p>
	<p>The UNCRC Resource Hub: Its aim is to provide a range of resources that will help to tell children and young people about their rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNCRC).</p>

	<p>Moving to Blended Learning in the Post Primary School Feedback and Assessment in the Post Primary Transition from Year 7 to Year 8 in the COVID-19 context</p>
	<p>The Association for Art and Design Education (AADE):</p> <p>The AADE organises workshops, events, an annual exhibition for art educators and produces a quarterly newsletter about art practice in primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>c/o Arts Council of Northern Ireland at: aadembership@gmail.com</p>
	<p>The Association for Physical Education (afPE): The only PE Subject Association in the UK.</p>
	<p>The National Society for Education in Art and Design: High-quality art, craft and design education makes the world a better place.</p>
	<p>GL345 – Guidance for science departments returning to school after an extended period of closure CLEAPSS Teaching Resources, CLEAPSS Science Site and CLEAPSS Design and Technology Site</p>
	<p>Films: Explore by curriculum subject, age or the curated films list – over 3,000 films available, plus find titles with accompanying education resources.</p>
	<p>The Academy education and skills activities are focused on addressing the UK's engineering skills challenge.</p>
	<p>GCSE design and technology resources</p>
	<p>The Wonder Gallery is BBC Northern Ireland's new digital art exhibition, a space to inspire creativity in young people aged between 4 and 18. Every week, a different artist sets a new challenge for young people to create their own art and send it in for display in The Wonder Gallery.</p>